

U.S. Assurances on Refugee Cost

Washington

The federal government assured the states again yesterday that it will fully repay them for any welfare, medical and social services given to Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees.

The promise came from Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who said it remains the administration's goal to find American sponsors to provide food and shelter and help find jobs for the refugees.

"However, in any large scale refugee resettlement program, some refugees will have to seek aid from state agencies. In those instances, our policies will assure that the refugees do not become a burden on state or local resources," he said.

That means the states will not have to provide the normal matching costs in order to be eligible for federal welfare aid for the refugees.

Weinberger also said that if a refugee is stricken with a major medical problem, the federal government will provide assistance so that sponsors are not burdened with the costs.

The federal government will finance refugee welfare costs from its \$50 million share of \$405 million in resettlement funds approved by Congress.

Weinberger's assurances fell short of satisfying Mario Obledo, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s health and welfare secretary. "We're still having problems," he said in Sacramento.

Obledo's deputy, Robert Gnaizda, was sharper. "There's nothing to it," he said of Weinberger's comments. "It's the reiteration of an empty promise."

A study of refugees made

by the state showed that 32 per cent of the 131,000 refugees—about 41,600—intend to settle in California. Of that total, 25,000 would be school-age children.

Based on the annual \$1400 it costs to educate a child, California would have to come up with \$35 million a year in added school costs.

"It's unfair, not to mention irresponsible," for the federal government to refuse to pay these costs, said Charles McFadden, a special assistant to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles.

A number of California congressmen are readying legislation in Washington which would force the federal government to pick up the cost of educating refugee school children.

Gnaizda accused the federal government of foot-dragging in the resettlement of the refugees. "We're now in the process of imprisoning 100,000 refugee Vietnamese on Wake Island, Guam and various military camps for a sentence that may be as long as a year."

He said a delegation of Sacramento officials will go to Washington next week to demand that the government step up its resettlement pace. "Whether anyone will meet with us, I don't know."

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