

Refugees Panel, After Vague Start, Seeking to Speed

By LINDA CHARLTON

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WASHINGTON, June 18—A month ago, with a plea for speed, President Ford set up a citizens' advisory commission to help with the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees. Since then, the panel has held two meetings, and its staff director said today, "Basically, we've been occupied with bringing the commission members up to speed on the situation."

"Time is of the essence," Mr. Ford said on May 19 as he announced the establishment of the group. But the Executive order itself was somewhat vague. The commission, whose chairman is John S. D. Eisenhower, was to "advise" the President and "seek to facilitate" refugee resettlement.

The group was given \$10,000 for its first month of operation, a staff of 10 was assembled from various Government departments — Roger Semerad, the staff director, from the Domestic Council; others from the Pentagon; the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Veterans Administration—and housed in offices in the new Executive Office Building.

Bringing the commission's members "up to speed" on the situation has meant, among other things, the two official commission meetings in Washington; visits to the refugee reception centers by some commission members; and the compilation by the staff of "background papers" and speech material.

Commission Decisions

At the two meetings, Mr. Semerad said, it was decided "to focus on two things: the advisory role to the President and using the commission's resources to stimulate new sponsorship areas and a better understanding of what sponsorship entails."

The voluntary agencies that were given primary responsibility for resettlement have indicated that they will be able to find sponsors for only about half of the 130,000 or so refugees who fled Vietnam, the director said.

The commission is aiming at the "untapped resource" of community and service organizations, he said. It has held up the State of Washington, which organized as a sponsorship effort, as a model to other

states. Maine has indicated a similar willingness to stand as a sponsor for refugees.

There are other plans, he said. A number of what Mr. Semerad would describe only as "important national figures" have indicated their willingness to sponsor "a family or group of families." Their names will be announced soon, with appropriate publicity, in the hopes of stimulating others to do likewise. There are also tentative plans for public service advertising campaigns, including television spots.

But group sponsorship is the idea the commission is most hopeful about. "Basically," said Mr. Semerad, "it makes more sense for a community or a small group of people" to undertake the responsibility of sponsorship — which means agreeing to provide everything from food, shelter, clothing and money to helping with school enrollment for children and employment for adults—than for a single family.

There is also some thought about the problems of special groups of refugees.

"If you have 10,000 farmers, you just couldn't put them down in Hoboken," Mr. Semerad mused, so some "new methods" of sponsorships, such as farm collectives, are being considered as possible alternatives.

Meanwhile, the Ford Administration's Interagency Task Force on Indochina Refugees announced today that the population of Vietnamese and Cambodians domiciled in tent cities on Guam had been cut in half over the last four weeks through relocation in the United States.

The refugee population on Guam was 50,233 on May 14 and was reduced to 25,144 by last Monday, the task force said.

In addition, orders were sent out to Guam to construct all-weather wooden barracks for 10,500 refugees who are expected to remain there another month or more, when typhoons and heavy rains often strike the area.

As of today, 131,211 refugees have come under United States control, the announcement said, and of these, 38,145 have been processed and resettled.

The announcement appeared to respond to criticism leveled at the refugee program by Senator Edward M. Kennedy on

June 8. The Massachusetts Democrat had accused the task force of exposing numbers of refugees to the dangers of typhoons on Guam.

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., June 18 (AP)—A total of 355 Indochinese refugees will be

processed for repatriation here by United Nations representatives, a senior State Department official has said.

The refugees seeking repatriation are all South Vietnamese except for one Cambodian.

Ninety are at this Marine

Resettlement

facility, and the remaining 265 are scattered in refugee centers elsewhere in the United States, Nick Thorne, head of the Interagency Task Force here, said yesterday.