

# Indochinese Refugee Reports

Information Exchange Project American Public Welfare Association  
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**MAY 16 HEARINGS ON REFUGEE BILL**

The tenor of the May 16 congressional hearings on the proposed Refugee Act of 1979 was to determine what should be changed in present methods of dealing with the refugee problem and to explore future directions. The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law, chaired by Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman (D.-N.Y.), had listened to earlier testimony on May 3 and May 10. (For an account, see Indochinese Refugee Reports, vol. 1, no. 1 and 2.)

A diverse set of witnesses testified on May 16th. Kenneth Fasick, director of the international division of the General Accounting Office (GAO), summarized the GAO report entitled "The Indochinese Exodus: A Humanitarian Dilemma." (see Indochinese Refugee Reports, vol. 1, no. 1 and 3.) David Carlinger of the American Civil Liberties Union and Whitney Ellsworth of Amnesty International expressed concern about portions of Title I and Title II of the bill. Executive Vice Chairman Irving Kessler and Dr. Hannah Avidor of United Israel Appeal, a private American voluntary agency, told the subcommittee about Israel's experience with the absorption of immigrants and refugees. Finally, Dr.

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Barry Stein, associate professor of social sciences at Michigan State University, presented the findings of his research on the progress of Indochinese refugees in the United States.

Fasick was questioned by subcommittee members about the GAO report's recommendation that the secretary of health, education and welfare require the monitoring of grant funds for refugee programs. He confirmed that up to now there has been no set of standards for the refugee programs and no systematic monitoring of the agencies implementing them. Holtzman also expressed concern about the apparent lack of coordination between programs.

Dr. Hannah Avidor, on leave as director of the Social Services Division of the Immigration Absorption Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel, was questioned by Holtzman about the resettlement process followed in Israel. Since the creation of the State of Israel, it has been that country's policy to provide a homeland for those suffering oppression. Consequently, Israel has had much experience in the absorption of refugees and has developed a unique, nationally supported system for resettlement.

The Israelis maintain special absorption centers for over 60 percent of their newcomers. For the first three to six months, language training, food, and shelter are provided by the government. Avidor reported that the cost incurred by the Israeli government for each refugee runs as high as \$20,000 for the first three to four years of resettlement. The greatest cost is incurred during the first year. It includes community labor and materials to house refugee families. The high initial costs of absorption have been found to be "more than worth the expense," according to Avidor.

Holtzman also questioned Avidor

about the methods used for language training for refugees. Elementary children, Avidor said, are given special classes in small groups, while adults take extensive daily language classes for the first several months after their arrival.

Stein stressed several points in his testimony. First, his research documented the seriousness of any delay in providing social services to the Indochinese refugees, especially during the first six months of resettlement. Stein agreed with Avidor that maximum governmental support for the refugees in the first three to four years of resettlement would mean smaller long-term costs. However, the refugees should not be treated simply as part of the general welfare population; they need assistance that takes into account their special needs.

Stein also expressed concern about the lack of standards in the provision of social services for refugees and the ad hoc system of monitoring programs. Correcting these deficiencies is especially important, because the proposed Refugee Act of 1979, with its allocation of 50,000 refugee admissions annually, would permit a permanent flow of refugees in future years. The legislation would provide a standard policy for dealing with all refugee populations rather than a different government reaction to each new set of refugees. Stein agreed with the legislation's call for DHEW guidelines and success criteria for special refugee projects, social services, and income maintenance programs. This must be done with special consideration of the cultural needs of refugees. In the case of the Indochinese refugees, the government dispersed the population widely without regard to their extended family networks. The result has been a second migration of many of the refugees in isolated lo-

cations to areas of the country where they could be near other Indochinese.

The final point stressed by Stein was the necessity to increase the involvement of voluntary agencies in the planning process. VOLAGs need to have some say in planning as well as resources if they are to continue to serve the refugees effectively.

Holtzman asked Stein if he would recommend that the United States adopt the absorption center concept used by countries such as Australia, Canada, and Israel. Stein answered no, explaining that the time spent by refugees in the centers only delays their adaptation to a new culture. There is even some evidence, he said, that after six months those refugees who are placed directly into a job with evening language training do as well as those having an intensive six to eight hours a day of language training in a special center. As for possible standardization of English-language programs, Stein advocated looking at the various programs to determine those of better quality, but he did not feel that agencies should be required to use the same curriculum.

A week later, on May 23, HEW Secretary Joseph Califano, Jr. and representatives of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service testified. The hearings were then extended for an additional day. On May 24, Governor Robert D. Ray of Iowa, accompanied by James Jordan, special assistant to Michigan governor William G. Milliken, appeared as witnesses. Representatives of the National Coalition for Refugee Resettlement also testified.

(An account of the May 23 and May 24 hearings will appear in the next issue.)

*not in* SELECT COMMISSION  
MAPS ITS COURSE

Undaunted by a delay in funding, the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, which has been operating since March on a skeleton staff of three people on loan from the Justice Department, has hired an executive director and adopted a tentative work timetable.

The commission, a cabinet-congressional-citizen body created by Congress last fall (P.L. 95-142) to recommend how the federal government should cope with the growing tide of refugees and illegal aliens seeking to enter the United States, held its first meeting on May 22. It named as staff director Professor Lawrence H. Fuchs, 52, chairman of the American Studies Department at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, former Peace Corps director in the Philippines, author of American Ethnic Politics, and board member of the Mexican-American Legal and Education Defense Fund, a position he plans to resign. Fuchs will take over July 1, replacing interim coordinator Joan Arrowsmith.

The commission also approved a tentative work schedule calling for a second meeting next October, followed by the inauguration of research studies, public hearings around the country, and visits by the commissioners to border locations and consular offices, and concluding with submission of its final report to Congress and the president by March 1, 1981. The timetable is contingent upon expected congressional approval of a bill to extend the commission's life from September 30, 1980 to March 1, 1981.

The work plan should be made definite at the commission's meeting in October, which, like its May meeting, will be open to the public.

Meantime, the commission invites interested individuals and groups to submit information and written statements regarding their particular concerns on immigration and refugee matters and any recommendations they think the commission should make.

The commission anticipates that by August it will have funds, permitting its staff to begin work. Congress originally authorized \$700,000 for the commission, but a bill to increase the authorization to \$2,450,000 (and to extend the commission's life by six months) has been introduced by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D.-Mass.) and Rep. Peter W. Rodino, Jr. (D.-N.J.), both commission members. Kennedy and Rodino reported at the May commission meeting that they foresaw no problem in winning congressional passage of the larger sum. Since then, the House has passed (on June 6) a \$224,000 commission appropriation for fiscal year 1979, and a \$1.6 million request for FY'1980 has been approved by the House Appropriations Committee and is slated for consideration by the full House on June 19.

The \$2.4 million allocation would, among other things, enable the commission to hire a staff of eighteen, supplemented by people detailed from federal agencies.

The committee is charged by law with making a comprehensive review of U.S. refugee and immigration laws, policies, and procedures and with recommending both administrative changes and revisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Among other things, its review is to cover:

- \*the social, economic, political, and demographic impact of previous refugee programs

- \*the criteria for, and numerical limitations on, the admission of refugees.

The commission will be following up on the work of the Carter administration's Interagency Task Force on Immigration Policy. The task force, which was composed of three cabinet members, was originally charged with making policy recommendations. However, when the administration decided to support a congressional move to form a select commission with broader representation, the task force's mission was pared down to one of background research. Its final report, which consists largely of papers on various immigration issues, is expected to be published in late June.

(For copies of the Federal Interagency Task Force Report on Immigration, write the Office of the Associate Attorney General, Main Justice Department Building, Washington, D.C. 20530.)

#### Askew Named Chairman

*copy*  
President Carter appointed attorney Reubin D. Askew, former governor of Florida, chairman of the 16-member commission. The chairman is expected to have considerable influence over commission operations.

The commission also includes four cabinet members: Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Attorney General Griffin Bell, Secretary of Labor F. Ray Marshall, and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano, Jr. (Bell, Marshall, and Califano made up the Interagency Task Force)

The eight congressional representatives include four members of the Senate Judiciary Committee--chairman Kennedy, who formerly headed its subcommittee on refugees; Dennis DeConcini (D.-Ariz.), an expert on drug and alien smuggling across the U.S. southern border; Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. (R.-MD.); and Alan K. Simpson (R.-WY.)--and four members of the

House Judiciary Committee--chairman Rodino, who once headed its immigration subcommittee; Elizabeth Holtzman (D.-N.Y.), now chairwoman of the immigration panel; Hamilton Fish (R.-N.Y.), a member of the immigration panel; and Robert McClory (R.-IL.)

Askew is one of four citizens appointed to the commission by the president. The others were (1) Rose Matsui Ochi, a Japanese-American attorney and executive assistant to Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley; (2) Joaquin F. Otero, a Cuban-born naturalized citizen and an international vice president of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks; and (3) Cruz Reynoso, a state appellate court justice in California and former director of California Rural Legal Assistance.

## Recent Developments

### NEWS BRIEF-- STATE OF MICHIGAN

The state of Michigan has formally requested that it be allowed to institute a refugee resettlement program. In a recent speech, Gov. William G. Milliken announced that U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs Dick Clark has said federal officials are ready to engage Michigan as a full partner in resettlement as soon as Congress funds the next phase of the refugee program. Milliken said the Michigan program would be patterned after the highly successful one in Iowa.

Milliken said advantages of state involvement in refugee resettlement would be the focusing of new attention on the refugee problem and the ability to reach out to groups, such as Rotary clubs, not sought as sponsors by church-related voluntary agencies.

## SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

On June 6, the House Appropriations Committee passed a \$59 million supplemental appropriation for FY'79 for refugee assistance administered by HEW, with \$8.3 million allocated for Soviet refugees. At the time of this writing, there had been no committee action on the supplemental appropriation for refugee and migration assistance administered by the Department of State.

### UPDATE--ABA HOTLINE

The American Bar Association telephone hotline has changed its hours for "live" legal advice for Indochinese refugees from 1 to 4 p.m. E.D.T. to 2 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The hotline operates 24 hours a day; an answering service is available to take messages before 2 p.m. and after 5 p.m. The toll-free number is 800-334-0074; in North Carolina, call 682-0315 collect. (For a description of the hotline, see Indochinese Refugee Reports, vol. 1, no. 1.)

### COALITION TAKES LEAD ON REFUGEE BILL

The National Coalition for Refugee Resettlement, chaired by Pennsylvania official Norman V. Lourie, speaks for over 130 state, local, and voluntary agencies in support of the proposed Refugee Act of 1979 and other federal efforts toward humanitarian and equitable refugee policy. Members include all of the major voluntary resettlement agencies assisting the Indochinese refugees as well as state, county, and private agencies that provide social services, medical services, and income assistance to refugees. Over 90 percent of the Indochinese refugees reside in the 28 states represented in the coalition.

Formed in March, 1977, as the Coalition for Effective Resettlement of Indochinese Refugees, the coalition changed its name early this year in anticipation of passage of the proposed Refugee Act of 1979, the first legislation that would provide a comprehensive and consistent policy toward all refugee groups. Coalition testimony in support of the bill was given before the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 14 by chairman Lourie; Edwin Silverman, governor's coordinator for Indochinese refugee assistance programs in Illinois; and Rupert Thompson, Louisiana state coordinator of social services for Indochinese resettlement.

Lourie also headed a panel of Coalition witnesses from the public welfare agencies of California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Virginia who testified on the bill before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law on May 24.

Lourie is executive deputy secretary for federal policy and programs in the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. He received the National Conference on Social Welfare's "Distinguished Service Award" last month for his success in assisting with the resettlement of refugees and his work in other policy-making and planning assignments in the social welfare field.

The Coalition will assemble June 18 in Washington, D.C. to discuss the refugee bills before Congress. The refugee situation in Southeast Asia and U.S. refugee programs will also be reviewed. Guest speakers will include Sen. Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.) and U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs Dick Clark. Invitations have also been extended to Reps. Peter Rodino, Jr. (D.-N.J.) and Elizabeth Holtzman (D.-N.Y.) and to Gov. Robert Ray of Iowa. Any organization involved in refugee resettlement is welcome to attend.

The meeting will be held in Room 1202, Dirksen Senate Office Building, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## Resource Exchange

### VIETNAMESE AMERICANS: PATTERNS OF RESETTLEMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC ADAPTATION IN THE UNITED STATES

A new book investigating the adaptation of Vietnamese refugees to American life has found they have made remarkable social and economic progress since 1975. The book, Vietnamese Americans: Patterns of Resettlement and Socioeconomic Adaptation in the United States, was written by Professor Darrel Montero, director of the Urban Ethnic Research Project at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The book analyzes data on the refugees' education, employment, income, proficiency in English, and volume of federal assistance received. It is based upon a study of 35,000 refugees, a representative sample of the Vietnamese who arrived in 1975.

A synopsis of the book follows:

The Vietnamese who fled their country in 1975 encountered an American public guilty about the U.S. role in the war but worried about the refugees' impact on a faltering economy. The unemployment rate at the time was almost nine percent. A Gallup Poll in 1975 reported that 54 percent of Americans felt that the Vietnamese should not be permitted to stay in this country. Many Americans warned that an influx of refugees would mean added competition for scarce jobs and longer public assistance rolls.

Of the Vietnamese who came in 1975, 80 percent were under the age of 35 and 40 percent were Catholics. Two-thirds came from urban settings and from relatively well-to-do families. Many were among the educational elite in Vietnam and held high career and social positions. These factors appeared to augur well for the refugees' adjustment to American society.

However, the jobs open to them

here were mostly lower level, offering little pay and little opportunity for advancement. Such jobs have caused an emotional crisis for many.

#### Fewer Than 1 in 3 on Welfare

But the Vietnamese have come far nonetheless. A remarkable 94 percent of male heads of households are employed, as are 93 percent of all women, and income among the refugees has increased steadily since their arrival. A majority (51 percent) of the households report a combined monthly income of \$800 or more, and fewer than three percent report less than \$200.

Furthermore, over 90 percent of the refugees' income comes from wages and salaries, not public assistance. In fact, fewer than one third of the households are receiving public assistance of any kind, a clear sign that the Vietnamese are moving steadily toward economic self sufficiency.

The language barrier has not proven an obstacle to employment. Fully 89 percent of those Vietnamese who cannot understand English at all are nevertheless employed. With prolonged exposure to American people, schools, and the mass media, it seems only a matter of time until the great majority are fluent in English.

Unlike other immigrant groups, the Vietnamese who arrived in 1975 found no ethnic community already here to give them emotional or material support. Moreover, the U.S. government intentionally dispersed the refugees, putting them in the hands of private sponsors scattered across the country. Aware of public hostility toward the Vietnamese, officials no doubt figured Americans would be more hospitable to single families than to large groups of refugees. This strategy also offered to reduce the economic impact of the refugees

on any one community.

The policy of dispersal was well intentioned, but by separating the Vietnamese from their countrymen it cut them off from those they needed for emotional support. Dispersal also broke up the large extended families which are the basis of Vietnamese society.

#### Regrouping

Within a year of their arrival, however, the Vietnamese had begun to regroup. They have been moving from small towns to large metropolitan areas, forming substantial ethnic communities in Dallas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York. They have also combined into more than 100 ethnic organizations. Thus, the Vietnamese, almost by instinct, seem to be following the path taken by other Asian immigrants to this country.

The gains the Vietnamese have made so quickly in employment and income and their cohesiveness despite efforts to disperse them are remarkable. It seems likely that if their growing familiarity with English is matched by an expanding job market that permits them to take advantage of their education and occupational backgrounds, they will have a bright future in this country.

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A six-page synopsis of the book is available without charge from Dr. Montero, Rm. 1111, Woods Hall, The University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Telephone (301) 454-5718.

The 218-page book, which contains tables, appendices, and a bibliography, is available for \$17.50 from Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, CO 80301.

CURRENT INDOCHINESE POPULATION IN THE U.S. BY STATE

As of June 11, 1979

1. Alabama	1,593
2. Alaska	262
3. Arizona	1,480
4. Arkansas	2,020
5. California	55,786
6. Colorado	4,199
7. Connecticut	1,981
8. Delaware	201
9. District of Columbia	1,579
10. Florida	6,205
11. Georgia	1,993
12. Hawaii	3,547
13. Idaho	482
14. Illinois	7,099
15. Indiana	2,219
16. Iowa	3,843
17. Kansas	2,460
18. Kentucky	1,169
19. Louisiana	7,965
20. Maine	344
21. Maryland	3,042
22. Massachusetts	1,847
23. Michigan	3,630
24. Minnesota	5,284
25. Mississippi	837
26. Missouri	3,339
27. Montana	548
28. Nebraska	1,772
29. Nevada	978
30. New Hampshire	154
31. New Jersey	1,975
32. New Mexico	1,013
33. New York	6,012
34. North Carolina	1,550
35. North Dakota	416
36. Ohio	3,559
37. Oklahoma	4,064
38. Oregon	5,207
39. Pennsylvania	9,044
40. Rhode Island	1,055
41. South Carolina	852
42. South Dakota	530
43. Tennessee	1,969
44. Texas	18,238
45. Utah	1,782
46. Vermont	52
47. Virginia	7,282
48. Washington	7,304
49. West Virginia	176
50. Wisconsin	3,144
51. Wyoming	105
52. Guam	389
53. Puerto Rico	36
54. UNKNOWN STATE	494
55. Virgin Islands	17
	204,238

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Department of State gave the following figures for Indochinese boat refugees in Southeast Asian camps.

<u>As of May 15, 1979</u>	<u>Current Camp Population</u>	<u>Refugees arrived first 2 weeks of May</u>
Thailand (does not include land refugees)	7,027	2,182
Malaysia	70,680	8,200
Hong Kong	31,567	8,882
Indonesia	15,780	4,396
Japan	472	9
Philippines	3,602	295
Singapore	421	220
Taiwan, India, Australia	743	239
Korea	35	0
<u>Total</u>	130,327	24,423

This statistical report is compiled from two sources: the annual Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Alien Report as a base and weekly updates of new refugees arrivals obtained through the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM). Only the January INS report gives any indication of refugee movement among the states. The current INS base figure used is from the INS January 1978 report.