

The original documents are located in Box C20, folder “Presidential Handwriting, 5/3/1975” of the Presidential Handwriting File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 3, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Attached is a wire service story illustrating the kind of public opposition which is building up to any help for the Vietnamese refugees.

Unless there are strong, moral White House statements leading public opinion in the other direction, this opposition to the refugees could turn into a nasty public groundswell and damage the possibility of Congressional approval of the Refugee Aid Bill.

The NSC is drafting a possible statement on the refugees for you to deliver at the opening of your news conference Tuesday.

RAN
RON NESSEN

Attachment



Good

(REFUGEES)

(BY GENE BERNHARDT)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- CONSTITUENT MAIL AND TELEPHONE CALLS TO CONGRESSMEN ARE RUNNING HEAVILY AGAINST ALLOWING SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES INTO THE UNITED STATES, A SPOT SURVEY SHOWED SATURDAY.

AMERICANS VOICING THEIR OPINION ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES ON AN ALREADY CRITICAL DOMESTIC UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION, A UPI CHECK OF MORE THAN 50 HOUSE AND SENATE OFFICES INDICATED.

REP. JOE WAGGONER, D-LA., SAID SOME LETTERS TO HIM ASKED: "HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THERE AREN'T ANY NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS IN THE CROWD?"

AN AIDE TO ONE SENATOR SAID HE DETECTED RACISM IN THE OPPOSITION, BUT THE SINGLE WORRY VOICED MOST OFTEN WAS THE IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT.

COUPLED WITH CONCERN OVER JOBS COMPETITION WERE PERSISTENT QUESTIONS SUCH AS: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE COMING? HOW DOES THE GOVERNMENT PLAN TO HANDLE THEM?

"THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN IS AND SO DO WE," SAID WAGGONER.

MOST MEMBERS SAID THE RESPONSE, SO FAR, HAS BEEN LIGHT TO MODERATE AND THAT REACTION MIGHT STEP UP NEXT WEEK AS THE REFUGEE PROBLEM BECOMES MORE ACUTE AND THEIR NUMBERS GROW.

THE OFFICE OF REP. BENJAMIN GILMAN, R-N.Y., SAID, FOR INSTANCE, "WE'VE HAD ONLY TWO INQUIRIES AND BOTH QUESTIONED HOW TO PROCEED TO TAKE REFUGEES INTO THEIR HOMES."

BUT A SPOKESMAN FOR SEN. JOHN TUNNEY, D-CALIF., SAID UP TO 2,000 LETTERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED, "ABOUT 90 PER CENT AGAINST BRINGING REFUGEES INTO THIS COUNTRY."

REP. ROBERT SIKES, D-FLA., WHOSE STATE IS EXPECTED TO BE HEAVILY IMPACTED, REPORTED GETTING A LARGE NUMBER OF TELEGRAMS, ALL AGAINST ADMITTING THE REFUGEES, BUT BY FRIDAY THE REACTION HAD FALLEN OFF TO NEARLY ZERO.

OTHER EXAMPLES IN THE SURVEY INCLUDED:

REP. GEORGE BROWN JR., D-CALIF. -- SOME 50 LETTERS, DESCRIBED AS "HEAVY" FOR HIS DISTRICT, AND ALL OPPOSED ADMISSION. A FEW HAVE "UNDERTONES OF RACISM," SAID AN AIDE.

REP. BILL ALEXANDER, D-ARK. -- ABOUT 10 LETTERS A DAY, WHICH AN AIDE DESCRIBED AS "MOST EMOTIONAL." ONE SAID "KEEP THOSE ASIANS IN ASIA."

REP. CHARLES CARNEY, D-OHIO -- ONLY ABOUT 10 LETTERS, ALL OPPOSED. SAID ONE: "WE CAN'T EVEN PAY OUR BILLS HERE. WHY DON'T YOU GIVE US SOMETHING? WHY GIVE OUT HANDOUTS?"

SEN. THOMAS EAGLETON, D-MO. -- ABOUT 100 LETTERS WITH ABOUT 95 OF THEM AGAINST ADMISSION.

SEN. JAMES BUCKLEY, R-C-N.Y. -- ABOUT 200 LETTERS SO FAR, WITH TWO THIRDS AGAINST ADMISSION. OF THOSE AN AIDE SAID "10 PER CENT ARE HARD CORE RACISTS AND ANOTHER 25 PER CENT ARE BIASED AGAINST ASIATICS."

REP. BELLA ABZUG, D-N. Y. -- MAIL HAS BEEN LIGHT "BUT WHAT WE'VE GOT IS NEGATIVE." MOST OBJECT TO THE "KINDS OF REFUGEES, LIKE BLACK MARKETEERS AND SO FORTH," AN AIDE SAID.

SEN. RICHARD SCHWEIKER, R-PA. -- NEARLY 2,000 LETTERS AND "THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM ARE CRITICAL, THE PRIMARY REASON BEING JOBS," SAID AN AIDE.

REP. BOB ECKHARDT, D-TEX. -- OF SOME 24 LETTERS IN THE PAST TWO DAYS, ALL WERE NEGATIVE. AN AIDE QUOTED ONE: "WE DIDN'T BRING THE JAPANESE OVER HERE AFTER WORLD WAR II."

REP. DON EDWARDS, D-CALIF. -- NEARLY 200 LETTERS AND PHONE CALLS, NEARLY ALL NEGATIVE, WITH WRITERS "CITING THE LACK OF JOBS AND THE COST OF HELPING THE REFUGEES."

REP. JACK EDWARDS, R-ALA. -- LESS THAN 10 LETTERS, ALL OPPOSED, BUT AN AIDE SAID AN INFORMAL POLL AT A MEETING IN THE DISTRICT SHOWED ONLY EIGHT OF 74 PERSONS SUPPORTED AID FOR THE REFUGEES.

REP. BARRY GOLDWATER JR., R-CALIF. -- IN MORE THAN 300 PHONE CALLS TO THE CALIFORNIA OFFICE, ALL BUT 10 OPPOSED. THE 70-ODD LETTERS WERE DIVIDED ABOUT HALF AND HALF.

REP. BOB CASEY, D-TEX. -- ABOUT 35 LETTERS, WITH ABOUT 90 PER CENT OPPOSED. "THEY'RE AGAINST PROVIDING EITHER REFUGE OR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE," SAID AN AIDE.