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INFO : LONDON
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FROM : Amembassy PORT LOUIS **ANALYSIS BRANCH** DATE: October 31, 1972

SUBJECT : Aspects Ilois Resettlement Issue

REF : Port Louis 972 and 973

Premature publicity regarding the \$1.6 million British grant to the Government of Mauritius for resettlement here of the Mauritian Ilois from Diego Garcia (refels) has focussed local attention on the issue. Leader of the Opposition Maurice Lesage commented privately on October 19 that both the British and the GOM have so far failed to settle the problem. He wondered whether Prime Minister Ramgoolam really wanted the Ilois here. In response to his query, Lesage was told that the US/UK BIOT agreement had envisioned insulation of any desired defense facility from local problems. The UK had had responsibility for looking after the Ilois, including those with Mauritian citizenship (whose means of livelihood had in any case been terminated on Diego by the end of copra cultivation). The recent news about the UK/GOM resettlement agreement suggested that their subsequent reintegration into the local economy was on the way to achievement. Lesage inquired whether the Ilois were not British subjects. He was reminded that the Mauritian Constitution granted most of those born in the Chagos Mauritian nationality (see below).

When the Legislative Assembly resumed on October 25, Lesage asked the Prime Minister to release the text of the UK/GOM agreement to the Assembly. On the citizenship issue, he simply recalled that the P.M., in an earlier statement to the Assembly, had said that he was not positive as to the nationality of the Ilois.

Meanwhile, Church World Services has gone ahead with an initial modest scheme (less than \$1000) to meet the request of those former Ilois, now living in the Roche Bois suburb of Port Louis, for an income-producing project. This scheme, the "Roche Bois Diego Project", will focus on practical training in rabbit and chicken

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raising. It was developed by a Project Planning Committee headed by Sulaiman Patel, well-known correspondent for l'Express newspaper and a recent specialist grantee. The scheme has already been approved by the Mauritian Council of Social Services and referred to CWS headquarters for final allocation of funds. Acting on informal advice from the Embassy, the local CWS representative, Miss Nancy Robinson, has also briefed an official (Mr. Kenneth Mafham) of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Town and Country Planning on the project, and has informed the Prime Minister's office in writing about it.

Comment: The citizenship status of the Ilois is made clear, if in obscure language, in Section 20 of the Mauritian Constitution. This states that "every person who, having been born in Mauritius, is on 11th March 1968 : citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies shall become a citizen of Mauritius on 12th March 1968." Section 20 (4) specifically notes that "a person shall be regarded as having been born in Mauritius (emphasis supplied) if he was born in the territories which were comprised in the former colony of Mauritius immediately before 8th November 1965" (date of the UK Order in Council establishing the BIOT). The dual citizenship of the Ilois has nevertheless been virtually admitted by the British in private (Paragraph two of our A-202, November 2, 1971). Lesage apparently considered invoking the Uganda experience and challenging the GOM on the point but seems to have softened his approach.

As to other points mentioned above, Patel was the source of much of the recent publicity on the issue (reftels). Mafham is the official charged with detailed planning for Ilois resettlement. He has told Miss Robinson that the Ilois will probably be settled permanently where they now are (i.e. the Roche Bois and Cassis suburbs of Port Louis) but has given no indication when construction of permanent housing for the Ilois may be expected to begin. In view of Patel's dual interests, we may expect to hear more criticism of Ilois resettlement if the GOM fails to move forward rapidly with construction.

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