

Phil Clark:

This is Phil Clark here at Kennedy International Airport. With me Philip Abbott Luce of the Executive Committee of the Student Committee for Travel to Cuba. Mr. Luce, what about this State Department action tonight in withdrawing, tentatively at least, the passports of these 84 students, Americans, returning from Castro's Cuba?

Philip Abbott Luce:

Well, actually, the State Department has done nothing towards withdrawing the passports. They simply issued the students with a piece of paper. And according to Supreme Court decisions, specifically, Foreman versus Dulles, the State Department cannot withdraw passports, cannot do anything with passports, until an administrative hearing has been held, and to date, certainly no administrative hearing has been held regarding these students since they've all been in Cuba.

Phil Clark:

Then in other words, you will fight this action legally in the courts?

Philip Abbott Luce:

Well, certainly, we'll fight it in the courts if necessary, but our contention is that it's not necessary since the government really hasn't taken any valid action. We don't recognize the action that they have taken; therefore, we contend that these students, along with the people that went last year, can travel at their own will.

Phil Clark:

I noticed that in your statement you say that next summer, you hope to send more young people to see not only Cuba but to other countries that are on the U.S. restricted list. What other countries might these be?

Philip Abbott Luce:

Well, specifically, we're going to attempt to send students to all of the restricted countries within the next few years, Albania, North Korea, North Vietnam, and especially China because we think that young people in this country should see the revolutionary socialist countries throughout the world, and since the State Department doesn't want them to see these countries, we think that they should have the right to go and see them.

Phil Clark:

And what do -- what objective besides merely seeing how these countries are operating, what other objectives do you have in visiting these restricted countries?

Philip Abbott Luce:

To simply show that no valid travel ban exists which we've shown two years in a row by traveling to Cuba, which we'll show next year by traveling to China.

Phil Clark:

All right. Isn't it true that members of your committee and some of the students who have actually traveled in violation of the State Department's orders are, shall we say, leftist-inclined or procommunist-inclined? Are there any members of the Young Communist League, for example, in the group?

Philip Abbott Luce:

There are no members of the Young Communist League in our group to my knowledge. I don't think it still exists. There are members of the Progressive Labor Movement who are communists, who openly state that they are communist, but the Student Committee for Travel to Cuba has no restrictions on who can go or who can travel. We're open to anyone to travel to these countries.

Phil Clark:

What do you think about the current election campaign in the United States between Goldwater and President Johnson? Do you think that things might change, perhaps be a little tougher for you under a Goldwater administration?

Philip Abbott Luce:

Well, I don't think they could be too much tougher under a Goldwater administration considering the fact that Bobby Kennedy, who is supposed to be a liberal, has indicted three of us for going last year, so I don't think they can do too much more.

Phil Clark:

Thank you very much, Philip Abbot Luce, this is Phil Clark, Kennedy International Airport.

Philip Abbott Luce:

Gentlemen, ladies, we're about to begin now. I will introduce - call all out the names of the people who will be the spokesmen initially for the group. After they answer questions, then we'll open it up for questions and answers among the rest of the people that are here at the moment. We can't bring in all 84 because of the space problems. This is a broad sampling, however, of the people that went. First, I want to introduce Mr. Eddie Lemansky, who is the spokesman for the group that went to Cuba, who will initially read a press statement from that group. (students applaud) Mr. Lemansky is from New York City.

Speaker 1:

Would each of these people give their address, and what sort of work they do or where they're **[inaudible3:28]** and so forth.

Eddie Lemansky:

My address is 414 West 121st Street.

Speaker 1:

How old are you, Mr. Lemansky?

Eddie Lemansky:

Twenty-four.

Speaker 2:

Take your glasses off, Mr Lemansky so we can see you.

Eddie Lemansky:

I can't see you.

Speaker 3:

How old are you, Eddie?

Eddie Lemansky:
Twenty-four.

Speaker 4:
Can you spell your name, please.

Eddie Lemansky:
L-e-m-a-n-s-k-y.

Speaker 5:
Where do you go to school?

Eddie Lemansky:
I don't go to school

Speaker 5:
You graduated?

Eddie Lemansky
I graduated, yeah.

Speaker 6:
What school?

Eddie Lemansky:
Antioch College in Ohio.

Speaker 6:
What do you do now?

Eddie Lemansky:
I work as an organizer for the Progressive Labor Movement. Can I look at you people now? Before I read this statement, I'd like to say something else. As we came through immigration, we were all handed copies of a letter which said that we were being informed that, because we had traveled to Cuba, that we should regard our passports as temporarily invalidated. And it lists a whole series of regulations and different things. And, you know, really, I don't even understand why we were given this. It has no relevance to anything we've done. We haven't violated any laws, and the statement that says we have is simply incorrect. So, you know, I don't think too much of this, and as far as I'm concerned, about the only thing I think of it is this.

(He tears the letter up. Students cheer and applaud).

And I think the other people in the group probably feel about the same way. (Sounds of agreement and approval from students.) This letter is nothing but garbage. Now, before we left Cuba, the group discussed two statements, both of which were unanimously approved. The first one reads as follows. Last year the House Un-American Activities Committee subpoenaed certain members of the group which visited Cuba. With one exception, all those subpoenaed were members of the Progressive Labor Movement. We fully expect a similar performance on the part of the government this year. We

realize that the government has and will continue to use the old red-baiting and name-calling tactics to split the group and attack us individually. We have no intention of allowing this to happen. We, undersigned, for all our political differences, are united on the following issues. One, that the U.S. government has no right to prohibit or interfere in any way with the travel of U.S. citizens to Cuba; two, that the efforts of the U.S. government to destroy the Cuban revolution most cease. We fully realize that the government and the press will attempt to present our trip to the American people as communist dominated. They will say that those of us who are not communists are dupes. We hereby state that we who are not communists are not afraid to stand with communists in proclaiming what we believe, and we intend to do so in a united fashion. We challenge the government to hear all of us. We demand that if any of our number are subpoenaed by any government agency that we all be subpoenaed. We do not intend to allow the government to say that the only people who oppose their policy on Cuba are communists. The opposition to the U.S. government's policy on Cuba is widespread because such a policy is wrong. That is why the government is afraid to tell the truth to the North American people, and that is why it is afraid of those who have visited the island to determine the truth for ourselves.

We have copies of these statements for anybody who wants them.

Speaker 7:

Good. And can I get an [inaud]?

Eddie Lemansky:

Yeah, why don't you hand them out.

End Part 1 - [00:08:16:01]