

Haitian problem
Meeting - September 7, 1978

The State Dept. outlined steps being taken to spread the word to the people in Haiti that there is no work for them in the U.S. The information is being disseminated through Haitian and Bahamian authorities.

Present relations between the Bahamas and the U.S. are not too good. No progress is seen on the fishing question. The Coast Guard has issued a notice to Mariners to avoid future friction. The Bahamians have refused to negotiate a formal fishing access agreement. It seems that they wish to build up their own fishing industry. It is unlikely, however, that they would be able to make full use of their waters. Economic, military facilities, and maritime agreements are now being negotiated. ~~For the~~ ~~bilateral economic assistance agreement, certain fiscal reforms~~ ~~are being require~~

Negotiations are also underway with Haiti for economic assistance. One requirement, however, is fiscal reform within Haiti. The assistance would come under PL480 Title III.

The INS said that there is an increase in exclusion cases. This means they are catching more Haitians before they land in the U.S. These persons are put into detention. The locations include Immokolee, West Palm Beach Jail and Dade County Jail (?). INS is negotiating with the Navy for a couple of barracks on their navy base (in Palm Beach?). This setting would be preferable because families could be kept together. Opa Locka would not be big enough and would require a lot of money to fix up.

Work authority is no longer granted and those who are not held in detention are released to the care of the Haitian Refugee Center. Abscondee who are caught are sent to jail. Those who have work permits may renew only for a period of sixty days. This determination is made on a case by case basis. 200 Haitians have left voluntarily after persuasion by INS. There are a number of repeat cases, some back in the U.S. a second or third time after deportation. There is a 40%-50% no-show rate for deportation hearings. INS blamed dilatory and obstructionist lawyer tactics for delays. Lawyers have told newly arrived aliens not even to give their names to INS.

On the question of political asylum, the INS makes a determination. If it is negative, it is referred to the State Dept. If INS does not hear from State after 30 days, it presumes that State concurs in the INS decision. The State Dept. is expected to send a representative to work with INS in Miami in order to speed up proceedings. The State Dept. has also been in touch with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. A UN official should work with the State to advise INS on granting political asylum. The question form used by INS in political asylum cases has been improved through the assistance of the State Dept.

HEW is concerned only with health aspects of the Haitian problem. People from Atlanta have gone to Miami to assess the Health problem and the Public Health Service is inspecting new Haitian arrivals for communicable diseases or other health problems. HEW cannot provide health or welfare benefits to non-citizens or non-legal residents. It is prohibited by law. Local services cannot be reimbursed. INS bears the health costs of aliens under their custody. Food Stamps will be available to those Haitians with documentation. (I-94's with no expiration date).

INS suggested that local community services may have to turn cases over to INS for custody if voluntary agencies cannot help them. County services will not be reimbursed if rendered.

The only possibility would be through CSA which does not have the restriction imposed on HEW. CSA can serve illegals (at least there is no prohibition.) CSA gave Dade County's CAA \$40,000 recently following a specific request. The money is for emergency basic services -- food, shelter etc.

There has been some investigation into organized smuggling rings. They seem to be operated out of Columbia and the Bahamas. Individual skipper in Haiti will bring people to Florida and provide them with a specific contact who will put them to work. The wages are used to pay the skipper who brought them over.

The State Dept. denies that there are any political prisoners in Haiti since the amnesty granted in Dec. 1977. An investigation by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission has ~~been~~ satisfied them that there are no pol. prisoners.