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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

TRADE

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

October 23, 1979

Ogden Williams
4621 Q Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Ogden:

Thank you for your letter. I enjoyed meeting you and I feel that I gained a lot from talking with you and sharing your long experience with Southeast Asian affairs.

I have enclosed a copy of the statement you were kind enough to allow me to insert in the Congressional Record. It sums up my own feelings very well, and I hope it may have some effect on my colleagues. My letter to Dick Clark, suggesting your proposal for a readjustment of the immigration quota, is also enclosed. I will keep you informed of any response I receive.

Once again, I want to thank you for your help and advice. We share a common interest in getting some positive action for the Hmong, and I look forward to talking with you about this again.

Sincerely,



THOMAS J. DOWNEY
Member of Congress

TJD/dhs:kco
Enclosures (2)

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October 15, 1979

Ambassador Dick Clark
Special Negotiator on Refugee Affairs
Office of Refugee Affairs
State Department
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ambassador Clark:

As you know, I am a strong supporter of the actions taken by your office to aid the refugees of southeast Asia. Since my recent trip to the refugee camps there I have been particularly concerned about the special plight of the Hmong people and other land refugees in Thailand. I would like to offer a suggestion which I feel would be of help to these people.

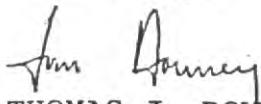
As I understand it, the 14,000 person quota on immigration is presently divided between boat refugees and land refugees in a ratio of roughly 8 to 6, with the larger number being boat people. Because the numbers of refugees at sea has significantly declined, I would respectfully suggest that this ratio simply be reversed, putting the emphasis on the land refugees who in most cases have been waiting for admission to the United States for a number of years.

This simple reversal of priority should require a minimum of red tape, and it would allow a further 2,000 Hmong and other land based refugees who qualify for entry to this country each month to escape the truly hellish existence I saw in Loei and other refugee camps in Thailand. The fact that the spreading warfare and famine in Cambodia is every day pressing closer to the Thai border also argues for a reversal of priority in the admission ratio at this time. If events take a different course in southeast Asia in future months, the ratio could, of course, be readjusted accordingly to return the emphasis to boat people or whoever is in greatest need.

Ambassador Dick Clark
October 15, 1979
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I really appreciate your consideration of my suggestion. If you have comments on this or any other proposal which might help the Hmong and other inland refugees, I would be very glad to hear them.

Sincerely,


THOMAS J. DOWNEY
Member of Congress

TJD/dhs:amc

sage of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1979.

The list continues:

B'nai B'rith Women.
Building and Construction Trades Department—AFL-CIO.
Center for Community Change.
Center for National Policy Review.
Church of the Brethren—World Ministries Commission.
Church Women United.
Citizens Lobby for Freedom and Fair Play.
Communication Workers of America.
Congress of Italian-American Organizations, Inc.
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.
Division of Homeland Ministries—Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
Episcopal Church—Public Affairs Office. ●

HMONG REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

HON. THOMAS J. DOWNEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 19, 1979

• Mr. DOWNEY. Mr. Speaker, during my recent visit with a congressional delegation to the refugee camps of Southeast Asia I had the opportunity to see firsthand the suffering and extreme hardship being endured by the Hmong people in refugee camps in Thailand. These hill tribes were our allies and friends throughout the long conflict in Vietnam. They suffered terrible losses during the war and after U.S. forces withdrew their suffering continued because they were left with the label of being our allies, which has unfortunately become the mark of death and persecution for so many in Southeast Asia. With the spread of warfare and famine in Cambodia pressing closer every day to the Thai border it becomes even more urgent for us to consider the special plight of these special people. In the past week the press has reported allegations of poison gas being used against the fleeing Hmong, and it is further reported that artillery shells fired from inside Cambodia have killed four refugees in a camp across the border in Thailand. The multitude of difficulties faced by these unfortunate people at the present time is difficult to fully comprehend.

I would like to take this opportunity to insert in the RECORD a statement by Mr. Ogden Williams which outlines the background of this problem. Mr. Williams has spent many years in Southeast Asia, he is intimately familiar with the Hmong people, and I believe he sums up the plight of the Hmong refugees in a way that is extremely convincing in that our attention to this problem is asked not on the basis of emotion but on the strong basis of history and fact.

I commend this statement to my colleague's attention:

THE PLIGHT OF THE HMONG REFUGEES (Unequal treatment of America's closest allies)

1. There are now some 70,000 Hmong refugees among the 300,000 total Indochina refugees in Southeast Asia, or 23% of the total. But they received only 2000 "spaces" out of

the 14,000 per month accorded by U.S. Immigration for entry to the United States, or 14%. If the Hmong were treated even on a equal basis with other refugees, they would be accorded about 8200 spaces per month.

2. But the Hmong in fact deserve not only equal treatment, but even preferred treatment. Why?

a. They fought for us. Whereas US troops fought for the South Vietnamese in Vietnam, in northern Laos the process was reversed. We enlisted the Hmong to hold northern Laos and deny it to the North Vietnamese invaders. This the Hmong did for thirteen long years, until our Indochina program collapsed in 1975. The Hmong were left holding the bag, after having *per capita* casualties greater than those of the Soviet Union in World War II.

b. They are being exterminated by the Vietnamese and Pathet Lao armies. For the Hmong, the war did not stop in 1975. Cut off from US arms and food, they have been the victims of a well-documented campaign of extermination by several divisions of Vietnamese regulars and Pathet Lao troops, using heavy artillery, Soviet tanks, captured US and Soviet aircraft and poison gas. Tactics included the systematic destruction of Hmong mountain villages, burning of crops and poisoning of water holes. Hmong attempting to flee to Thailand run a gauntlet of forces assigned to their destruction—men, women and children. All this is documented beyond doubt. Among all the Indochina refugees, including ethnic Chinese from Vietnam who leave because of economic pressures, or Cambodian civilians who are caught between contending armies, only the Hmong are systematically hunted down in a deliberate campaign of extermination.

c. Conditions in the Hmong refugee camps are now the worst of all land refugee groups in Thailand. Overcrowding, disease, malnutrition, enforced idleness, and hopeless delays have caused morale to decline sharply. There have been recent suicides. Many Hmong have been living like this for four years, including many who bear combat wounds suffered while fighting the North Vietnamese communists, at our behest. This should be a reproach to the American conscience.

3. Because of the lull in arrivals of "boat people" from Vietnam since the Geneva Conference in June, when Hanoi agreed to "turn off the tap"—at least for the time being—the camp populations of "boat people" have declined sharply. Thus in August '79 some 8792 new boat people arrived from Vietnam, but more than 14,000 were resettled in the US and other countries. In September '79 only 7090 boat people arrived in the refugee camps, while more than 21,000 departed for resettlement. Not so with the Hmong. An average of 2500 new refugees arrived each month, with not more than 2000 departing.

4. Why do the Hmong not receive even equal treatment?

Perhaps most important, because the hinge which squeaks loudest gets oiled first. The Hmong have not received the enormous worldwide media coverage accorded to the "boat people". TV cameras cannot cover Hmong families being shot down in the forests of Laos; or even while swimming the Mekong, even though their bodies float by the Thai police posts. Still less do TV cameras or reporters cover the thousands who die of starvation and battle wounds in the mountains of Laos.

Secondly, even though the Hmong fought under CIA control and funding, the fiction is maintained that they were not working for the United States since their salaries were "laundered" through official Hmong intermediaries. Thus even those Hmong refugees who have battle scars are classified as having worked "with" the United States—Category 3, not "for" the United States—Category 2. This means that a Laotian chauffeur or typist

who worked at a US installation in Laos gets automatic preference over a Hmong combat veteran.

5. How well do the Hmong do when resettled in the U.S.?

While US resettlement agencies have a policy of avoiding any official "ranking" of refugee groups, privately they will confirm that the Hmong are at the top of the list, because of their innate characteristics. These include a willingness to work at any job available rather than go on relief; honesty and directness which are appreciated by US employers; loyalty, and an enormous appetite for education. Hmong communities thrive in places like Minneapolis, California, Washington, D.C. and the Pacific Northwest. Two Hmong kids in the Tacoma school system have been classified at the "genius" level. They have a reputation for talent and ability in school. They also have a tradition of craftsmanship. Hmong as a group are predominantly honest, brave, hardworking, loyal to the United States and passionately opposed to communist totalitarianism. What else should we require of immigrants?

Action required: Take immediate advantage of the current lull in new arrivals of "boat people" to give higher and well-deserved priority to the Hmong, by doubling the "spaces" allocated to them. Right now, the total US entitlement is 14,000 spaces per month. Of these, 8,000 still go to the "boat people", with only 6,000 for all the land refugees—Hmong, Laotian and Cambodian. Of this 6,000, the Hmong now get only 2,000. The "boat people" quota should be reduced to perhaps 5,000, with 2,000 additional spaces going to Hmong and 1,000 to Cambodians or other land refugees. As a target, all verified Hmong combat veterans, and the dependents, should be moved out of the Thai camps where they have lingered for up to four years, and at the earliest practicable time. America should pay her debts. ●

POWER CRISIS

HON. ALBERT GORE, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 19, 1979

• Mr. GORE. Mr. Speaker, not many years ago, the idea of controlled nuclear fusion seemed a distant dream, a wish of grand dimensions and little likelihood of success. Today all that is changed. Today we can say with confidence that the work of laboratories around the world—including our own National Laboratory at Oak Ridge—will make possible a day in which many of us will see the lamps which light this Chamber powered by the force which kindles the stars.

Or, rather, we could confidently say so except for one little problem, a problem so foolish in so many ways that it would be funny were the need for a secure and plentiful energy course not so vital for our Nation's future. The problem? We cannot have controlled fusion without helium, and this Nation is squandering its reserves of helium at an alarming rate.

We will need helium to cool the giant lasers and power the magnets which will generate the fields to contain fusion reactions. We will need liquid helium to cool the reacting core and carry the heat from the chamber to the turbines. But our helium reserves are mixed with natural gas. And therein lies our problem.