

P O BOX 536

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East African Dept  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office

## RESETTLEMENT OF ILOIS IN MAURITIUS

1. I do not feel that I can say anything usefully at this stage about the difficulties. I am glad to see that you recognise that any resettlement scheme will have to be generous, on a grant basis and, of course, over and above our present aid allocation to Mauritius. Such a scheme will take time to prepare, it will have to be drawn up in close consultation with the Mauritian authorities and we shall require expert assistance in its formulation.

2. We have been hamstrung so far by our inability to take the Mauritian Government into our confidence. The time has come when we must do so. The only people I could speak at this early stage, and from whom I could hope to get a considered view, are either the PM or his deputy, Ringadoo. Since Ram is off to Singapore and thence on to a 5-week jaunt to Burma, Pakistan and India, I would have to go to Ringadoo, if you do not want to waste time. But in any event, before speaking to either of them, I would hope to have your authority to reassure them straight away that HM will furnish aid, both by way of funds (on a free grant basis) and by technical assistance, to cover the cost of repatriation and rehabilitation (housing and resettlement) of the Ilois in Chagos and the Ilois back here, under a scheme which is designed to benefit the Island's economy as a whole and which will be designed to take account not only of the economic but also of the sociological difficulties which might arise.

3. I am glad to note that the FCO recognises that such a scheme is bound to be costly, having regard to the present economic and unemployment problems which the Government are

cc Miss E J Emery P & IOD Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
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316



facing. Without an expert assessment we cannot give you an accurate estimate of the likely cost, but on the basis of the FAO pilot project for the Northern Plains written in 1968, the costs per acre were estimated at:-

<u>Capital</u>	<u>Cost per Acre</u>
	<u>Rs.</u>
including irrigation, roads, pumps, compensation, etc but <u>not</u> housing	2,630
<u>Recurrent</u>	
Interest charges, maintenance, supervision, etc	800

This was for a pilot project covering only 500 acres, although the major scheme, if the pilot project was successful, would cover 10,000 acres (and costs would be lower). Clearly one could not hope to resettle all the 450 Ilois (quite apart from the 100 Ilois families already here) in the Northern Plains but if one attempted to settle some on 2 acre plots and to repay the Mauritius Government the capital costs and, say, 3 years recurrent costs, this would amount to no less than Rs 10,000 (£750) per family exclusive of housing.

4. We have not the expertise to prepare such a comprehensive scheme; we cannot look to the Mauritian authorities to do the work for us. So we shall probably need, unless the Mauritian authorities unexpectedly volunteer somebody of their own, the assistance of an outside expert to do it for us, somebody like Philip Hotchin, who carried out a land settlement scheme in Rodrigues. What he should do would be, after a visit here for talks and familiarisation, to visit the Ilois both here and in Chagos so as to acquaint himself with their skills, their background, etc., before drawing up a comprehensive scheme designed to reintegrate them economically and socially into the pattern of life here with the minimum of embarrassment to the Mauritius and British Governments. The provision of such an expert seems to be an essential part of any offer we make to the Mauritius Government.

5. Of course, I may have underestimated the reaction of the Mauritius Government. They may well feel that these people are a UK responsibility, that we have so far got away with the Ilois here and must not be allowed to get away with any more. These Ilois, they might argue, have been living in a British possession and if they are no longer wanted there, are to be cast out in this inhuman fashion, then Britain must find some other British possession for them. However, as you say, the Mauritius Government do not seem to have wanted to disown the Ilois already here; so let us hope they will react in the same

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way as regards the 450 from Chages (even though some of them may, in strict law, have ceased to be Mauritian citizens).

6. Copies of this letter go to Eleanor Emery, Alan Urwick and Owen Hughes.

**P A Carter**