

What constitutes a refugee? This editorial comment is reprinted by permission from the New York Post, July 12, 1994.

Granting Gays Refugee Status

New York Post

Last month the Clinton administration quietly announced plans to open yet another path for mass migration into the United States: political asylum for homosexuals. In a Justice Department directive, Attorney General Janet Reno ordered U.S. immigration officials to consider applicants who claim to have been persecuted because they're homosexual eligible for entry under the asylum laws. Gay magazines report that hundreds have already applied.

In the meantime, word is sure to go out to impoverished folks throughout the world who dream of ways to come here that homosexuality has been rendered a legitimate asylum category — along with race, creed, political orientation and ethnicity.

We've long expected that immigration and asylum would be major issues in the 1998 national campaign. Thus, it will be interesting to see how Americans at large react to the Clinton administration's decision to create a designated entry path for homosexuals seeking to migrate here.

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Popular sentiment aside, the Justice Department directive strikes us as astonishingly ill-advised. Only a handful of countries — Fidel Castro's Cuba and a few Islamic states — openly discriminate against practicing gays. The demise of communism radically reduced the number of regimes avowedly hostile to homosexuality.

But gay activists have now stretched the definition of oppression to include anything short of full endorsement of homosexuality — in the schools and from the pulpits. Using such standards, ample grounds will exist for gays around the world to

employ the asylum vehicle. And insofar as the U.S. remains the world's most tolerant society vis-a-vis homosexuality, it's safe to assume that many will endeavor to do so. Certainly, the multivariied events that took place in New York in late June secured America's status as the international gay mecca.

It has not been established whether there are 600 million homosexuals in the world (a number arrived at by extrapolating from the fabled and dubious ten percent figure claimed by gay activists) or 60 million; nor can anyone know how many heterosexuals are likely to feign homosexuality in order to jump to the front of the U.S. immigration line.

But the new policy — an unsubtle capitulation to the growing gay lobby — represents an invitation to fraud, one that's certain to make the effort to bring a measure of order to the U.S. immigration process all the more difficult. America's notoriously lax asylum system is already subject to wide abuse. Smugglers are well-versed in teaching would-be claimants how to pretend they've either experienced or fear persecution. Declaring an entirely new class of people — "persecuted homosexuals" — eligible for asylum will render it harder than ever to distinguish between individuals who genuinely face persecution and those who are simply anxious to jump to the head of a very long line. ■

Sign of the Times

Hand-lettered sign spotted by Arthur Witkin of Hartsdale, N.Y., taped to the information window of the office of the State Department of Motor Vehicles in White Plains:

THE PERSON WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH
WILL NOT BE IN TODAY

— *The New York Times*, August 17, 1994

This article highlights the level of "push" pressure for migration. Can you imagine yourself sealed into a freight container, not knowing when or where you will end up? This reprint is by permission from Professional Mariner, 207-772-2466, Issue #8, August/September 1994.

Stowaway Problem in the U.S.

Coming to America as a stowaway aboard ship has never been easy, but lately this rather desperate form of illegal immigration has become dangerous, degrading, and an international political problem.

Long a volatile social issue in the U.S., the stowaway problem has recently come to a boil as shipping companies are complaining about punitive government policies, and the plight of unfortunate but often unwanted stowaways has caught the public eye.

Numerous stowaways have died recently while attempting to hitch a ride to the "land of the free," including those who have been forced to jump overboard, or who chose to jump overboard, and others who have died in sealed containers during transit.

Government requirements regarding the handling of apprehended stowaways are costing shipping companies tens of thousands of dollars for individuals discovered aboard ship. At least one European nation has complained bitterly that its citizens have been retained for long periods as chained and manacled "political prisoners." Indeed, a spokesman for Amnesty International charged in May that treatment of stowaways arriving in America is "outrageous" and suggested that most stowaways should not even be detained. United Nations officials also joined the chorus of complaints in early June.

The New York Association for New Americans, meanwhile, has complained that stowaways are being treated like criminals, particularly a group of 20 Rumanians who were taken off a Sea-Land containership on the East Coast. Members of that group, which included a number of teenagers, were confined in manacles in a hotel in Newark, N.J., for a month before being transferred to a Pennsylvania state prison. Prison officials felt obliged to have them locked in cells and denied normal prison privileges. A number of the stowaways started a hunger strike in June.

Meanwhile, a new wave of questions regarding existing liability laws has sparked lawsuits, led to the

clarification of government policies, and has even prompted Congressional hearings on the treatment of stowaways.

The large number of stowaways arriving from eastern European, African, and South American countries in recent months has become increasingly frustrating to many in the financial departments of commercial shipping companies, due to the strict laws that make those companies responsible for stowaways arriving on their vessels. Although the Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that the number of stowaways has been fairly steady recently, some shippers claim that is not true.

"We unfortunately do not have a handle on the overall numbers, but they seem to be growing," says Bill Summers of the New Jersey-based Sea-Land Service, one of the largest worldwide container shippers. "We only keep track of the ones entering on our ships. Yet we feel the number has been on the rise for the last several years."

"The numbers we have say that the trend has been fairly steady at 800 to 1,000 stowaways entering U.S. ports a year," rebuts Michael Jaromin of the INS. "The carriers say that these figures are low, but they have not been able to show us any hard numbers. We have asked for more information from the maritime industry, but we have not gotten anything back."

The *New York Times* reported that as many as 3,000 to 5,000 stowaways might have tried to enter the U.S. last year by ship, saying the numbers the INS compiled probably "count mainly those who also applied for political asylum."

"People stow away on ships for many different reasons," said Jaromin, an assistant chief inspector at the INS headquarters in Washington. "Of course, for the most part, we can only grant asylum to people requesting it on political grounds. Many would rather go back to their country to try again, because they know they do not have a valid asylum claim."

"Clearly, it's a problem," said another INS