

MAIL TO CONGRESS AGAINST REFUGEES

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The Volume Varies but Most
of Letters Are Hostile on
Issue of Resettlement

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WASHINGTON, May 8—The volume of mail received by members of Congress on the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in this country has varied widely, but, whether heavy or light, the letters have been hostile more often than not.

The Senate Subcommittee on Refugees, a spokesman said, is getting "much more mail" on the subject than any other panel. While no count has yet been made, the letters were described as being just about evenly divided "pro and con" on the issue. The subcommittee is part of the Judiciary Committee.

Perhaps indicative of a trend, an aide to Representative Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, a California Democrat, said that of 30 letters received the earlier ones were hostile but that the mail now appeared to be "leveling off."

Senators and Representatives from California have generally received more mail on the issue than members of Congress from other states, attributable partly to exaggerated reports that as many as a million South Vietnamese would be resettled in that state alone.

More than 5,000 letters have arrived at the office of Senator John V. Tunney, Democrat of California, and the letters run "9 or 10 to 1" against refugee resettlement, according to his press secretary.

Senator Alan Cranston, California Democrat, has received 1,500 pieces of mail, with 95 per cent "very much against the refugees," according to an aide.

The office of Representative Don Edwards, California Democrat, reported more than 200 letters and telephone calls, with fewer than 40 hospitable to the Vietnamese.

Senator Richard S. Schweiker, a Pennsylvania Republican, has received about 3,000 letters during the last 10 days on the refugees, an aide said, and most are critical of the resettlement.

"The primary concern is losing jobs," the aide said.

Buckley Aide Comments

But Senator James L. Buckley, Conservative-Republican from the neighboring state of New York, has had only about 400 letters thus far, and they were described by a Buckley aide as "about 60-40 against," with the opposition letters "not just stating their position but vicious."

Another New Yorker, Representative Bella S. Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan, has received a "quite heavy" volume of mail that it "beginning to

run into the hundreds," according to an aide. Her mail is "about half and half, pro and con."

But an aide to another New York City Democrat, Representative Elizabeth Holtzman, of Brooklyn, reported that the number of letters was "nothing overwhelming."

In the office of the House Democratic leader, Thomas P. O'Neill of Massachusetts, the mail count was called "surprisingly low," less than a dozen letters in all. The few letters were mostly hostile, a staff member said—"all because of the economy."

Representative Joshua Eilberg, the Pennsylvania Democrat who heads the Immigration subcommittee has received about only 10 letters, an aide said, adding that the mail was "all against, what there is of it."

Some Congressional aides used terms like "a smattering" to describe the number of letters. Representative Peter W. Rodino, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has received "no more than 30" letters, an aide to the New Jersey Democrat said.

Representative Robert L. F. Sikes, the Florida Democrat whose district includes Eglin Air Force Base, one of the centers receiving refugees, has received "about 50" letters, according to an aide.

Senator George McGovern, the South Dakota Democrat who spoke out last weekend in opposition to the idea that evacuation of so many South Vietnamese was in their own best interests, has received 947 letters and other messages, an aide said. Of these, 785 have supported the Senator's position, which the aide said was "to offer the opportunity for the Vietnamese to return to Vietnam," but only on a voluntary basis.

At the White House, a spokesman said that 9,000 letters telegrams relating to all aspects of the Vietnamese refugee problem have been received during the last month. He said this was a "very small" number for a month, or "what we consider average response on an important issue."

The tally showed 5,975 "generally favoring Administration policy," he said, 3,446 in opposition and 238 with no detectable leaning one way or another.