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PRIME MINISTER

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Services statistics

Copied to National Health:
Report of the Royal Commission
on the Int Health Service.

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Statements in the House

Sir Ian Gilmour's statement on Indo-Chinese Refugees (Flag A) met with generally warm support in the House. There was support from all sides for the announcement that an extra 10,000 refugees would be admitted.

Mr. Shore welcomed the statement as far as it went. He asked about the food problems in Cambodia and suggested that we ought to give food aid to that country. The Lord Privy Seal said that we had responded to a request from the UNHCR to admit more refugees. It would be unreasonable to make any further undertaking at this time. The Cambodia problem would be dealt with at Geneva and we had already raised the food need with our EEC partners.

There was an extraordinary outburst from Mr. Enoch Powell, who asked what moral, political, historical, or ethical grounds there were for the admission of large numbers of persons from Indo China, a country with which we had no historical connections. There was widespread condemnation from both sides of the House, and the Lord Privy Seal said that Mr. Powell was ignoring the appalling tragedy which was now taking place in South East Asia. He said that we were all part of the human race. Sir Paul Bryan, Mr. Grimond, Mr. Ennals, Hugh Fraser, Peter Bottomley, Jack Ashley and Michael Latham all supported the Government's decision. Ronald Bell, however, said that every immigration episode in the past had been justified at the time on the grounds of hardship. He thought there was a real danger of self-indulgence in matters of this kind and that we all needed to be thinking in terms of no more major immigration initiatives. The Lord Privy Seal said that he disagreed, and that it was possible to be self-indulgent in an inhumanitarian way.

Mr. Frank Allaun (who has a Parliamentary Question down for you tomorrow) aroused the anger of the House by asking what the Conservative Party attitude had been when the American Government was bombing Vietnam and suggesting that we should be

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giving relief to the political prisoners in Latin America who were being tortured at the present time. The Lord Privy Seal accused Mr. Allaun of having double standards. He said that the Vietnamese Government had a callous and calculated policy to expel one million people merely because they were of Chinese stock and Mr. Allaun was demeaning himself.

The balance of opinion in the House was clearly with the Lord Privy Seal and what he said, but there were some notes of reservation from the Government side. There was, however, almost total opposition to Mr. Powell and Mr. Allaun.

*Copied to,
Nat. Health: Report of
the Royal Commission
on the Nat. Health Service*

Royal Commission on the National Health Service

Mr. Jenkin's Statement (Flag B) was received quietly. The main pressure from the Labour side was on the issues of insurance financing of the Health Service, pay beds and private medicine, prescription charges and current financing of the Health Service.

Mr. Jenkin said that the Government did not necessarily share the view of the Royal Commission that 100% financing of the Health Service from taxation was necessarily the right answer. He said that we needed to examine alternatives which would give greater autonomy and greater patient choice. On pay beds he referred back several times to the consultative letter issued in June. On prescription charges and financing more generally, he said that he had been faced with a choice between raising charges and cutting services. He has chosen to maintain the level of services by raising charges. There was no dodging these alternatives.

He said that the main thrust of the report on the structure of the Health Service had support on all sides of the house. It meant ensuring that decisions were taken at the lowest possible

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level, eliminating a tier of the management structure and distinguishing properly between strategy and operational management. He emphasised that the Government did not envisage "big bang" changes but would bring them about gradually in line with the Royal Commission's recommendations.

A number of more detailed points were raised, but Mr. Jenkin dealt with them all effectively, with no hostages to fortune.

We will ensure that you will get some briefing for tomorrow's Questions on the main issues, but the only ones which are arousing real concern on the basis of this afternoon's discussion are likely to be private medicine and the present financial situation in the Health Service.

MS

18 July 1979

Published Papers

The following published paper(s) enclosed on this file have been removed and destroyed. Copies may be found elsewhere in The National Archives.

House of Commons Hansard, 18 July 1979, columns 1779-1789
"Vietnamese Refugees"

Signed Wayland Date 11 August 2011

PREM Records Team

STATEMENT ON INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES TO BE
MADE BY THE RIGHT HON SIR IAN GILMOUR,
LORD PRIVY SEAL, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
ON WEDNESDAY 18 JULY 1979

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement which has been made by my right hon and noble Friend in another place on the Indo-China refugee problem. Honourable Members will be aware of the deep concern with which the Government have viewed the rapid deterioration of the refugee situation in South-East Asia over recent weeks. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr Waldheim, has now convened a special international meeting in Geneva on the 20th and 21st of July to deal with the problem. The Government welcome this move, which was originally proposed by my Right Hon Friend the Prime Minister.

There can be no doubt that it is the callous and inhuman policies of the Vietnamese Government which are the root cause of the problem and it is imperative that the Vietnamese Government change those policies. Meanwhile, the burden which the flood of refugees is imposing on others in the region can be relieved only by a major and genuinely international effort.

The Government have given very careful consideration to the extent of the humanitarian problems, and in particular to the appalling burden which is being placed on the

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resources of the Government of Hong Kong. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has asked us to accept a further 10,000 refugees from Indo-China for settlement here. We have agreed. Because of our direct concern for the situation in Hong Kong, these extra refugees will be taken, over a period to be agreed with the Governor, from Hong Kong where there are already over 66,000 awaiting resettlement. My Right Hon Friend the Home Secretary is getting in touch with the voluntary agencies who have played such a commendable role in helping with the resettlement of the refugees who have already arrived in the United Kingdom. I would like to take this opportunity of recording again the Government's gratitude to the voluntary agencies for the splendid work which they are doing in this field.

The Government also propose, subject to Parliamentary approval, to make a further £5 million available from the overseas aid programme for dealing with the refugee problem in South-East Asia over the next 12 months.

My right hon and noble Friend will himself attend the opening session of the Secretary-General's meeting in Geneva on the 20th of July. I can assure honourable Members that we shall play a full and constructive role in Geneva.

*Copied to. Nat. Health; Report
of the Royal Commission
on the Nat. Health.*

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES
(THE RT HON PATRICK JENKIN MP) ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE
REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL HEALTH
SERVICE - WEDNESDAY 13 JULY

With permission Mr Speaker I should like to make a statement
on the Report of the Royal Commission on the National Health
Service.

The Royal Commission, set up by the right honourable,
Gentleman the Member for Huyton in 1975 have presented their
Report to my right honourable Friend the Prime Minister.

It has been published today. Copies of the full report, are
available in the Vote Office.

The Government are grateful to the Chairman,
Sir Alec Merrison, and the other members for the time and
trouble they have devoted to this important task.

The Commission's Report is long and detailed. It merits
careful study. Today I can make no more than a preliminary
reference to a few of the issues with which it deals.

The Commission recommend that the administration of the Health Service should be simplified by eliminating, in most cases, one tier of management; and they recognise that management decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level.

A number of the Commission's recommendations will be costly as they themselves recognise. They state, and I quote, "it would be unrealistic to suppose that the fortunes of the NHS can be insulated from those of the nation".

On the question of private practice, the Commission see no objection to a significant expansion of the private sector, providing that the interests of the NHS are adequately safeguarded. Nor do they consider the presence or absence of pay beds in NHS hospitals to be significant at present from the point of view of the efficient functioning of the Health Service. It is, of course, the Government's policy to welcome the contribution that independent medicine can make to the health care of the nation, and we published our proposals in a consultative letter last month.

I would like to tell the House how we propose to handle the Report. This Report has been made to the Government, and it is now up to the Government to respond with our own proposals. On the major issues of structure and management we shall put forward proposals in a document in the Autumn, and will invite early comments on that document from the interests affected. Subject to this consultation, it is our view that early progress is essential to simplify the structure of the Health Service and to devolve management authority to the lowest effective level.

A number of the Commission's more detailed recommendations will be studied by the Health Departments through the ordinary machinery.

Finally, Mr Speaker, this Statement deals with general matters relating to the United Kingdom. My Right Honourable Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be making separate arrangements for dealing with those recommendations which relate to their separate interests.