

## IMMIGRATION PANEL TO MEET IN PRIVATE

The New York Times

November 23, 1980, Sunday, Late City Final Edition

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**Section:** Section 1; Part 1; Page 21, Column 1; National Desk

**Length:** 825 words

**Byline:** By ROBERT PEAR

**Dateline:** WASHINGTON, Nov. 22

### **Body**

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Immigration lawyers and citizen groups expressed anger yesterday after learning that a Federal commission recommending major changes in immigration policy would hold most of its last scheduled session in private at a secluded resort.

Four Cabinet officers including Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti, eight members of Congress and four public members serve on the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, which is scheduled to meet Dec. 5 through 7 at the Tides Lodge on the Rappahannock River in Irvington, Va. The Commission is scheduled to meet for a total of 23 1/2 hours, according to a notice published in the Federal Register. All but three and a half hours on the afternoon of Dec. 7 will be closed to the public.

Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy will hold private session at secluded resort in Irvington (Va)

The Rev . Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of the University of NotreDame and chairman of the 16-member commission , said it was necessary to exclude the public from "our last and mos t important meeting" because the agenda included "ticklish questi ons of national security," affecting relations with Mexico a nd other countries. He said that the decision to close the meeting w as final and would not be reconsidered.

Father Hesburgh said in an interview that the commission, created by Congress in 1978, wanted to develop a "consensus on major final recommendations." The panel, he said, will submit its report to the President and Congress by March 1.

#### Criticism From Interest Groups

Immigration lawyers, civil libertarians, refugee resettlement workers and special interest groups denounced the decision to close most of the session as contrary to the spirit of Federal laws requiring open government. Attorneys for a group representing Haitian refugees said that they might file a lawsuit to gain access.

Phyllis Eisen, a spokesman for Zero Population Growth, a nonprofit group interested in population policy and immigration, said she was "incensed" at the commission's decision to meet in private. "Politicians have a right to get together and cut deals, but these are not just politicians," she said. "They are public commissioners operating on public money."

David Carliner, the author of a handbook on the rights of aliens who is chairman of the immigration committee of the American Bar Association, complained in a letter to Father Hesburgh that the meeting was being held "in an

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isolated location, which is virtually inaccessible to the public." The site, near the point where the Rappahannock flows into the Chesapeake Bay, is a three-hour drive from Washington.

At the session, commissioners will try to develop recommendations on such controversial issues as a national identity card, numerical limits on immigration, amnesty for illegal aliens already in the United States, penalties for employers who hire illegal aliens, asylum for political dissidents, selection criteria for new immigrants, deportation procedures and admission of temporary workers from Mexico.

## Harris Opposes Decision

A spokesman for one member of the commission, Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of Health and Human Services, said that she had opposed the choice of a "remote" location and the decision to close most of the session. "She knew of no national security considerations" that would require closed sessions, said the spokesman, Bill M. Wise.

Father Hesburgh asked for permission to close most of the meeting in a five-page letter to the head of the General Services Administration, the Federal housekeeping and supply agency. Commission officials said that the President had designated the agency to review such requests. Ray Kline, deputy administrator of the agency, approved the request on Nov. 7.

Dale Frederick Swartz, director of the alien rights project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil rights Under Law, asserted that some members of the commission "have not done their homework" and did not want that fact disclosed at a public meeting. In private, he said, commissioners may advocate positions that they would not defend in public.

In his letter asking for permission to close the meeting, Father Hesburgh said that the commission had held public hearings in 12 cities and conducted 25 public consultations with experts.

The Cabinet officers on the commission, besides Mrs. Harris, and Attorney General Civiletti are Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie, and Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall. They will all be replaced by their counterparts in the incoming administration after President-elect Ronald Reagan takes office on Jan. 20. Commission members said they were unsure whether the new appointees would endorse their report.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (91%); TALKS & MEETINGS (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); REFUGEES (90%); LAWYERS (89%); POLITICS (88%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (79%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (79%); FOREIGN LABOR (79%); AGENCY RULEMAKING (79%); PUBLIC POLICY (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); SUITS & CLAIMS (78%); LITIGATION (78%); INTERVIEWS (75%); RESETTLEMENT & REPATRIATION (74%); NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS (74%); POPULATION GROWTH (73%); NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (72%); ATTORNEYS GENERAL (72%); WRITERS (70%); UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION (68%); NATIONAL SECURITY (66%); POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS (61%); AMNESTY (60%)

**Industry:** LAWYERS (89%); WRITERS (70%)

**Geographic:** UNITED STATES (93%); HAITI (79%)