

WXPost

MAY 15 1975

Hill Votes Bill

Authorizing Refugee Aid

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The House passed bill last evening authorizing continued aid for Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees and worked into the night on a companion appropriation bill.

Moving swiftly, the authorization passed by a vote of 381 to 31 after the House voted 353 to 54 to convert it from an open-ended measure to one fixing the spending ceiling at the \$507 million President Ford had requested.

The Senate Appropriations Committee, at the urging of Democratic leaders, quickly approved a \$405 million appropriation for the same purpose. But Senate action on the authorization bill setting a ceiling and the appropriation bill actually providing the funds was put off until today.

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) chairman of the subcommittee handling the funds bill, had intended to delay action until next week so he could obtain information on how funds previously authorized for Vietnam have been spent. But yesterday morning the Senate Democratic Policy Committee pressed for speedy action so it would not appear that the Senate was holding up the refugee aid program.

Administration officials have said they are out of funds to complete the task of bringing to this country and resettling 115,000 or more refugees whose lives were considered in danger if they remained in their homelands after the communist takeovers.

President Ford had requested \$507 million in addi-

tional funds for the program. This was reduced to \$405 million for a period ending June 30, 1976, because congressional committees decided the number of refugees actually coming to this country is not precisely known. If more money is needed, it undoubtedly would be provided.

Congressional sentiment has swung solidly behind support of the refugee aid bill. But there is some nervousness and opposition from members who fear that the refugees will mean more competition for jobs that don't exist, or that they are being given special treatment while no help is extended to Americans who became refugees from their country, on grounds of con-

science, to avoid fighting in Indochina.

Rep. Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which wrote the authorization bill, urged approval because "This is the right of immigrants. We must be true to ourselves. We have contributed to the plight in which these people find themselves, and we have no alternative."

Rep. Edward Hutchinson (R-Mich.), senior Republican on the Judiciary Committee, added that the number of heads of families that would be seeking jobs would be not more than 30,000. "They can be absorbed," he said, noting that 400,000 persons immigrated into the United States last year.

Rep. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.) tried to offer an amendment extending refugee aid to Americans who fled the United States to avoid military service. It was ruled out of order as not germane.

Rep. Donald W. Riegle Jr. (D-Mich.) offered an amendment, defeated 346 to 71, intended to give all poor Americans the same aid the bill would give to Indochina refugees. But it was so worded that it would have denied any aid to the refugees which is not available to all Americans.

Rep. Paul S. Sarbanes (D-Md.) said the effect would be to halt refugee aid, because no programs exist to permit Americans to live in tents at Camp Pendleton or to be transported to communities throughout the United States for resettlement.

Rep. William L. Hungate (D-Mo.) opposed the aid bill in part because while President Ford was requesting the extra \$503 million for refugees he was vetoing the farm bill important to Hungate's rural constituents. Hungate and others were also troubled by reports that many of the refugees on their way here are war profiteers or persons otherwise undeserving of U.S. aid.

Rep. Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.), noting that housing and jobs bills to help Americans are working their way toward the President's desk amid talk of possible vetoes, declared:

"I intend to vote for homes and jobs for Vietnamese refugees. I hope the President will reciprocate by upholding jobs and housing for Americans."