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Voluntary groups join in shaping federal refugee program

Canada's refugee efforts are concentrated on offering permanent resettlement to significant numbers of displaced persons, Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy told delegates to the Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees held in Toronto, June 6. Excerpts from his address, which outlined the role of voluntary groups in the federal refugee program, follow:

...Canada's role as a country of permanent resettlement flows from its active interest in foreign affairs, its size, its history as a pluralistic society populated mainly by immigrants and their descendants, and, consequently, its positive attitude towards immigration. Despite the rewards and benefits which have come to Canada through its role as a country of permanent resettlement, refugee acceptance was, until recently, carried out in rather an *ad hoc* way — a series of responses to specific global crises.

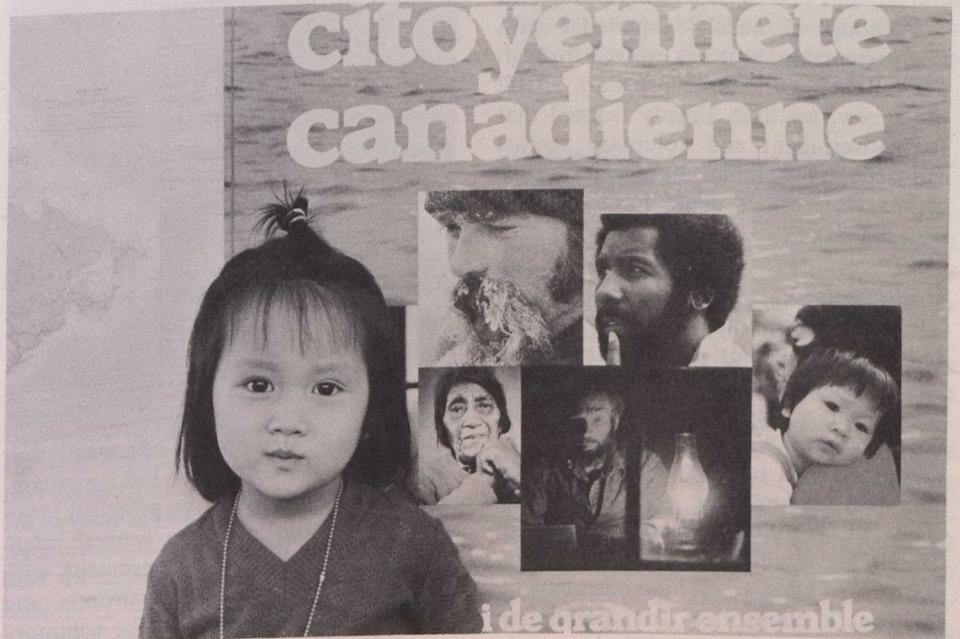
Since the end of the Second World War, Canada has welcomed about 350,000 refugees. [Canada's] immediate postwar efforts were focused on the displaced persons of Europe, and then on those fleeing Hungary during the mid-Fifties and Czechoslovakia in the late Sixties. Since

then, our scope has broadened to include Uganda and Chile, and now Indochina.

Immigration legislation

With the enactment of the current Immigration Act in 1978, Canada's international obligations towards refugees, and its traditional compassion for the displaced and persecuted, became enshrined in immigration policy. The legislation contains a number of innovations which have improved [Canada's] ability to help refugees....

First, refugees are now a separate immigrant class and are not subject to the same selection criteria as other immigrants. Second, the act provides for the private sponsorship of refugees in addition to those who are resettled by the Federal Government. And finally, the



A young Indochinese girl stands in front of a poster on Canadian citizenship.

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One-hundred-and-thirteen years ago this week...
The British North America Act came into effect uniting the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in the Dominion of Canada. Upper and Lower Canada became the provinces of Ontario and Quebec respectively. Viscount Munk became the first Governor General and Sir John A. MacDonal, the first Prime Minister.