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Canada speaks out at United Nations refugee conference

Representatives of 72 nations attended a two-day conference on Indochinese refugees opened by Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim in Geneva, July 20.

Countries attending the conference included those directly involved, member nations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and those countries indicating a desire to assist in finding a practical solution to the problem of Indochinese refugees.

At the meeting, Secretary of State for External Affairs Flora MacDonald gave a speech in which she urged other nations not to disregard the political aspects of the refugee question. The following is the text of the Minister's speech given July 20:

We are convened by tragedy. Though Canada welcomes this conference, indeed urged that it be held, we deplore the circumstances that have made it necessary.

I need not describe the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees from Southeast Asia who are suffering — even dying — at the very moment that we meet. Those facts are well known to everyone here. They are well known to the Canadian people as well, and Canadians have responded.

My country...has a tradition of welcoming refugees to its shores. Since World War II Canada has resettled more than 350,000 refugees from various parts

of the world — a significant number for a country with our size of population.

And Canadians continue to respond to the call of people in distress, specifically in regard to the Indochinese. From 1975 to the end of 1978, 9,000 refugees from that area came to Canada. Last December the Canadian Government announced that it would resettle 5,000 Indochinese in 1979. Recognizing the growing seriousness of the situation we increased that figure to 12,000 in June. At the Tokyo Summit my Prime Minister confirmed that we are prepared to do even more.

...My government recognizes that countries of first asylum must be encouraged



The first picture taken by a Western reporter of the refugee camp in Ubon near the Cambodian border. The camp houses Laotians, Vietnamese and Cambodians.

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One-hundred-and-sixteen years ago today... Angus McAskill, the famous Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, giant died; he was 7 feet 9 inches and weighed more than 400 pounds.

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