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HEARING
BEFORE
SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 1
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETIETH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
ON
H.R. 14806, H.R. 14807, and H.R. 14808
AND SIMILAR BILLS
FOR THE RELIEF OF VICTIMS OF THE EARTHQUAKE
IN SICILY

FEBRUARY 21, 1968

Serial No. 12

Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1968

★ 90-572

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION



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REFUGEES FROM SICILY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1968

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 1 OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m., pursuant to call, in room 2141, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Michael A. Feighan (chairman) presiding.

Present: Representatives Feighan, Rodino, Donohue, Cahill, and MacGregor.

Staff members present: Garner J. Cline, counsel, and Donald G. Benn, associate counsel.

Mr. FEIGHAN. The subcommittee will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to receive testimony on pending legislation to permit the immediate admission into the United States of victims of the recent earthquake disaster in Sicily.

On January 12, 1968, the island of Sicily was rent with an earthquake which uprooted the lives of more than 40,000 individuals, destroying homes, towns, and even the land itself.

Our Government joined with others in airlifting medicine, food, and other supplies to provide for their immediate needs. Many organizations, the voluntary agencies and private individuals also moved quickly to the aid of those uprooted. However, many of these unfortunate people are not just without their homes, possessions, and means of livelihood; many are even without the prospects of local resettlement or rehabilitation because of the widespread scope of the calamity, and must look elsewhere for the opportunity to rebuild their shattered lives.

The United States has long had a tradition of offering a haven to the distressed and suffering, to the victims and refugees from disaster or tyranny, and this is certainly no exception. Ample precedent is found in Public Law 85-892 which provided for the victims of the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions which plagued the Azores in 1957 and 1958.

Over a period of 6 months, successive earthquakes and volcanic eruptions destroyed the land, many homes, roads and buildings, often just after they had been repaired. Under this legislation more than 4,800 of these victims came to a new life in this country, many to join friends and relatives, already longtime residents and citizens here.

In the light of the great suffering and hardship caused to the people in Sicily, I introduced legislation to enable 5,000 of these homeless unfortunates to be brought into this country with a minimum of delay. To date more than 53 of my colleagues in the House have also

joined in voicing their concern through the introduction of subsequent bills to provide for their relief. Of these separate bills, there are three major proposals.

H.R. 14806, introduced by myself would issue any time prior to July 1, 1969, up to 5,000 special immigration visas, exempt from any numerical limitations, to natives and citizens of Italy and their accompanying spouses and children, who have been uprooted by the catastrophe in Sicily and unable to return to their usual place of abode, and who are presently beneficiaries of approved preference petitions for the first through sixth preferences.

H.R. 14807, introduced by the distinguished chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. Celler, would issue up to 1,000 special immigrant visas, also exempt from numerical limitations, to natives of Italy uprooted by the earthquake and unable to return to their usual place of residence and in urgent need of the essentials of life. Such aliens would be exempt from paying any visa fees, and their spouses and children, whether accompanying or following to join, would be issued visas without regard to this 1,000 limitation.

H.R. 14808, introduced by my able colleague and ranking member of this subcommittee, Mr. Rodino, is similar to H.R. 14807 except that it would provide up to 2,000 visas to the principal aliens.

The three bills will be inserted in the record at this point.

[H.R. 14806, 90th Cong., second sess.]

A BILL For the relief of refugees from Sicily, Italy, and for other purposes

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there are hereby authorized to be issued, prior to July 1, 1969, five thousand special immigrant visas to natives and citizens of Italy and their accompanying spouses and children, who have been uprooted by the catastrophic natural calamity in Sicily and are unable to return to their usual place of abode, and who are eligible for immigrant visas under section 203(a) (1) through (6) of the Immigration and Nationality Act in all respects except for the numerical limitations contained in sections 201 and 202 of that Act.

[H.R. 14807, 90th Cong., second sess.]

A BILL For the relief of certain distressed aliens

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, there are hereby authorized to be issued one thousand special immigrant visas to aliens specified in section 2 of this Act seeking to enter the United States as immigrants. The spouse and children of any such alien, if accompanying or following to join, may be issued special immigrant visas notwithstanding such numerical limitation.

SEC. 2. Visas authorized to be issued under section 1 of this Act shall be issued only to natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968, and are unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life.

SEC. 3. Visas authorized to be issued under this Act may be issued by consular officers as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act in accordance with the provisions of section 221 of that Act: *Provided*, That each such alien is found to be eligible to be issued an immigrant visa and to be admitted to the United States under the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act: *Provided further*, That a visa is not immediately available to such alien at the time of his application for a visa.

SEC. 4. Aliens receiving visas under section 1 of this Act shall be exempt from paying the fees prescribed in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 281 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

SEC. 5. Excerpt as otherwise specifically provided in this Act, the definitions contained in section 101 (a) and (b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act shall apply in the administration of this Act.

[H.R. 14808, 90th Cong., second sess.]

A BILL For the relief of certain distressed aliens

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, there are hereby authorized to be issued two thousand special immigrant visas to aliens specified in section 2 of this Act seeking to enter the United States as immigrants. The spouse and children of any such alien, if accompanying or following to join, may be issued special immigrant visas notwithstanding such numerical limitation.

SEC. 2. Visas authorized to be issued under section 1 of this Act shall be issued only to natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968, and are unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life.

SEC. 3. Visas authorized to be issued under this Act may be issued by consular officers as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act in accordance with the provisions of section 221 of that Act: *Provided*, That each such alien is found to be eligible to be issued an immigrant visa and to be admitted to the United States under the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act: *Provided further*, That a visa is not immediately available to such alien at the time of his application for a visa.

SEC. 4. Aliens receiving visas under section 1 of this Act shall be exempt from paying the fees prescribed in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 281 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

SEC. 5. Except as otherwise specifically provided in this Act, the definitions contained in section 101 (a) and (b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act shall apply in the administration of this Act.

The following similar bills have been introduced for the relief of the refugees from Sicily:

H.R. 14854, by Mr. Rooney of New York; H.R. 14855, by Mr. Addabbo; H.R. 14856, by Mr. Annunzio; H.R. 14857, by Mr. Brasco; H.R. 14858, by Mr. Daddario; H.R. 14859, by Mr. Daniels; H.R. 14860, by Mr. Dent; H.R. 14861, by Mrs. Kelly; H.R. 14862, by Mr. Minish; H.R. 14863, by Mr. St Germain; H.R. 14864, by Mr. Tenzer; H.R. 14865, by Mr. Tiernan; H.R. 14884, by Mr. Fino; H.R. 14885, by Mr. Garmatz; H.R. 14886, by Mr. Giaimo; H.R. 14887, by Mr. Joelson; H.R. 14893, by Mr. Rooney of Pennsylvania; H.R. 14899, by Mr. Waggonner; H.R. 14929, by Mr. Farbstein; H.R. 14943, by Mr. Barrett; H.R. 14944, by Mr. Byrne of Pennsylvania; H.R. 14945, by Mr. Corman; H.R. 14947, by Mr. Gallagher; H.R. 14948, by Mr. Howard; H.R. 14949, by Mr. Leggett; H.R. 14950, by Mr. O'Hara of Illinois; H.R. 14951, by Mr. Pucinski; H.R. 14952, by Mr. Schweiker; H.R. 14956, by Mr. Burton of California; H.R. 14958, by Mr. Delaney; H.R. 14967, by Mr. Ronan; H.R. 14968, by Mr. Wolff; H.R. 14970, by Mr. Helstoski; H.R. 14986, by Mr. Ashley; H.R. 15026, by Mr. Eilber; H.R. 15028, by Mr. Gilbert; H.R. 15036, by Mr. Shipley; H.R. 15039, by Mr. Carey; H.R. 15048, by Mr. Murphy of Illinois; H.R. 15050, by Mr. Ottinger; H.R. 15085, by Mr. Miller of California; H.R. 15095, by Mr. Vanik; H.R. 15143, by Mr. Macdonald of Massachusetts; H.R. 15192, by Mr. Philbin; H.R. 15207, by Mr. Halpern; H.R. 15261, by Mr. Wylder; H.R. 15265, by Mr. Ryan; H.R. 15303, by Mr. Donohue; H.R. 15327, by Mr. Bates; H.R. 15342, by Mr. Nedzi; H.R. 15363, by Mr. O'Neill of Massachusetts; H.R. 15423, by Mr. Dow; H.R. 15428, by Mr. Fulton of Pennsylvania; H.R. 15434, by Mr. Meskill; H.R. 15444, by Mr. Bingham; H.R. 15452, by Mr. Resnick; H.R. 15547, by Mr. Irwin; H.R. 15713, by Mr. Ruppe, and H.R. 15754, by Mr. Podell.

The purpose of the public hearing today is to hear the views of the immediately concerned department of the Government who will administer such legislation, and from those outstanding people who have personal knowledge of the situation in Sicily.

We are privileged to have as our first witness one of our Nation's greatest gentlemen who has devoted almost a lifetime to the cause of giving assistance to his fellow man, particularly to the downtrodden

and oppressed of all nations. He has toiled for almost half a century in the Halls of Congress, the dean of the House of Representatives, our esteemed and distinguished colleague, Hon. Emanuel Celler.

Mr. CELLER. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Rodino.

Mr. RODINO. May I make a preliminary remark before we hear from the chairman of the committee, and I shall not take any time because I know this is a subject that we are all concerned with. It is something that I am certain will receive the support of all the people who are motivated by humane instincts.

I merely want to say I commend the chairman of this subcommittee and the chairman of our Judiciary Committee and all of the others who have moved so quickly in the direction of introducing this kind of legislation. I, myself, have introduced legislation to provide, as the chairman has pointed out, for 2,000 special immigrants, but I have no pride of authorship.

I am concerned with getting this legislation through the House and I am sure both the chairman of the subcommittee and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the other eloquent spokesmen will make a case for the immediate adoption of this legislation.

I ask that my remarks be incorporated in the record.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Without objection it is so ordered.

STATEMENT OF HON. EMANUEL CELLER, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. CELLER. I want to thank you both for the complimentary remarks you made concerning me, but I want to say that both of you have given unremittingly to the oppressed and the displaced over the years, and you have initiated further legislation to give relief to these unfortunate earthquake victims. It is a source of great comfort to me to serve with distinguished members like both of you.

I welcome indeed this opportunity to appear today in support of the legislation now under consideration to extend a hand of refuge to those victims of the tragic earthquakes which have recently taken place in Sicily. I have been advised that approximately 60,000 persons have been affected, 40,000 made homeless, thousands have been deprived, not only of their homes, but of their sources of livelihood.

In the quake-stricken areas removal of debris for the recovery of the dead continues. We know that 235 persons have been killed and there is every indication that the death figure will rise as the police, the Red Cross, and members of the voluntary agencies incessantly search through the rubble of destroyed towns and villages.

The extent of this tragedy is not limited to the number of persons killed or the number of homes destroyed. There are the orphaned children, 57 that we now know of, the destroyed factories, which have left some 15,000 unemployed and the cost of the damage which exceeds \$400 million.

The Government of Italy, by decree, has made \$100 million available for aid in the areas damaged by the quakes. The homeless are being cared for in hotels, pensiones, tent camps, hastily erected aluminum huts, and in public buildings.

Vaccines, medicines, and blankets have been made available through the American Red Cross working in conjunction with the Italian Red Cross. But what about tomorrow and the day after? By and large

these people lived off of the land. They were farmers, they tended livestock, and eked out a living on land impoverished by centuries of use.

Now, their source of livelihood has been denied them. Their crops have been destroyed, their irrigation systems destroyed, and their livestock killed. What does the future hold for these unfortunates?

It will take years to refurbish and rebuild the damaged areas. The Italian Government cannot absorb these people through resettlement. Italy is a country with a surplus population and Italy must, and I use the word must, export tens of thousands of people through the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, and other international organizations to the New World, principally to Latin America.

Some governments, such as Switzerland and Germany, have made arrangements for earthquake victims in Sicily to join their husbands who have been temporarily employed in northern Europe. Generous as these arrangements may be, they are temporary and only provide for the admission of families for limited periods.

On January 24, 1968, I introduced H.R. 14807 which is more or less a counterpart to bills offered by the chairman, by Mr. Rodino, and many other well-thinking members, not only of the subcommittee but members of the full Judiciary Committee and Members of the House. My bill happens to authorize 1,000 special immigrant visas to be issued to these victims of the earthquakes in Sicily.

Based upon available figures, this would mean that approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people would be given the opportunity to come to the United States outside of present numerical limitations. So that when the figure 1,000 is used it does not necessarily limit the number of individuals that can come to 1,000 because the spouse and the children accompanying or following to join may likewise come in under special visas, which was the practice that we indulged in on other occasions of a similar nature. This is a minimal request for assistance to these afflicted people.

Another proposal before this committee provides that the earthquake victims must establish that they are entitled to a preference.

However, since refugee legislation is an act of mercy, succor and rescue, it seems to me that the real objective is to offer refuge to victims of the earthquake whether or not they have relatives in this country or have skills which would provide them with a preference. My desire is to offer resettlement opportunity to the distressed and the homeless. If these people are beneficiaries of preference petitions, well and good, but the matter of selection for visa issuance should be delegated to the executive branch as we did in the special legislation—the Act of September 2, 1958, for the relief of distressed persons in the Azores Islands.

The United States has a long and cherished history of helping displaced persons and refugees. We have opened our doors to victims of volcanic eruptions in the Azores. We have recognized the need for resettlement of the Dutch expellees from Indonesia. We have passed numerous displaced persons acts and under those acts we admitted 352,000 of those who were displaced and who had been theretofore tossed about like dried leaves before the chilly autumn blasts, and under the Refugee Relief Act we admitted 189,000 persons fleeing communism

or the fear of communism, and under the Azores and Indonesia Resolutions we admitted 22,000. So no precedent is being established in the passage of any relief of this sort. It is following precedent, and I think our great Nation can very easily absorb 4,000 or 5,000 refugees that would come from Italy under the circumstances that I related.

The Italian immigrant has contributed greatly to the welfare of our land and has added to its gross national product. They have been orderly, they have been lawful, and wherever they are they have been citizens that we can well be proud of. I do hope that a bill will issue out of this committee. I am not particularly interested in my bill being adopted. I think the chairman's bill is a good bill. However, Mr. Chairman, I hope the subcommittee will strike out the limitation that they must have preferences.

If you do not do that you are going to reduce, materially, the numbers who can come in. I think it should be a straightforward relief bill which was the type of bill we passed heretofore.

With those remarks I want to thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I certainly agree with you, that it would be preferable to bring those to this country who are most affected by the ill-fated earthquake. The only reason that I made a provision to accept those who have already been approved was that we could get speedy action.

Mr. CELLER. I well appreciate that, and we have to, sometimes, compromise and trim edges in order to get a bill through. But I think under the circumstances you should not have too much trouble getting this bill through.

I think, as far as the full committee is concerned, most of our members are humanitarians and I am sure I can say the same thing for the subcommittee, where this will have to be approved in the first instance. I can say the same thing for them.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Celler, for your very excellent presentation which reflects the usual thoroughness with which you face any issue.

Mr. RODINO. Just one question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Celler, neither your bill nor my bill provide for a termination date. Would you have any idea or suggestion as to a reasonable termination date?

Mr. CELLER. In the Azores case, I believe there was a termination date and the date was extended later on. I do not see any objection for termination, of course. It might be well to include it but let it be long enough to be sure to get the victims within the number that we indicate.

Mr. RODINO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

STATEMENT OF HON. PETER W. RODINO, JR.

Mr. RODINO. Since January 14, 1968, western Sicily has experienced 110 earthquake tremors. One month has passed since the severe earthquake razed Gibellina and Salaparuta in the province of Trapani, and Montevago in the province of Agriginto, and destroyed 60 percent of Santa Margherita Belice, 50 percent of Santa Ninfa, and 30 percent of Saleni.

Hundreds of injured are in hospitals. Over 40,000 are homeless and the searchers trace paths through the debris in search of the dead. Emergency camps, such as the one in Montevago, are hosting thou-

sands of people, and the number is continuously rising because many homeless people who have found temporary shelter in neighboring areas are returning with the hope of recovering what may be left of their possessions among the ruins.

The Italian Government has worked feverishly to erect temporary shelters, and, as with people in stressing need, the earthquake victims soon improvised barracks which offer them some shelter.

Many villages are still deserted because the people are afraid to sleep in their unstable or damaged homes, some with deep fissures in the supporting walls. The people are not at ease and have not yet recovered their confidence. The despair of these displaced people is great and the land which has challenged their very existence has now been ravaged by nature. The earthquake victims in Sicily urgently need to be resettled.

The victims have buried their dead; they have nursed their wounded, and the orphans have been placed in friendly hands. Now the victims' greatest worry is about the future: their work; their ability to meet the exhausting demands in rebuilding their homes, their factories, and readying their lands for future production.

These very serious and complex problems are on the road to being solved through the resumption of economic and social activity.

However, no matter how much financial assistance is made available to the towns of western Sicily, the only real solution to the plight of the inhabitants there is resettlement. Years will necessarily pass before that area recognizes any sort of rehabilitation. In the meantime, the needs of the people are compounded.

Mr. Chairman, on January 18, 1968, I hastened to introduce legislation to authorize the issuance of special immigrant visas to the victims of the catastrophic earthquakes. The distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, Mr. Celler, as well as you, Mr. Chairman, have introduced similar bills. In fact, more than 50 Members have recognized the need for this type of special legislation and have also introduced bills.

My bill, H.R. 14808, is generous since I have, in my bill, authorized 2,000 special immigrant visas while providing that the spouses and children can accompany or follow to join without numerical limitation. I feel that this number will result in the admission of between 8,000 and 10,000 persons, which will do much to alleviate the burden on the stricken country. This is a fair but not unreasonable offer of assistance.

I specifically provide in my bill that the special refugees are exempt from the usual visa fees, that their dependents may either accompany or follow to join, and that there will be flexibility in administration so that the true intent, relief to the distressed refugees, can be carried out.

I feel that the provisions of H.R. 14808 offer the best legislative approach; however, this does not preclude my support for other worthy provisions so long as we can expeditiously agree to approve legislation for the aid of the earthquake victims.

I stress the urgency for action and trust that my colleagues on the subcommittee will agree to approve legislation for the aid of the earthquake victims.

Mr. FEIGHAN. We are very happy to have with us as our next witness the very able distinguished Acting Administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs of the Department of State, Miss Barbara Watson. It is my understanding, Miss Watson, that you are

accompanied by Mr. Frederick Smith, Jr., Assistant Legal Adviser, Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, Mr. Eugene Krizek, Special Assistant, Office for Congressional Relations, Mr. George Owen, Director, Visa Office, and Mr. John Ordway, formerly principal officer in the Consular Office in Palermo, Italy.

On behalf of the subcommittee I welcome you here and look forward to hearing from you.

**STATEMENT OF MISS BARBARA WATSON, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR,
BUREAU OF SECURITY AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT
OF STATE**

MISS WATSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to have this opportunity to appear before you and the members of your subcommittee to discuss proposed immigration legislation—specifically H.R. 14806, H.R. 14807, and H.R. 14808—which would make special provision for admission to the United States of victims of the recent earthquake in Sicily.

Our Government has, of course, been deeply concerned over this catastrophe and over the loss of life, the human suffering, and the property damage caused by the disaster.

Shortly after the earthquake struck, President Johnson sent a message of condolence to President Saragat of Italy, and, in response to a request for assistance from the Italian Government, our Government began contributing a wide variety of relief goods and services.

This assistance, some of which reached Sicily by airlift on January 16, included a U.S. Army medical team, food, tents, field kitchens, communications equipment, and trucks.

The cost of this assistance was covered by an allocation of \$210,000 from the Agency for International Development.

Turning now to the immigration proposals presently before the subcommittee, I should like to reiterate the view expressed in the Department of State's written report to Chairman Celler. We believe that it would be an appropriate demonstration of sympathy in keeping with the American humanitarian tradition of offering haven to distressed victims of oppression or disaster to admit—as these bills would—several thousand Italian nationals who have been made homeless by the earthquakes in Sicily. Accordingly, we support the objectives of the proposed legislation.

The subcommittee is, I know, most interested in hearing a direct report on the specific circumstances of the catastrophe and the conditions in the disaster area. For that purpose, I am fortunate to have accompanying me today Mr. John Ordway, who was the U.S. Government's principal officer in Sicily at the time of the earthquake, serving then as Consul General in Palermo.

Mr. Ordway toured the disaster area shortly after the quake and will be able to answer questions based on his observations.

There are, in addition, many technical questions involved in the implementation of legislation of the kind which the subcommittee is now considering. Mr. George Owen, Director of the Visa Office, is here with me today to respond to your questions in this area.

But before I surrender the floor to these gentlemen, I should like to make three observations with regard to the specific bills which are before you.

First, we noted in our response to Chairman Celler that there is presently a very substantial backlog of intending immigrants from Italy. These are individuals who have qualified as beneficiaries of petitions filed in their behalf by U.S. citizens or employers.

They are unable to come to the United States because of the limitations imposed by law on immigration from any single country in the Eastern Hemisphere. In the allocation of special immigrant visas to victims of the Sicilian earthquake, it would be logical and fair to accord preference to those who have, prior to this disaster, demonstrated a desire to immigrate to the United States and who already have an established tie with this country.

Accordingly, we suggest that preference be given to beneficiaries of approved preference petitions. We have been told that the Italian Government would prefer such a provision.

My second point is that while we believe preference should be given to beneficiaries of approved petitions, we do not think it would be appropriate to limit the relief afforded by the legislation to this category.

In other words, if numbers remain after victims of the earthquake who are also presently registered in Palermo for immigration are given their special immigrant visas, such numbers should be distributed to other victims, even if they are not beneficiaries of approved petitions.

We cannot tell, at this time, how many numbers would be available to earthquake victims who are not beneficiaries of approved petitions. There are already on file at our Consulate General at Palermo a large number of approved petitions, the beneficiaries of which may qualify under these bills.

Finally, I should note that we have been advised by our Embassy in Rome that if the statutory standard for qualifying immigrants is not merely that they be "unable to return to their usual place of residence" or "abode," but also that they be "in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life," it is possible that no one would qualify.

We therefore recommend that this language be omitted from any bill which the subcommittee may report.

With these few suggestions, we are in complete accord with the purposes and content of the legislation being considered by the subcommittee.

Thank you.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you very much, Miss Watson.

Personally I think the point is well made that in the event that the bill does provide for persons with approved preferences and the number is not reached by them, others should be given the advantage of visas.

I would like to ask a few questions. You have very able associates and you might wish to refer one of the questions to either of the distinguished gentlemen who accompany you.

What is the best estimate in the number of people affected by the earthquake?

Miss WATSON. According to our latest report from Rome there were, I believe, something like 42,000 homeless persons, 260 bodies which have been recovered, 500 persons injured, and monetary damage between \$400 and \$500 million. The figure of 11,000 homes destroyed is the basis on which the Government of Italy is presently operating.

Similarly, the current estimate is 42,000 persons are homeless. In other words they cannot return to their homes because they have been destroyed or condemned. There is a suggestion that possibly this may rise to around 55,000.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Fifty-five thousand. Do you mean those who would need resettlement and could not be taken care of in that area where the earthquake took place?

Miss WATSON. I do not know—they certainly are deemed homeless now. They would need homes, whether it would be in this country or other parts of Italy.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Could you tell me what provisions have been made for resettlement of the earthquake victims in other parts of Italy?

Miss WATSON. As I understand it, sir, from the report of the Italian Government, it has been arranged for many of them to visit with other relatives and friends in other parts of Europe. They have also established three phases of helping the homeless. Phase one is aimed at immediately providing tents and temporary housing and putting them in more established areas.

Then the second phase would be the erection of prefabricated housing. That is to be completed by the end of March prior to the onset of inclement weather. And the final phase is permanent housing. This is what we are given to understand. This is what the Italian Government is undertaking at the moment.

Mr. FEIGHAN. How many of the earthquake victims are presently beneficiaries of approved petitions?

Miss WATSON. This we do not have a firm figure on as yet. We have requested this information from our Embassy in Rome. We have no firm figure. Might I inquire: Are you trying to ascertain those who are homeless and who are also at the same time beneficiaries of approved petitions?

If so, this is a figure we have not gotten a firm estimate on as yet. We do know the last estimates that had been given us and I think possibly Mr. Owen could tell us something additional. I have been given to understand it is approximately 2,000 persons who are both earthquake victims and beneficiaries of approved petitions.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Do you have an idea about how many persons would qualify in the terms of the three bills; that is, under the provisions of the bill which I introduced, there is a maximum of 5,000, while Mr. Celler's bill and Mr. Rodino's bill have no maximum specified. Would you have an idea how many total might qualify in each of those two bills?

Miss WATSON. It would be rather difficult for us to give a firm estimate without getting more firm information from our post in Palermo.

But, from information presently available it would appear that under the chairman's bill about 2,000 persons could qualify as both "uprooted and unable to return to their usual place of abode" and beneficiaries of approved preference petitions.

Under Congressman Rodino's bill, 2,000 principal aliens would enter as "uprooted" with approximately 6,000 wives and children accompanying or following to join them. These would not have to be beneficiaries of approved petitions.

Under Chairman Celler's bill, 1,000 principal aliens would qualify with about 3,000 wives and children accompanying or following to

join. These, too, would not have to be beneficiaries of approved petitions.

Let me give you the estimates with respect to backlogs in Italy. In Palermo there are 28,409 beneficiaries of approved petitions most of whom come under the fifth preference.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I am talking particularly about the residents of Sicily.

Miss WATSON. Yes, Mr. Chairman. All of those registered in Sicily would be registered in Palermo.

Mr. FEIGHAN. How many thousands did you say?

Miss WATSON. 28,409 people in all of Sicily are beneficiaries of approved petitions.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Would that include families?

Miss WATSON. That would include families. This is not limited to heads of families.

Mr. FEIGHAN. With reference to the need for resettlement, do you have any ideas as to what the condition of the land is, whether homes could be built or other arrangements made for resettlement? In other words, I take it there is an immediate need for resettlement and I wondered what the situation was over there.

Miss WATSON. May I refer that question to Mr. Ordway?

Mr. ORDWAY. Mr. Chairman, I think at the present time everyone is taken care of under temporary provisions, under tents or in temporary housing, other buildings, railroad cars, and things of that kind. So at the present time everyone is taken care of on a temporary basis. Was this the point you are interested in, sir?

Mr. FEIGHAN. Yes. How long in the future do you estimate it will take to make provision for resettlement in other than temporary habitation?

Mr. ORDWAY. The regional government in Sicily has a plan, under which it is to work out with the National Government of Italy a three-step plan for the future of this area. The first step is to get all the victims under shelter in the emergency. That has been done. The second step is to provide for prefabricated housing to give them better housing than the tents and provisional shelter.

This is going forward and they hope to get these prefabs set up to take care of all the people by about the end of March, which may be a little optimistic. Then they have a third step for permanent housing to rehabilitate the whole area. On this no firm date has been set. It will take more time.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I notice, Miss Watson, that the legislation for the victims of the Azores disaster applied to "nationals or citizens." H.R. 14806 applies to "natives and citizens," while H.R. 14807 and H.R. 14808 apply only to "natives." Is there any significant preference for either language and would there be any administrative difficulties with respect to spouses or children accompanying or following the principals or the parties?

Mr. OWEN. Under H.R. 14806 the spouses and children would themselves be entitled to the special immigrant visas which the bill authorizes. Under H.R. 14807 and H.R. 14808 they would not take one of the numbers that the bill provides for as the limit, but there would be no difficulties since the bill itself provides that they would also be entitled to these special immigrant visas without regard to the total number of spouses and children.

That would be the only difference. If you came up to the point where you are using up all the numbers, on the one version you might have to leave some spouses and children behind, but under the other you could bring them in.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Do you feel there should be a more precise definition of the calamity with a termination date included, and if so, what termination date do you feel would be reasonable and most constructive?

Mr. OWEN. Is that a termination date for the bill; that is, a provision that the issuance of visas would no longer be possible after a certain date?

Mr. FEIGHAN. Yes.

Mr. OWEN. I believe that if the bill provides for a certain number of visas, if it provides, in other words, a numerical limitation on the visas that would be issued to these persons who qualify, there may not be a need for a termination in time. The speed with which qualified applicants could be processed would also depend on the workload and staff available at the Consulate General at Palermo.

Mr. FEIGHAN. If there is not a termination in time you could still be issuing visas 6 years from now.

Mr. OWEN. Well, there might be persons who would apply for consideration under the bill several years after they have probably been rehabilitated. However, since the bill provides that they will have to be uprooted and unable to return to their place of abode, it appears to me that this would be a situation that would terminate by lapse of time.

If a termination date were provided, I would not be able to make a suggestion as to how long the bill should be in operation because I don't think that as of now we would have any idea of how long it would take for all these persons to qualify or to be processed.

Mr. FEIGHAN. For those who have approved preferences there should be no long undue delay in processing.

Mr. OWEN. That would be true only for those who have approved preference petitions. As soon as we know how many of the victims of the earthquake are also those who are beneficiaries of approved petitions, it would take just the normal time of processing their application.

The only special feature in the processing of applicants under all of these proposals would be that we would have to determine that they are uprooted and that they are unable to return to their homes, their place of abode.

In order to do this, it is likely that the consular officers would be guided by the information provided by the local authorities and the relief organizations that may be operating in the area, such as was the experience in the instances of the Azores earthquake victims.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Is there an estimate of the length of time required?

Mr. OWEN. No. I would say that it may not necessarily be a long procedure in order to identify those who would qualify under these provisions, as being uprooted and unable to return to their abode but we cannot give an estimate of how long it would take in the average case.

Mr. ROBINO. You referred to the Azores situation. There were no preference requirements there and yet the bill was administered. How did you administer that legislation?

Mr. OWEN. So far as ascertaining whether the applicants qualified under the terms of that bill, we were guided by the information provided by local authorities. I would have to check on what the procedures were to grant some priority to those who may have been either beneficiaries of petitions or relatives of persons already here.

(The following information was subsequently submitted by the Department of State:)

It has been ascertained that under the Azores Refugee Relief Bill the Consulate at Ponta Delgada did set up a priority system in which those persons who were "out of their usual place of abode" and unable to return thereto and who were also beneficiaries of preference petitions were given priority in the issuance of visas. Non-preference quota applicants who had been registered on the Consulate's waiting list were given second priority. Those persons who had never indicated an intention to emigrate to the United States were taken in a third group in the chronological order in which they applied under the program. The Department approved this priority system.

The procedure followed under that bill, however, was more one of priority in processing rather than preference in issuing visas.

Mr. RODINO. In other words, addressing myself to that same problem, you would then have some guideline in administering legislation of this sort without the need to require that there be an approved preference petition?

Mr. OWEN. We would have the guideline from the local authorities or relief agencies as to who meets the requirements of having been uprooted and being unable to return to his place of abode. In the proposal which limits applicants to those who are beneficiaries of an approved petition, of course this would be an additional requirement which would be very easy to ascertain since every petition is on file at the Consulate General in Palermo.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I would like to make this observation and get your reaction. H.R. 14806 requires an alien already to be the beneficiary of an approved preference petition while H.R. 14807 by Mr. Celler and 14808 by Mr. Rodino do not.

In this context I would like to know what order would be used to issue visas under these bills?

Mr. OWEN. The usual way of proceeding in a situation of this kind is to consider the applications in the order in which the applicants establish their qualifications for consideration under this proposed law.

If you are required to establish that you are uprooted and unable to return to your place of abode, as soon as that is established, at least prima facie in an application, we would consider the case. As a practical matter, this might mean the date that you receive the information from local authorities or other organizations which might be determining, in effect, which of these people are homeless.

As soon as this is established, the applicant's case would be processed. This establishes an order of priority for the consideration of the applications.

Now, if there were also a requirement that applicants be beneficiaries of petitions or be the spouse or child of such beneficiary, that would be easy to determine. It would be a matter of just going to the records of the post itself.

Mr. FEIGHAN. In H.R. 14806, which requires approved preferences, there would be no necessity for any further question about labor certi-

fication because if it were necessary, it would already have been approved. What would happen under the bills, H.R. 14807 and H.R. 14808 with reference to labor certification?

Mr. OWEN. I believe the labor certification provision; namely, section 212(a) (14) of the Immigration Act would have no application in the case of any of these bills since they all authorize the issuance of special immigrant visas.

Section 212(a) (14), which establishes the labor certification requirement, expressly states to which categories of immigrants it applies. Obviously, it would not apply to the special immigrants coming under the provisions of any of these bills.

The other grounds of ineligibility would presumably apply. In fact, in the bills it is stated that applicants would otherwise have to be eligible under section 212(a), insofar as those sections apply.

Mr. FEIGHAN. There is another question I would like to have resolved. If the principal alien is physically located away from the spouse and children, such as in different parts of Italy, in Europe or even the United States, would there be any difference in the administration between the two versions?

Mr. OWEN. Under H.R. 14807 and H.R. 14808, the spouse and children would have to be "accompanying or following to join" the principal homeless. If I understand your question correctly, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. FEIGHAN. As an example, if the principal and father of the family, say, is in Germany working and his wife and children are in Sicily and are obviously victims of the earthquake, would the whole family be admitted?

Mr. OWEN. All the bills refer to the spouse and children of someone who has been uprooted and cannot return to his place of abode.

If the father is working in Germany and his house has been destroyed, I think you could say he has been uprooted in the sense he could not go to his home. But I would say he would have to be an applicant himself to come here. Most of the heads of families who are not now in Sicily, we understand, are in other European countries on a temporary arrangement.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I would like to ask, should any criteria be defined in the law pertaining to the order of issuance of visas or should this be left to a regulation?

Mr. OWEN. If there is no express provision on the order of consideration in a provision such as this, the order of consideration would be the chronological order in which the applicants established that they qualify under the provision.

If the law were to require that preference be given to a certain category such as beneficiaries of approved petitions, you would have to attend to those of the preference category first.

You would have to administer the law in such manner that you would be certain when you reach the end of the numbers available, that you have not left any of the preference category out.

Mr. ROBINO. Miss Watson, first of all may I say that I welcome your presence, and your testimony is, I am sure, useful to this committee. I have a couple of questions that I would like to address to you or any of those who are assisting you this morning.

Primarily with reference to some of the recommendations you made, one, principally with reference to the recommendation that the words

"who are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life" be deleted. I believe you stated in your testimony that this was a suggestion on the part of the governing body of Italy.

Are you aware of the fact that this exact language is part of Public Law 85-892 which dealt with distressed aliens in the Azores? This language was there and this language is in my bill, and although I may ultimately agree with you that it probably may present some problem, nevertheless, I would like to know more affirmatively why we should not include this language other than the suggestion that comes from the Government of Italy. What difficulties would we encounter if this language were included in this legislation, in view of the fact that we have the history of experience of administering the Azores legislation and apparently no difficulties were encountered.

MISS WATSON. May I first make a correction? It was not the Government of Italy that raised this matter. It was our Embassy in Rome which noted that if these two conditions for qualification for the special immigrant visas were used; namely, one, that they be uprooted and unable to return to their abode and place of residence; and two, that they be without the essentials of life, this second qualification would make the bill inapplicable to the situation in Sicily at this time.

This is true because the refugees and the victims of this disaster have received aid. They are getting the essentials of life, such as clothing, shelter, food. So if those words were strictly construed one could not honestly say they are without the essentials of life.

MR. RODINO. In other words, there would be a difficulty, an obstacle in administering this legislation to expeditiously provide the kind of relief you want to see provided.

MISS WATSON. That is correct.

MR. RODINO. I accept that and I think it makes a lot of sense. Although I included this provision in my bill, I would wholeheartedly go along with your recommendation. The other observation; I am aware that we talked about the question of the immediacy or the urgency for the need of settling. Nonetheless, I do not seem to have gotten this from any of the testimony here this morning. Although I am aware of the problem and how acute it is, I would like to know from you, Miss Watson, or anyone speaking from your department, just what the urgency is in this situation and why we have this urgency?

MR. ORDWAY. Yes, I think the question of urgency you have to look at from the special point of view. That is, we all know people were absolutely in dire need of everything when the earthquake first struck. They had nothing, no shelter. It was cold, and the first problem was to get them in some kind of shelter and some food.

But this emergency situation is pretty well passed. They are now living in temporary quarters. They are uprooted in many ways. Their means of livelihood has been disturbed. For example, in these small towns where the damage was greatest most of the people are farmers, so to speak. Within these towns you also have shopkeepers, bakers, and people of this kind, and in the damage that ensued their means of livelihood was impaired if not destroyed.

So that the urgency with respect to them is to give them something more permanent and to get them settled into something more ordinary, shall we say, instead of living on relief in temporary shelters,

which in many cases are only very temporary and not very substantial.

Miss WATSON. And there is a fear those temporary things may become permanent.

Mr. RODINO. I am aware of that.

The other question that I would like to direct is in the area of your preference for the bill that would provide the guideline of approved preference petitions. I wonder whether or not you can say to me here and now that recognizing there are some 2,000, who would come under that category, and the fact that there are more than the 2,000 really affected, that this makes a great difference in the administration of the legislation. You would on the one hand be confining yourself to a previous petition for only 2,000 and then you would have to be wrestling with the question as to who comes next.

Of course, I heard you talk about chronology. Chronology, I assume, is the chronology of who files first and who comes after that and then after that, but you still have to make the determination.

Now, this brings me to this question. Do you still stand pat with the recommendation or the suggestion, at least, that this kind of guideline be followed, that you first go to the approved petition and then afterward make up guidelines again?

Miss WATSON. Sir, we leave the final determination in the hands of your considered judgment, because it is you who will determine the kind of bill that you would like us to administer. We are cognizant of the enormous backlog of approved petitions that exist in Italy and largely it is within the fifth preference.

We are also cognizant of the fact that a great many of those approved petitions are in the Sicilian area, as we understand, a great many of the beneficiaries might have been specifically in the areas that were destroyed.

Since we have approved petitions on file which go back as far as June 1955, we are of the view that some of this pressure may be alleviated by providing a preference for those who had the intentions of coming, who had ties here, as well as taking care, thereafter, of those who were victims but who did not have approved petitions.

We are not stating that we want it confined solely to the approved petitions. But we feel that since there is this enormous backlog which everyone is aware of—

Mr. RODINO. Would you say, then, that following this guideline you would be able to more expeditiously provide the kind of relief that we are looking for?

Miss WATSON. Following the guideline of those who have approved petitions?

Mr. RODINO. Yes.

Miss WATSON. I don't think really there is any difference in the efficiency of administration. We can follow either procedure equally well. It is a matter of helping to relieve the pressures of those who have been waiting so very long.

Mr. RODINO. I thought maybe that might have been the reason for the suggestion because I would wholeheartedly endorse that idea. I am sure it would be getting the kind of relief we needed immediately and as quickly as possible.

MISS WATSON. I should note that there is, in fact, a reason why those who have approved petitions and who qualify with respect to being uprooted could be handled more expeditiously. They are in the pipe line, they have sponsors whereas those who have not approved petitions would have to start from scratch and sponsors found for them.

This relates to the problem of determining who is eligible. I refer specifically to your bill:

Provided That each such alien is found to be eligible to be issued an immigrant visa and to be admitted to the United States under the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

It might turn out, for example, under one of the provisions of section 212(a) that an applicant is not able to qualify. For example, an applicant might be ineligible under section 212(a) (15), the public charge provision. Beneficiaries of approved petitions do not have that difficulty.

MR. RODINO. My last question, Miss Watson, I don't believe that there was any specific reply to whether or not the termination date was desirable or not desirable in that sense. Could you tell me whether or not this legislation might better be helped if we had a termination date? I go back again to precedent and that is that in the legislation providing for relief in the Azores earthquake there was a termination date although later it was extended.

MISS WATSON. We have not suggested a termination date. Mr. Owen, I believe, called your attention to the fact that there would be an automatic termination date, not specifically spelled out, based on the fact that you have a numerical limitation. So once those numbers that have been authorized by virtue of the bill have been used, we could not go on beyond that.

MR. RODINO. Thank you very much.

MR. FEIGHAN. Mr. Cahill?

MR. CAHILL. I yield to Mr. MacGregor.

MR. MACGREGOR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Watson and gentlemen, we appreciate very much your appearance here this morning and the excellent assistance you are rendering to this subcommittee.

Under section 203(a) (7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act provision is made for conditional entry, and I quote the language of the Act, of persons "uprooted by catastrophic or natural calamity, as defined by the President, who are unable to return to their usual place of abode."

In 1965, when the Senate originally wrote in the language, "natural calamity" we were pleased to embrace it. Many of us had the idea we were making provision for the immediate urgent necessity which might arise in the future by reason of natural calamity to deal with precisely the situation that the world was confronted with in a humanitarian way in the Sicilian earthquakes.

Has the President defined the present situation in Sicily as a result of the earthquakes as catastrophic natural calamity within the framework of existing law?

MISS WATSON. No, he has not. He would have to issue a proclamation to that effect.

MR. MACGREGOR. Has he been requested to do so by you, Miss Watson?

MISS WATSON. No, sir.

MR. MACGREGOR. To your knowledge has he been requested to do so by anyone?

MISS WATSON. Not that I know of, sir.

MR. MACGREGOR. Would you tell this committee why you have not requested him to issue such proclamation?

MISS WATSON. If you included these people under the seventh preference—which is what we call section 203(a)(7)—the numbers used by Sicilian refugees would be chargeable to the foreign-state limitation applicable to Italy which establishes a ceiling of 20,000. There would not be sufficient numbers to help those who have been affected by this earthquake and at the same time, provide for ordinary immigration from Italy.

MR. MACGREGOR. I am glad you mentioned that because I have been taking a look at your publication dated January 15, 1968, the pamphlet of the Visa Office Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. I find there this language, "unused seventh preference numbers will be made available to nonpreference applicants in the latter part of fiscal year 1969, in the order in which such applicants have qualified for immigrant status."

I did not quote this exactly correctly because I inserted "fiscal year 1969" and your language is just "fiscal year." Does that language refer to fiscal year 1969 or 1968?

MISS WATSON. At any time, there is no specific year.

MR. MACGREGOR. Would you expand for us about this statement, "unused seventh preference numbers will be made available to nonpreference applicants in the latter part of the fiscal year in the order in which such applicants have qualified for immigrant status"?

MR. OWEN. Under section 203, the different preferences are enumerated and you will see that for each one of them there is some order of how remaining numbers in one particular preference will drop down into another. Nonpreference is supposed to get what remains after all the preferences are satisfied. As a practical matter the nonpreference receives nothing from those that drop down through fifth preference, since there is a very great fifth preference demand.

Sixth preference is also oversubscribed so the only possible numbers that might be available for the nonpreference category are those that are unused in seventh preference, namely, the refugee preference.

MR. MACGREGOR. Miss Watson, if I may go back to your answer to a previous question that I asked. It apparently is the desire to provide some avenue outside the 20,000 limit that prevents a Presidential proclamation. In other words, it is a desire not to have any victims of this natural calamity be charged against the 20,000 annual total for Italy that militates against the issuance of a Presidential proclamation. Is that what I take from your answer?

MISS WATSON. I am not in a position to determine what is in the President's mind or that of the administration.

MR. MACGREGOR. Was that in your mind when you determined or decided not to ask him to issue the proclamation that was necessary under law?

MISS WATSON. All we are in position to do is comment on legislation that is proposed, and we were asked to comment on the three bills which are under discussion today.

Mr. MACGREGOR. I appreciate that, Miss Watson. I am sure you also understand that were this bill to come to the floor of the House of Representatives we would be confronted with the question which I asked you; why not use the mechanism that is in existing law that the Congress adopted in 1965, to take care immediately and long before this, of the problems created by the homeless in Sicily?

Miss WATSON. There would not be enough numbers, sir. And besides most seventh preference numbers are used for the refugees from the Communist countries and they are heavily subscribed. There would not be sufficient numbers to handle disasters such as the Italian one.

Mr. MACGREGOR. I appreciate that. The section I referred to particularly applies to refugees from Communist countries and Middle East as well as victims of natural calamities, and I note that you say there are insufficient numbers. Yet I note from your bulletin of January 15, that unused seventh preference numbers will be made available to nonpreference applicants in the latter part of the fiscal year.

Miss WATSON. If there are any left. These would also have to be Italian numbers remaining.

Mr. CAHILL. To clear up a question. What is the administrative machinery that is implemented in order to have the President declare that there has been a catastrophic natural calamity?

Mr. SMITH. There is really no established procedure that I know of, Mr. Cahill. It has not been done before. Since this provision is in the act I would presume it would take defining by the President in the form of a proclamation.

Mr. CAHILL. I realize what the result would be on his part, but upon whom would he rely in the first instance for the recommendation that he should make this finding—your department?

Mr. SMITH. I would assume the Department of State and the Department of Justice.

Mr. CAHILL. So the initiative, generally speaking, would rest with your department. If, in fact, a calamity occurred which you felt warranted a statement by the President, that it came within the confines of this law, the initiative would originate with you.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, and I would assume our initiative, too, would quite possibly depend, in part, on an approach by the foreign governments concerned, since they might be sensitive to implication that they are unable to take care of local problems. Such an approach did not take place in this case.

Mr. CAHILL. That was my interest. Thank you.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. Donohue?

Mr. DONOHUE. No question.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you, Miss Watson, and your associates.

Mr. CAHILL. May I ask one question? I was not here, regrettably, when you started your statement. I gathered, however, from statements I have heard that everything has been done for these people consistently, from a humanitarian standpoint, that could possibly be done on an emergency basis, and now what remains to be done is to aid them in resettlement of their business and construction of permanent homes and reestablishment of their business and construction of permanent homes and reestablishment of their occupation. Is that right?

Miss WATSON. Yes.

Mr. CAHILL. Now, what can we do here in the United States for these people that has not already been done for them in Italy or which is not contemplated as part of the overall planning of Italy to do for them in the foreseeable future aside from conferring upon them emergency help?

Miss WATSON. You can give them an opportunity to start a new life, particularly those who have filed petitions to immigrate to this country.

Mr. CAHILL. I realize that, but I mean is there anything we can do for them, aside from giving them the opportunity of establishing themselves in a new country that has not been done or that is not being planned for them by Italy?

Miss WATSON. Over in Italy?

Mr. CAHILL. Yes.

Miss WATSON. So far as I understand we are doing everything in coordination with the Italian Government.

Mr. CAHILL. And the Italian Government is doing everything or planning to do everything that they feel is necessary for them?

Miss WATSON. That is correct.

Mr. RODINO. I would like just to pass these pictures along to the committee members so they might see what the actual damage is. These are some of the victims of the damage. They are pictures taken on the scene.

Mr. DONOHUE. I think you have suggested that the language be eliminated in several bills before us, the language having to do with essential needs being one of the criteria. Did I understand you correctly?

Miss WATSON. Yes, we suggested that.

Mr. DONOHUE. Were that language deleted would you not be confronted with the situation that a person who was in essential need of relief would be in the same category as say a businessman in Sicily who was in the earthquake area with a substantial amount of money in a bank in Rome? They would be on the same level?

Miss WATSON. Sir, we felt that difficulties would arise under strict construction of the language "without essentials of life." We assume that when you talk of this you speak of shelter, food, clothing. These have been provided. You have these two aspects. One, they must be uprooted and be unable to return to their residence, former residence, or abode. The other condition under two of the bills is that they must be without the essentials of life.

Mr. DONOHUE. I thought I understood you to say that you are inclined to eliminate that provision that had to do with the essentials of life.

Miss WATSON. Exactly, because they are getting the essentials. They are minimal but they are not starving.

Mr. DONOHUE. Take the case I cited of the man that was living in Sicily and he had an income that enabled him to build up a substantial bank account in a bank in Rome. Would he be in the same category and entitled to the same relief that we are endeavoring to grant in these bills as the poor farmer that did not have a bank account?

Miss WATSON. He could establish a new place of abode within Italy.

Mr. DONOHUE. He was uprooted as a result of the earthquake and could not return to the area in which he formerly lived.

Miss WATSON. It would have to apply equally unless you put in, as you have in two of the bills, that they are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life.

Mr. DONOHUE. If you eliminate that language the person with substantial means would be placed in the same category as the person without substantial means.

Mr. ORDWAY. May I say something there? On the basis of my experience in the Consulate General's Office of Palermo, the applicants for visas to go to the United States are generally people who have had very little in the way of means. A man who has property and funds is usually not an applicant for a visa, and I doubt if he would be at the present time because his land would still be there.

Mr. DONOHUE. That is true, but there would be nothing to prevent that person from applying.

Mr. ORDWAY. Correct.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you again, Miss Watson.

(In response to a State Department request for appraisal of the situation in Sicily and further recommendations, the following telegram was received March 1, 1968, from the American Consul General in Palermo, Italy, and is included in the record at this point:)

From : American Consul, Palermo.

To : Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

Info : American Embassy, Rome.

Ref : State 121491. Visas.

Proposed Sicilian refugee legislation criterion No. 2 in referenced telegram could best be met with certificate from prefects office in each provincial capital. He represents Rome Ministry of Interior and has supervisory and coordinating authority all over central government activities in the province.

Among these is Civil Engineers Service (Genio Civile) of Ministry of Public Works, which is taking complete house-by-house, person-by-person census of damage. We think brief certificate from official designated by prefect to effect house of named individual or house in which he lived was destroyed or severely damaged (first two categories in census of property damage) would offer most reliable evidence possible under circumstances and would be acceptable in its face without need for first hand investigation by Consul General or Immigration and Naturalization Service. It would be difficult in present situation to establish any other workable criterion for inability to return to usual place of abode. Many are only temporarily unable to return because of fear, loss of agricultural tools, damage not yet assessed, cleaning of rubble, need for repairs to slightly damaged houses, etc. Moreover prefab housing may be made available in village which was "usual place of abode."

In any case we would propose to interpret language in question as applying only to persons whose housing had been listed by Italian authorities as destroyed, condemned, or seriously damaged.

Department did not ask for comment on third criterion but, unless it is considered generic description of all victims of earthquake without specific application to individual cases seeking to qualify for visa under new legislation, difficult to see what it would mean in practice. If language is taken at its face value, none, repeat none, would qualify. Conditions of life in tent settlements, schools, railroad cars, etc., are minimally adequate at least for few months of good weather. Prefab housing is expected to be ready within 2 or 3 months. Meanwhile, victims have essential shelter, food, medical care, cash payments, etc., from Government of Italy.

Another possible difficulty (in earlier drafts of legislation) is specification of initial qualifying date in January 1968. On October 31, 1967, and following days, there were quakes in eastern Sicily provinces of Messina, Enna and Palermo. Fifteen communities, total population 69,000, were included in list of western Sicily disaster areas recently proclaimed by Sicilian Regional Government and are equally eligible for government benefits. Plight of earlier victims was generally ignored until after January quakes, but there were several hundred houses destroyed and other damage. Exclusion of few hundred such cases which might

qualify for visas except for specification of January date, might be resented by persons who might otherwise have qualified, and by their relatives in United States and, from humanitarian point of view, they ought, if possible, to be included. Some such language as "recent earthquakes in Sicily" would obviate this problem.

If legislation as enacted gives any reason to think there may be numbers available after satisfying need for preferences, we would propose issuing statement describing possibility and specifying criteria. Prospective applicants would be invited to file form FS-497 with this office. Priority would be established by date of receipt of form by Consul General Palermo. This would penalize those who did not hear of opportunity in earlier stages, but we see no more equitable procedure under existing circumstances. We would take all possible steps through personal visits to camps and shelter sites in Sicily, and through ministry of interior for settlements on mainland, to get announcement and copies of form FS-497 distributed as rapidly as possible after enactment of legislation. Would propose appropriate statement to local press, stressing limited numbers who will qualify. We have been keeping record of some (but not all) persons who inquired in person (about 50 daily) and would propose giving earlier priority if satisfied that earthquakes victim had expressed earlier desire to emigrate.

There were about 24,000 persons (in all of Sicily) on nonpreference waiting list whose registrations were canceled on January 1, 1968, because they could not establish eligibility under section 212(A) (14) for nonpreference status. Cannot estimate how many would qualify under preferential criteria. Should such persons who may apply for numbers remaining, after demand for preferences under possible new legislation is satisfied, be given original priority date or priority date of receipt of post earthquake application?

We would favor giving benefit of earlier priority.

Initial announcement would presumably include statement (unless we are instructed otherwise) that normal documentary requirements for immigration visa would apply. Clearance procedures normally take 2 to 3 months and this would afford time to get Italian documents and liability of becoming a public charge evidence.

We might get 20,000 or more of these new applications affecting upwards of 75,000 people. Procedure risks disappointment of those who do not qualify or whose priority dates are not reached within limit of available numbers, but we see no more equitable course.

HORSEY.

MR. FEIGHAN. Our next witness is Domenic Florio, assistant to Fortune R. Pope, the editor and publisher of *Il Progresso, Italo-Americano*.

STATEMENT OF DOMENIC V. FLORIO, ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER, *IL PROGRESSO*

MR. FLORIO. May I read Mr. Pope's statement? Mr. Pope is editor and publisher of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*.

On February 8, 1968, the Honorable Michael A. Feighan, chairman of the subcommittee, wrote to me and asked me to voice an appraisal of the situation in Sicily as it relates to the legislation presently being considered by this subcommittee, which is primarily designed to furnish some relief to the unfortunate refugees who have been displaced in Sicily, Italy, as a result of a natural calamity which took its form in the shape of an earthquake.

In response to the chairman's invitation, I am pleased to present my views, which I would have preferred to do in person but will not be able to, much to my regret. However, I am confident that you will consider my statement in the course of your deliberation as representing the sentiments of the vast majority of the American community of Italian ancestry in the United States.

I wish to support the proposed bills because they are in the highest tradition of our great country which has always stretched out a help-

ing hand to the unfortunate victims of natural calamity which have uprooted them and caused them untold suffering.

I am sure that the chairman knows that there is precedent for this type of legislation born of the compassionate understanding of our people and our lawmakers. The Congress expressing the will of the people rose to the occasion in 1958 when a similar disaster struck the Azores Islands and enacted legislation to permit 1,500 Portuguese citizens and their children displaced by an earthquake to enter the United States on special nonquota visas.

We applauded that tangible act of mercy which brought some measure of relief to those stricken people underscoring once more the humanitarian spirit of the American people. Again, a volcanic calamity has fallen upon a people bound to us by time-tested and time-honored friendship.

It has taken 129 lives in the Province of Trapani, 105 in the Province of Agrigento and one in the Province of Palermo making a total of 235 known dead.

It has left in its wake 419 people wounded in the Province of Trapani, 197 in the Province of Agrigento and 15 in the Province of Palermo for a total of 625 wounded people.

It has made 45 orphans in the Province of Trapani, 10 in the Province of Agrigento and two in the Province of Palermo for a total of 57 orphaned children.

It has left homeless 33,850 in the Province of Trapani, 13,213 in the Province of Agrigento, and 16,075 in the Province of Palermo for a total of 63,138 homeless people.

It has destroyed 7,918 homes in the Province of Trapani, 884 in the Province of Agrigento and 78 in the Province of Palermo for a total of 8,880 crushed homes.

It has left dangerously damaged 10,960 homes in the Province of Trapani, 994 in the Province of Agrigento and 1,971 in the Province of Palermo for a total of 13,931 damaged homes.

And it has destroyed factories and other industries as a result of which it has left unemployed 4,000 in the Province of Trapani, 5,161 in the Province of Agrigento and 5,250 in the Province of Palermo for a total of unemployed men of 14,311.

The damage in the Province of Trapani is approximately \$265 million. The damage in the Province of Agrigento is approximately \$130 million. The damage in the Province of Palermo is approximately \$43 million; making a total in excess of \$435 million.

Obviously, their plight is heartbreaking and their need of assistance great and impelling. I am certain that I voice the feelings and hopes of all Americans of Italian origin in their appeal for aid to their friends and relatives across the sea.

We have received thousands of letters from readers of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*—the largest and only daily newspaper in the Italian language in the United States—supporting the passage of this legislation proposed by your distinguished chairman and several other outstanding members of your honorable body.

As I understand it, this proposed legislation when enacted into law will permit the issuance of special visas to these distressed aliens outside any ceiling on immigration with the understanding that prospective immigrants benefiting from this proposed legislation will still

have to fulfill the eligibility qualifications for entry in the United States under the present law as to health, good character, and so forth.

Since this is the ultimate objective of the proposed legislation, I should like to reiterate the suggestion that a preference be given to the natives of Sicily for whom visa petitions already have been filed but have not been admitted to the United States because of the numerical limitations due to a backlog under the fifth preference of about 60,000 people of whom at least 27,000 live on the area affected by the earthquake.

May I point out that many of these 27,000 people are also close relatives of U.S. citizens and, therefore, the proposed legislation not only will bring immediate assistance to the victims of the quake but will reunite families, thus, reaffirming one of the objectives of the immigration reforms enacted into law by President Johnson at the foot of the Statue of Liberty on October 3, 1965.

I respectfully urge this committee to put its authoritative stamp of approval on this most urgently needed legislation, which in effect, will be to voice the compassionate and humanitarian feelings which the American people have traditionally had for victims and unfortunate persons, when suffering has come through an act of God.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you for your very succinct and broad analysis of the situation facing us.

I would like to ask you, in your opinion, would homes and jobs be made available by the respective Italian communities in the event these unfortunate victims are admitted for permanent residence to the United States?

Mr. FLORIO. They would help greatly.

Mr. FEIGHAN. I am very familiar with persons of Italian decent and they make it a habit of taking care of less fortunate persons, whether they are of alien descent or otherwise.

Mr. RODINO. Mr. Chairman, I merely want to compliment Mr. Florio who appears today on behalf of Fortune R. Pope and who presented such a vivid, moving, and heartbreaking statement of the plight of these people and I know an "on the scene" account of what has actually taken place. I know *Il Progresso* from way back. My father used to read it and get an account of what was, day-to-day, taking place in Italy.

I followed with deep and moving interest the accounts of the quakes that took place only recently in Italy and I think that you are primarily and principally responsible for making people, here in America, consciously aware of what was taking place. As I have noted through the photographs that you were kind enough to bring here to this committee and which this committee has had an opportunity to view, the disaster is something more than the eye and the imagination can actually entertain.

I have no questions to address to you, Mr. Florio, whom I affectionately call Dominic, but please convey my comments to Mr. Pope and to the newspaper which is doing such a good job.

It is my hope that this committee will see the urgent need of enacting this kind of legislation and make this appeal the instrument of bringing relief to these people whose account you have brought us today.

Mr. FLORIO. Thank you very much.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. Cahill?

Mr. CAHILL. No questions.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. MacGregor?

Mr. MACGREGOR. No questions, Mr. Chairman, but thank you, sir, for your appearance here this morning and for your statement.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Again, Mr. Florio, thanks.

We have with us also Mr. Michael Rivisto, deputy supreme venerable, Order of Sons of Italy in America.

On behalf of the committee we give you a welcome, Mr. Rivisto.

You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL RIVISTO, DEPUTY SUPREME VENERABLE, ORDER OF SONS OF ITALY IN AMERICA

Mr. RIVISTO. Mr. Chairman and members of the honorable subcommittee, I am Michael A. Rivisto, the supreme national deputy of the Order of Sons of Italy in America. I speak here today in behalf of the international head of the Order of Sons of Italy in America, Supreme Venerable Peter J. Bertoglio.

We recommend to this honorable committee the enactment into law of House bill 14808 as proposed by Congressman Peter Rodino which provides for the issuance of 2,000 special immigrant visas to Italian citizens whose homes were destroyed and their means of livelihood torn from them by the tragic earthquake which convulsed Sicily in January of this year.

I would like to add to these remarks, upon hearing our distinguished chairman, Mr. Celler, and also having the pleasure of meeting our honorable chairman, Mr. Feighan, that both of these bills are fine. We would also support them and certainly we would like to make that a matter of record.

The heart of America was touched by the stories of destruction which struck Gibellina, Montevago, Santa Ninfa, and Darpanna, plus many villages and part of the city of Palermo, and I have every reason to believe that America wishes to assist, in any manner it can, those who have suffered and continue to suffer as the result of the earthquake.

The Order of Sons of Italy in America is convinced that all Americans would approve of this legislation which would accomplish much in alleviating the terrible suffering which still goes on in the devastated areas of Sicily.

Not only have populations been deprived of their homes, but the cruel workings of the earthquake have wrested from thousands the means whereby they could help to restore what has been taken away.

Many of these victims are men with great skill as artisans and therefore would fit excellently into the American industrial program which includes construction and agricultural enterprises.

The admittance into the United States of these Italian immigrants with their families could in no way adversely affect the economy of America, but, on the contrary, would advance that economy because Italian workmen are universally known for their dedication to toil, their eagerness to work, and their natural pride in work well done.

And, I am sure that the members of this committee know, from their own observation and experience that Italian workmen adapt easily to their environment and become excellent American citizens.

Approval of this bill would be another indication of the great humanity of America, ever ready to assist, where it can, those who, through no fault of their own, have been subjected to suffering, depredation, and want.

We have opened our doors to victims of political persecution. We should be willing to provide asylum for those who have been victimized by natural calamity which can at times be as cruel and devastating as political despotism.

If and when passed, House bill 14808 could be so administered that priority could be given to those persons who have already been processed and are beneficiaries of preference petitions. This would help to lessen some of the pressure built up by the backlog of those seeking visas.

It is the desire of America to build up good will in all parts of the world. We are spending billions to accomplish that end, all looking toward that kind of understanding among all peoples and among all nations, which will lead eventually to a world of peace.

Nothing makes the world kin more than kindness. The world knows of the Sicilian earthquake. The world knows also of the vast suffering in the devastated areas. Let the world know that America has not been appealed to in vain in behalf of suffering humanity. The passage of this bill will be a good deed, the excellent results of which will be appreciated and applauded wherever men of good will meet to discuss the state of the world with the advancement of mankind.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity of appearing before this honorable committee.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Rivisto.

I want to congratulate you and the Order of the Sons of Italy in America for their contribution, not only to their fellow men of Italian birth and descent but to all Americans. I don't want to go into a long discussion of the contributions that I think the Italians have brought to America, but I am confident all Americans are deeply grateful for them and are deeply appreciative.

Mr. RODINO. May I say, Mr. Chairman, that it is a personal pleasure for me to welcome my good friend, Michael Rivisto, here. I know he comes here at great sacrifice. He comes all the way across the country just to testify, but this is just like the person I know who has endeared himself to many who know of his fine efforts.

I know—speaking on behalf of the organization—I know the Sons of Italy in America, which has many chapters across the whole United States, has supported hundreds of thousands of sons of Italian immigrants. They are proud of their Americanism. This order has done a great deal of work in the fields of charity and giving assistance, whenever it was needed. So again, I guess it merely does the very thing that it has been used to doing.

I want to compliment you, Mike, on the very fine presentation. I feel that you have contributed a great deal to this effort.

Mr. RIVISTO. Thank you, Mr. Rodino.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Again, thank you on behalf of the committee.

Our next witness is Rev. Joseph A. Cogo, executive secretary, American Committee on Italian Migration.

We are very happy to have you. I appreciate your coming to help us in the deliberation on this important piece of legislation.

STATEMENT OF REV. JOSEPH A. COGO, C.S., EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON ITALIAN MIGRATION

Reverend Cogo. This statement is submitted by the American Committee on Italian Migration which is a national organization founded in 1952, engaged in a program of education regarding the immigration legislation as it affects particularly Italian migration to this country.

In addition, it renders assistance to prospective Italian migrants in Italy for the issuance of a visa and after arrival in the country to effect prompt implementation into the lifestream of American society.

The American Committee on Italian Migration, headquartered in New York City, is represented by 102 chapters throughout the country which carry out locally these same objectives and functions. The purpose of this statement is to indicate our agency's position on proposed legislation under discussion for the relief of victims affected by recent earthquakes in western Sicily.

This natural calamity in Sicily has caused between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants to be homeless, according to a recent communication from the Italian Embassy, notwithstanding the fact that the Italian Government has allocated large sums of money for repairs and reconstruction and that voluntary organizations are devoting their every effort to alleviating suffering throughout the world.

There will remain a good number of refugees whose homes were completely destroyed and who must start anew. It is our considered opinion that immigration is the only means of relief for several thousands of these refugees. While, in fact, many will prefer to settle in continental Italy and some in other countries of Europe or elsewhere, it has become evident that a good number of them are looking for a better opportunity in life by migrating to this country.

The admission of several thousands of Sicilian refugees will further prove the solidarity of the United States with the Republic of Italy. Further, it is our opinion that such immigration would not create undue difficulties in resettlement in this country.

It can be safely anticipated that they will be safely absorbed into the already assimilated Italian-American community. In fact, it has been the experience of this agency, from the large number of inquiries received, that many of these refugees already have relatives or friends here willing to assist them.

It will be remembered that under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, 60,000 Italians were admitted into this country and smoothly resettled, largely through the assistance rendered in Italy by Catholic Relief Services and in the United States by the American Committee on Italian Migration.

We are aware of the many bills which have been introduced to meet this emergency and we commend the legislators who introduce them for their humanitarian concern and prompt action.

Our agency favors and supports emergency measures in which the principal is the alleviation of tragic human distress, and in which the sole criterion of applicability is the refugee status of the applicant.

As in the past, we pledge our assistance and service in the resettlement of those refugees who will benefit from this emergency legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you very much, Father Cogo, for your fine presentation.

Mr. Rodino.

Mr. RODINO. Father Cogo, I have no questions except to say that I am aware of the fact that you and your organization have been deeply concerned with this problem. I know how you communicated with me and voiced your deep anxiety for the need for this kind of legislation. I want to express my gratitude to you personally for your appearance here this morning and for your testimony before this committee.

Reverend Cogo. Thank you.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. Cahill.

Mr. CAHILL. No questions.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Thank you again, Father Cogo.

Mr. CAHILL. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to point out to the committee that Representative Richard Schweiker, of Pennsylvania, had intended to be here and testify personally but because of a very important meeting of a subcommittee on matters of great national importance he was not able to be here. I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that his statement at this time be put in the record immediately following that of the chairman's.

I also have a similar request for Representative Seymour Halpern, of New York, that his be inserted in the record also.

Mr. FEIGHAN. That will be done.

The record will be kept open for 1 week for Members of Congress and other interested persons to have statements incorporated into the hearing.

Mr. RODINO. Before concluding, is there some way that the record might show these photographs of the "on the scene" disaster that have been presented so that they can be made officially part of the record?

Mr. FEIGHAN. Your statement accomplishes that purpose so we have that in the record.

Mr. CAHILL. Mr. Chairman, this is just a point of information. Was anyone here this morning, before I arrived, from the Immigration Service to present their views?

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. Farrell, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, was readily available to testify, but inasmuch as the administration of this legislation, if passed, would be almost entirely in the State Department and dealing with Sicilian affairs, I told Mr. Farrell that I would like him to stand by. He has been standing by and he will be readily available if the subcommittee wishes him to testify, but I really feel that this probably would not be necessary.

Mr. CAHILL. May I have the opportunity of discussing with my colleagues, Mr. Moore and Mr. MacGregor especially, and any other colleagues who would like to discuss this, the advisability of bringing him in to clear up some of the technical questions that have not been completely answered by the witnesses today.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Certainly.

This will conclude the hearing.

(Whereupon, at 12 noon, the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the chair.)

(Statements were received from the following Members of the House of Representatives:)

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES C. CORMAN

Mr. Chairman, I appear today in behalf of my bill, H.R. 14945, which would make available 2,000 special immigrant visas to those Sicilian earthquake victims uprooted from their homes and in urgent need of assistance.

It is difficult to imagine the plight of the victims of this disaster. They have lost their homes and their jobs. Without our help, they have no future to look forward to in their impoverished and underdeveloped homeland. My bill would give these innocent victims some hope—an opportunity to begin a new life. It would do this without jeopardizing the chances of immigration into the United States of those Italians who would enter under the regular Italian immigration quota. Moreover, prospective immigrants, to benefit from the bill, would still have to fulfill the eligibility qualifications for immigration under present law, including health and good character.

Mr. Chairman, I urge the committee to act favorably on this humanitarian measure.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSHUA EILBERG

Mr. Chairman, I speak in support of H.R. 15026 which will provide for entry into the United States of victims of the Sicilian earthquakes. The discovery of America brought to the world new hope and confidence for mankind. Refugees of the strife and torment of the old world had an entire undeveloped continent on which to begin their lives anew. At this moment refugees of the Sicilian earthquake—who are among the most highly skilled in arts, crafts and agriculture who ever looked toward these shores—ask if America is still capable of her historic purpose. Shall our reply be that just because the continent is now settled and explored that its role as purveyor of opportunity and inspiration to the world is over? Or shall we answer that an industrialized and developed America—a Nation grown rich from the contributions and energy of our immigrant ancestors—has more to offer those worthy people who seek a better life than did even America of centuries past?

My reply is H.R. 15026. Our Nation's resources are not depleted. Her purpose has not ended. America can provide scope for the frustrated talents and energies of the world as well now as at any time since 1492. H.R. 15026 would provide special immigrant visas for those Sicilians who suddenly because of earthquake devastation are without means for exercise of their talents.

This affirmative reply is consistent with that given in response to other island inhabitants confronted by the same emergency. In 1958, we permitted thousands of Portuguese citizens of the Azore Islands to enter the United States on special non-immigrant visas.

The plight of the Sicilians is complicated by the fact that Italy has the greatest back-log of immigration applicants. No would-be immigrant to the United States has longer to wait. I submit therefore, that the immigration procedure presently available is not adequate for providing the emergency relief.

Also, we should bear in mind that a great number of the homeless Sicilians have relatives in this country. One of the immigration reforms espoused by President Johnson is the reuniting of families. Before the earthquakes, many proposals of this and the previous session set forth this objective. H.R. 15026 therefore would implement already existing policy.

I should emphasize that H.R. 15026 will not relax eligibility standards. The protection against admission of aliens of undesirable characteristics will apply to this special legislation as it does to all other immigration laws.

Latest reports are that close to 65,000 Sicilians are homeless. Close to three hundred are dead. Property damage amounts close to a half billion dollars. Factories and industries are destroyed. Over 14,000 workers are unemployed. If our Nation could afford work and opportunity to unemployed masses when they had only unexplored wilderness inhabited by wild Indians to come to, surely the world's most industrialized nation today, with the lowest unemployment rate in decades, can offer work and outlet of energy to the Sicilian earthquake refugees who ask only for the chance of employment and rebuilding of their homes.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN J. ROONEY

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful indeed to have the opportunity of expressing my deep personal interest in the proposed legislation for assisting the tragic victims of the recent earthquakes in Sicily. My proposal, H.R. 14854, and the similar proposals of my colleagues constitute a sincere effort on the part of this Congress to extend a helping hand to a group of fine home-loving friends who today find themselves shorn of all their worldly possessions.

Many of these families have not only lost their homes and their personal belongings, but the very land upon which their homes had long rested has disappeared in the catastrophe which has befallen them.

Mr. Chairman, we are all aware that some of our finest Italian Americans are those who proudly claim Sicily as their birthplace and also those whose ancestors came from this lovely country. Many of these Sicilian-born Americans, as well as those born of Sicilian parents, have reached the pinnacle of success in this country. From among them we treasure the friendship of distinguished public servants, jurists, editors and artists, in addition to the host of successful businessmen.

These loyal and patriotic leaders who have either adopted United States citizenship or are of this proud lineage have proven without question the ability of their relatives and countrymen to accept without reservation the responsibilities and duties of American citizens and to serve this country with devotion and distinction.

Not only do I count and value as personal friends many of these splendid American citizens of Sicilian birth or descent but I have had the good fortune of visiting Sicily on several occasions where I met and got to know personally many of the leaders and people of that hospitable area. I found all of them home-loving and proud of their families and their centuries-old lineage.

Because my last visit to Sicily took me to the very area in which nature has wrought such havoc, the reports of death, of suffering and of privation of these fine people are particularly distressing to me. I have conveyed to them my sympathy and condolences and I have pledged them I would do all in my power to help them.

I am grateful that President Johnson mobilized effective emergency aid for these people. Within hours tents, foods, medicines, clothing and other essentials were being landed by American aircraft. Americans everywhere have been responding generously to the appeals which have been made for contributions in this worthy cause.

But, Mr. Chairman, essential as are these timely and generous rescue operations, there remains an equally important rescue operation which needs to be initiated at once.

I have mentioned the great love of family which characterizes these people. For the thousands of American citizens of Sicilian background that love of family extends over the seas to their relatives caught in this appalling tragedy. So little of anything but emergency measures can be taken here to relieve the suffering of their relatives in Sicily. In too many cases the complete loss of property or the swift elimination of a livelihood precludes any reasonable attempt at rehabilitation in the large area in which homes, shops, schools, hospitals, churches and public buildings have been completely destroyed.

What can be done to assist in rehabilitating these deserving people is to give some of them a chance here in this country with the help of their American relatives and friends to start a new life. The means to achieve this, the miracle of a new life for them, is relatively simple. We need but to amend the provisions of our current immigration laws to provide for authorizing a reasonable number of special immigrant visas to the nationals or citizens of Italy who have been rendered homeless and in need of assistance for the essentials of life by the natural calamity. I have suggested the figure of five thousand special immigrant visas as adequate to include spouses and unmarried sons or daughters under 21 years of age.

The addition of this special category of 5,000 immigrant visas will have little negative effect upon our over-all immigration program for the ensuing two years. But it will have a very worthwhile positive effect by demonstrating once again that America continues to care for people anywhere who are suffering and in need.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that these humanitarian measures which this Committee is considering today will meet with unanimous approval. I hope, too, that full and favorable consideration of the Congress can be expedited so that at the earliest possible moment these homeless, destitute families can be given the

affectionate care and assistance which American relatives are so anxious to bestow upon them.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would call this Committee's attention to the message which President Johnson sent to Italy's President Saragat in which he said: "Dear Mr. President: I was deeply distressed to learn of the tragic loss of life caused by the earthquake in Sicily. All Americans join me in offering our heartfelt sympathy to you and the people of Sicily. I am asking Ambassador Reinhardt to keep in touch with the Italian authorities to determine in what way we can be of assistance in this sad moment."

One of the most vital ways in which we can help is to open our doors to receive and help a significant number of these men, women and children who are so desperately in need of our immediate help.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I stand ready to help you and this Committee in any way I can to further the adoption of these proposals.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD S. SCHWEIKER

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee: I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of my bill, H.R. 14952, to aid victims of the recent earthquake in Sicily.

Our nation owes its greatness in large part to the millions of immigrants who have settled here, making this land their land. In the words of President Kennedy, America is truly "a nation of immigrants." Virtually all of us owe our being here to ancestors who were immigrants. Most Americans are several generations removed from the immigrants in their family trees. But for a great number of Americans, it is their parents or grandparents who made the migration here, who planted fresh roots in America at the turn of this century when immigration from eastern and southern Europe was at its peak.

We can be proud that America has given unlimited opportunity to tens of millions of immigrants from abroad. They have helped to build America into a great nation. We can be proud that throughout our history America has not turned her back on less fortunate nations. America has gladly extended a helping hand to other countries and their peoples when help was needed. In our own times alone, we have seen this over and over again—through the Marshall Plan and later foreign aid programs, through the Peace Corps and through liberalized immigration laws in recent years.

It is in the spirit of America as both a "nation of immigrants" and a nation of generous human beings that I urge that America now come to the aid of thousands of Sicilian families uprooted by the recent earthquakes.

My bill would authorize 2000 special immigrant visas for natives of Italy displaced from their homes by the earthquakes and in need of assistance. The 2000 visas would go to heads of families. Additional visas would be authorized to spouses and children who either come with the family head to the United States or join him here later. In all, these immigrants would number from 10,000 to 20,000. Passage of this bill would mean they would not be counted against the regular immigration ceiling of 20,000 immigrants a year from any one country, a ceiling that applies to Italy as well as to other countries.

It has been estimated that up to 40,000 men, women, and children have been made homeless by the earthquakes in Sicily. This means that while many of these victims will manage to survive in makeshift quarters while their homes are rebuilt, many more will be forced to emigrate.

In recent years many residents of Sicily, especially younger people, have been migrating off the island and onto the Italian mainland, particularly to the heavily industrialized North of Italy. We can be sure that continental Italy and other European nations will be the preferred destination for a great number of Sicilians who now must leave their island home.

But we can also be sure that many will wish to make their new home in the United States, drawn here by economic opportunity not found at home and by family ties to Italian-American households. The United States must recognize this fact and, in this hour of need for the people of Sicily, the United States must respond with a liberalization of its immigration visa restrictions.

The measure proposed in my bill would be a response tailored to the precise needs of the Sicilian population at this time. It would reaffirm the strong link which exists between America and Italy. It would, finally, be an international humanitarian act of the generous proportions that the world has come to expect of America.

Despite these advantages of the proposal, it will not result in any undue costs to the American people or the American economy. The standing requirements for immigrants—that they be of good health, of good character, for example—are not to be relaxed. I am assured that when these immigrants arrive, the Italian-American community will do its utmost to care for them and facilitate their adjustment to life in the United States.

The executive secretary of the American Committee on Italian Migration, the Rev. Joseph A. Cogo, C.S., wrote to me on February 7 and said: “* * * it is our opinion that such immigration will not create undue difficulties in resettlement in this country. It can be safely anticipated that they will be smoothly absorbed into the already assimilated Italian-American community. It will, in fact, be recalled that under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, sixty thousand Italians were admitted into this country and smoothly resettled largely through the assistance of Catholic Relief Services and the American Committee on Italian Migration.”

I hope that the Congress can enact this bill as soon as possible, for to delay it too long would leave these potential immigrants in distress or force them to emigrate to other countries when they would have preferred to come to the United States. I am gratified that this subcommittee has acted so promptly in holding this hearing, and I hope that this promptness will set the tone for full committee and floor action in both the House of Representatives and the other body of the Congress.

STATEMENT BY HON. SEYMOUR HALPERN

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am grateful for the opportunity to submit my views on the pending bills before your Subcommittee to offer relief to the victims of the earthquakes in Sicily. I introduced H.R. 15207, identical to H.R. 14808, and ask your careful consideration and urge your favorable action.

These bills authorize 2,000 special immigrant visas only to natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life. The livelihood for most of these unfortunate victims is completely destroyed and there is no opportunity to rebuild when the land for this purpose is gone. The wives and children of such aliens would also be issued special visas. The legislation might therefore benefit some 10,000–20,000 people, on the basis of the best available estimates of the number of people suffering from the earthquake who would want to immigrate from Italy.

These bills represent independent measures not a part of the Immigration and Nationality Act. There is precedent for this type of legislation for, in 1958, a similar bill was enacted (P.L. 85–892, 72 Stat. 1712, Act of September 2, 1958) to help the Portuguese victims of volcanic eruptions in the Azores.

These bills would permit spouses and children to accompany or follow the principal alien which is a feature not found in the legislative precedent cited above. I consider this a salutary feature to permit the father to proceed to America first, if the need so recommends, to arrange a home for his family. By this means the head of the family can establish his livelihood and provide for his family to follow.

This legislation is in the best tradition of our nation's humanitarian policy of offering a haven to the distressed and suffering and to the victims of disaster.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I urge your favorable action.

STATEMENT OF HON. LEONARD FARBSTEIN

Mr. Chairman, the United States has traditionally opened its doors to the distressed victims of disasters. Your distinguished subcommittee is holding these hearings today to consider special legislation related to just such a disaster. I speak, of course, of the recent tragic earthquakes in Sicily, Italy, which has resulted in widespread loss of homes and livelihood.

Concern over the tragic plight of these Sicilians is shared by all Americans. We were shocked to learn of this disaster. Now we must offer our help to those that survived this calamity. Many Sicilians will choose to stay in Italy; but others may wish to start a new life in this country. We should help them toward that end.

A number of bills of relief have been introduced in Congress. I have introduced one such bill. My bill would authorize the immediate entry into the United

States of 5,000 refugees. Under this legislation, spouses and unmarried children under 21 years of age would be allowed entry, but would not be counted under the 5,000 limitation.

Mr. Chairman, I believe this is the least we can do. We surely cannot stand by and simply ignore the destruction that has befallen these people. Precedent for such legislation was clearly established in 1958 when a similar bill helped Portuguese victims in the Azores. The present situation is equally as tragic and requires prompt action to aid those who have lost their homes and jobs.

Current immigration laws prohibit many of these refugees from entering the United States because of the 20,000 per year country limitation. My bill would exempt these refugees from this limitation.

Mr. Chairman, these refugees should not be given carte blanche entry. Prospective immigrants should still have to fulfill the eligibility requirements established under present law. My bill is aimed primarily at exempting the victims of this unfortunate disaster from normal country quota limitation.

Finally, let me simply observe that many of these Sicilians have relatives in the United States. We would then not only be helping victims of this disaster, but would also be reuniting many families.

I urge early passage of this legislation.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS P. O'NEILL, JR.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of legislation for the relief of the homeless refugees from the recent earthquakes in Sicily.

We all know the tragic facts concerning the great damage inflicted by uncontrollable Nature. They have been stated eloquently before this Committee by sympathetic individuals. I do not want to repeat the description of the pain and destruction inflicted on unsuspecting people those disastrous days in January. I would only like to emphasize several points that we should remember.

The first is the number of people affected by this catastrophe. Appropriately 200 died; tens of thousands were left homeless; and hundreds of thousands were displaced.

Six towns in Sicily are totally uninhabitable: Montevago and Gibellina were completely destroyed. For all practical purposes so were Salaparuta, Santa Margherita di Belice, Santa Ninfa, and Poggioreale.

Thirty-five thousand people, refugees from those towns, have no place to go, no homes to return to. Many other small towns were partially destroyed and an equal number of people have lost their homes.

The suffering of these people has been great. They have seen the death of family and friends; their homes have been destroyed and their life's work ended.

On January 17th, President Johnson sent a message of sympathy and an offer of aid to President Saragat. Ambassador Reinhardt, the United States Military Forces in Italy, and the Agency for International Development, co-operated with Italian officials in providing relief assistance. We provided aid wherever and whenever it was requested.

Now we are able to provide another type of assistance. We must open our doors to these refugees. This committee has many bills pending before it which would provide visas to those people displaced by the earthquakes. I am hopeful that generous legislation will be reported.

The people of the Mezzogiorno, and especially Sicily, have always had to work hard in order to survive. They have overcome hardships and setbacks with industriousness and fateful optimism. But this last catastrophe can not be overcome by hard work. They must go elsewhere to rebuild their lives.

I urge this Committee to look favorably on this legislation. I have submitted H.R. 15363 which provides for the issuance of 5,000 special immigrant visas to natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968, are unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily, and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life. The spouse and children of such alien, if accompanying or following to join him, would also be authorized special immigrant visas notwithstanding the 5,000 limitation. Thus, 5,000 families would be allowed to come to America.

I believe the passage of this legislation would be in keeping with the humanitarian tradition of our country, and would benefit these refugees and our Nation.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK ANNUNZIO

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I would like to commend the outstanding Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Honorable Emanuel Celler, as well as the distinguished Chairman of this Subcommittee, Honorable Michael A. Feighan, and the able Subcommittee Members, for their astute foresight in arranging these prompt hearings to deal with a matter of grave urgency.

With your permission, I would like to address myself to a matter of great sorrow and tragedy—the series of catastrophic earthquakes which devastated the western part of Sicily last month and have left countless numbers of Sicilians destitute and homeless.

My legislation, H.R. 14856, along with other bills introduced by many of my colleagues—among them Chairman Celler, Chairman Feighan, Congressmen Rodino, Donohue, and Fino—is designed to help alleviate the plight of those “unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily and are in urgent need of assistance.”

The provisions of my bill would authorize to be issued two thousand special immigrant visas to natives of Italy uprooted by the earthquakes seeking to enter the United States, in addition to the yearly quota of 20,000 visas to be issued for natives of any single country. My bill also provides for visas to be issued to the spouse and children of any such alien, “if accompanying or following to join . . . notwithstanding such numerical limitation.”

A precedent has been established for the type of legislation envisioned in the bills that have been introduced. On January 25, 1968, Congressman Rodino cited in example the enactment of a similar bill in 1958 to help alleviate the plight of the Portuguese victims of volcanic eruptions in the Azores.

The magnitude of the catastrophe which has befallen the people of Sicily is difficult for us to envision. The latest estimates put the death toll close to 300, and the number of those injured admitted to hospitals reaches 500.

Many towns and villages have been destroyed. According to the Sicilian regional president, Signor Corallo, “five towns are merely names on the map now, and seven others are badly hit.” The towns of Montevago, Gibellina, Salaparuta, Santa Margherita di Belige, Poggioreale and Camporeale, with total populations of 35,000, have been declared uninhabitable.

Bridges have collapsed, roads are blocked, and in addition to the human toll, many domestic and farm animals were killed. Many of the improvised tent camps, already insufficient in number to shelter the 80,000 refugees who are roaming the countryside, have been washed away by storms and floods, and epidemics of whooping cough, measles and bronchitis are feared.

The earthquake victims in Sicily have lost their homes, members of their families and their livelihoods, and can now anticipate only the bleakest of futures in their impoverished, demolished homeland. Through the means of this special legislation, we in the United States can offer these suffering people a helping hand and hope for the future in the time-honored American tradition of compassion and assistance in the name of humanity.

Help has poured in from all parts of Europe. Great Britain, Holland, Norway, Tunisia and France sent in supplies and donations. The United States, in keeping with its tradition of compassion, has also been prompt and generous in assisting the disaster-stricken refugees.

On January 16, President Johnson sent his condolences and those of the American people in a message to President Saragat of Italy. A.I.D. allocated \$185,000 to meet the cost of United States Government relief assistance. Ambassador Reinhardt in Rome requested the U.S. Commander in Chief, Europe, to make available three planes for the transportation of emergency relief supplies from U.S. military stocks in Germany to Sicily. Two $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton vehicles, a seven-man U.S. Army medical team, 1,000 cases of C rations, 50 squad tents and 1,300 blankets were flown in on January 16. These planes, along with others belonging to the U.S. Navy, have helped Italian planes in the transportation of Italian supply trucks, field kitchens, communications equipment, and food to the area.

Due to the unpredictable nature and scope of disasters, a significant portion of American assistance abroad is provided from the resources of the contingency fund appropriated to the President under general foreign assistance legislation. However, Congress has not relinquished its responsibility to enact special legislation when an emergency has necessitated such action.

Congressional concern and compassion for alleviating the plight of victims in disaster-stricken areas dates back to the early 19th century. In 1812, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for emergency supplies for the victims of the earthquake in

Venezuela. In 1847, Congress authorized the use of two naval ships for the transportation of food supplies to Ireland and Scotland, then suffering from a great famine.

In 1899, \$100,000 were appropriated for the Cubans in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war. When a series of earthquakes hit various parts of the world in the early part of the 20th century, Congress again appropriated funds and supplies to the destitute: in 1907, to the earthquake victims of Jamaica, in 1909, to those in Messina, Italy, and in 1910, to the victims of the earthquake in Costa Rica. More recently, in 1961, Congress appropriated \$100 million in addition to the regular foreign aid to Chile for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of that country after the earthquake of May, 1960.

It is heartening to me that both the Department of State and the Department of Justice, after carefully studying the pending legislation, have issued official reports stating that the legislation is meritorious and deserves early enactment.

In addition, our close ties with Italy and its people, which have been maintained and strengthened throughout the course of our history, warrant special legislation on the part of Congress today. In the wake of the terrible catastrophe which has befallen so many people in Sicily and in the light of our historic traditions of compassion, it is, I feel, incumbent upon us to do what we can to help alleviate the suffering of these people.

I submit that my bill, as well as similar legislation, which has been introduced, accomplishes this without creating an imbalance in the previous immigration legislation of this Congress.

I want to congratulate the distinguished Committee Chairman, Mr. Celler, the very able Subcommittee Chairman, Mr. Feighan, as well as the Subcommittee Members, Congressman Rodino, Congressman Donohue, Congressman Dowdy, Congressman Moore, Congressman Cahill, and Congressman MacGregor, for taking the initiative and acting with dispatch and wisdom to extend American assistance in the wake of this natural disaster.

The record shows that the compelling evidence in favor of early enactment of this legislation is overwhelming. I urge, therefore, that this Subcommittee, as well as the Committee and the Congress, act expeditiously and favorably on the legislation in order that our country may be of maximum assistance to our staunch ally, Italy, in this calamity.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK J. BRASCO

Mr. Chairman, I speak in support of my proposed amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act, H.R. 14857 for facilitation of entry of Sicilian earthquake refugees into this country. Though my amendment changes the letter of the law, it enhances rather than changes the spirit. The fundamental spirit of our immigration law compels implementation of America's historic purpose—the purpose of providing opportunity to people who deserve opportunity. Past fulfillment of this purpose, that is, provision of opportunity to our ancestors, has led America to greatness. Today the spirit of the immigration law is the same: to provide new hope and opportunity to those who are worthy of better ways of life.

Just as eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, we must be constantly aware of changing circumstances which accordingly necessitate changes in the lettering of the law, so that that spirit remains the same. The tragic events in Sicily present such changed circumstances. Villages have been destroyed and thousands are homeless, without livelihood. But unlike the immigration waiting-lines of all other countries, that of Italy extends completely back to 1955. Therefore, the eligible homeless Sicilians applying for emergency relief through entry into this country, cannot be presently admitted without causing further delay to those applicants who have already been waiting over twelve years for new life and opportunity in America. Of course, if the Sicilian refugees were put at the end of the line, a delay of twelve or more years would afford no emergency relief.

H.R. 14857 provides for issuance of two thousand special visas for those Sicilians who are unable to return to their homes and are in urgent need of the essentials of life. In this way, the earthquake victims would receive the emergency relief, and the lines of worthy applicants waiting for the chance to make better use of their talents and abilities in America would not be swollen even more than it is already.

I should point out that the spouse and children of the Sicilian refugees receiving the special visas would receive visas also, without being included in the numerical

limitation. Therefore, H.R. 14857 would possibly provide not merely for the granting of refuge to 2,000 individuals, but to 2,000 entire families.

Our Nation, needless to say, has prospered from the contributions of its immigrants. The latest statistics indicate that our unemployment rate is the lowest in decades. I see no reason to think then, that there is any less scope for their talents in America today than in the past.

Our Nation has historically provided salvation to refugees who seek liberty. The most recent examples of course are the Hungarians and Cubans. I submit however, that relief for refugees from natural disasters deserves no less consideration than that for political refugees. The maxim is often quoted that the people have only themselves to blame for bad government, that they receive the quality of government that, owing to their vigilance, they deserve. I do not pass on the accuracy of that maxim. But I do say unequivocally that no people deserve an earthquake, and certainly have not themselves to blame for it. Let us then provide means for entry of the victims of the Sicilian disaster, who otherwise cannot enter, as we have provided for refugees of dictatorial government.

STATEMENT OF HON. DOMINICK V. DANIELS

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of Subcommittee No. 1 of the House Committee on the Judiciary, it is a great honor to be with you today to testify in support of my bill, H.R. 14859, to permit persons made homeless by the recent earthquakes in Sicily to be permitted to come to this country as immigrants.

As present law now stands, these people could not come to this nation because of the limitation of 20,000 persons per year admitted under the quota of any single nation.

Under my bill the annual limitation of 170,000 immigrants per year to be admitted to the United States would automatically be raised in order that immigration from other nations would not be curtailed.

Mr. Chairman, America has always prided herself on her humanitarian image and for us to extend a hand of welcome to these people uprooted by an act of nature is in the finest American tradition.

I commend all members of this subcommittee and indeed, all members of the Full Committee for their willingness to hold early hearings on my bill and the many other bills to accomplish this end introduced by many members of both Houses of Congress.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. EDNA F. KELLY

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, I wish to express my interest in my bill, H.R. 14861 and similar legislation authorizing the immediate entry into the United States of 2,000 natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968; are unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily; and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life.

The spouse and the children of the alien if accompanying or following to join would be allowed entry to this country but would not be counted in the numerical limitation.

This legislation if enacted would exempt the victims of the tragic earthquakes in Sicily from the normal country quota limitation of 20,000; they would, however, be required to fulfill the eligibility requirements established under the present Immigration and Naturalization Act.

In the past through special legislation in 1958, the United States has been a haven to the homeless and the suffering Portuguese victims of the volcanic eruptions in the Azores. The enactment of Italian emergency immigration legislation would be in the best traditions of America's humanitarian spirit. Although the United States Government has joined the Italian Government in relief efforts in providing temporary housing, food and medical supplies, many of the estimated 40,000 earthquake victims who have no hopes of rebuilding their homes and businesses, would through the enactment of this urgent legislation, be given the opportunity to start a new life and to be united with their families in the United States.

I respectfully urge this subcommittee to give every consideration to favorably considering my bill, H.R. 14861, and similar legislation.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH G. MINISH

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee: I am gratified at your prompt attention to the pending legislation to offer relief to the victims of earthquakes in Sicily. I speak in support of H.R. 14862, introduced by me on January 25. The bill would amend the immigration laws so as to admit victims of the Sicilian earthquakes. We acted in accordance with the humanitarian principles upon which this nation was founded when we amended the law for admittance of refugees of Hungary and Cuba whose home lands were ravished by Communism. We thereby proved to the world that such noble and enlightened spirit is as alive in America today as always. I recommend that we yield to the same spirit of generosity and nobility that compelled us then, by admitting not only refugees of the plague of Communism, but also refugees of the plague of the natural disaster which has so recently devastated entire villages of Sicily.

An estimated five hundred Sicilians are dead, an estimated one thousand are injured. Many reliable sources report that these figures will increase. However, I direct the Committee's attention to another figure—the figure of ten thousand Sicilians left homeless in sub-freezing temperature.

As we have inscribed on the base of the Statute of Liberty, one of the guiding principles of this nation has been to offer refuge to the weary and the homeless. But let us not think that homeless Europeans have been the only beneficiaries of our magnanimity. We ourselves are. Our nation prospered from its own generosity. It has risen to greatness because of the quality of its immigrants. Let us remember then, that Sicily is one of the oldest centers of our Western civilization. In Sicily, learning, art and commerce flourished when almost all the rest of Europe had not yet awakened from the Dark Ages. I mention this factor so as to emphasize that with admittance of the Sicilian earthquake refugees we would be enriching our society and industries with a people whose talents and traditions have been in the process of development since the very awakening of modern civilization.

Recent reports indicate that Gibellina, a town of 7,000, was completely destroyed. More than half the buildings of Santa Margherita, with 9,000 inhabitants, have been destroyed. I mention, of course, only part of the damage. Our cities and towns can easily absorb these people whose own dwelling places have suddenly, over night, ceased to exist. And in the process, as I have shown, America stands to benefit.

Even before the earthquakes, re-settlement of refugees in this country was a prominent matter for consideration of this Congress. Now because of unexpected circumstances it is of greater urgency. My bill would meet the emergency by authorizing issuance of two thousand special immigrant visas to natives of Italy, to quote the bill directly, who "were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968, and are unable to return to their usual place of residence in Sicily and are in urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life." The spouse and children of any such alien may be issued special immigrant visas notwithstanding such numerical limitation.

I must emphasize that the bill would in no way relax the eligibility requirements for admittance to the United States. It would admit those worthy and able Sicilians who look toward America for hope, as did our ancestors, only because after the cruelest act of nature, in spite of their industry and frugality, they suddenly find themselves without shelter and without sustenance. I submit that by our most basic traditions—indeed traditions which are the reason for our being here ourselves—their hope should be fulfilled.

I respectfully urge speedy action on this urgently needed legislation.

STATEMENT OF HON. FERNAND J. ST GERMAIN

Mr. Chairman, the tragedy to which the people of Sicily were recently subjected has been the cause of great concern by the people of this nation, many of whom claim this land to be their native land.

The tragic events associated with the Sicilian earthquakes have indeed touched the hearts of all Americans. While many Americans have already contributed towards providing relief to the victims of the Sicilian earthquakes, many other Americans would also like to make a contribution.

One of the ways in which all Americans can share in helping the displaced people of Sicily is to provide, through legislation enacted by the Congress, an opportunity to come to our country.

On January 25th, I submitted a bill, H.R. 14863, to provide two thousand special immigration visas to those natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily and are unable to return to their usual places of residence in Sicily.

I believe that this legislation will provide a strong affirmation of American compassion for the Sicilian people victimized by these earthquakes and will also provide these displaced victims of a truly tragic event with an opportunity to begin life in a new country which all of us know to be the greatest of all nations.

It would be the most wonderful form of relief that I can think of and I, therefore, urge that this Committee act expeditiously and favorably on my bill.

STATEMENT BY HON. PAUL A. FINO

Mr. Chairman and members of this distinguished subcommittee, I firmly support my bill H.R. 14884 and other bills to permit several thousand people uprooted by the recent earthquakes in Sicily to come to the United States to live.

This bill would make available 2,000 special immigrant visas only to those earthquake victims uprooted from their homes and in urgent need of assistance. The wives and children of such aliens would also be assisted by the issuance of special visas. Thus, the bill could help as many as ten thousand people. The visas which would be issued under the bill would be outside of the regular immigration ceiling so that no other potential immigrants would be affected or displaced. However, prospective immigrants would still have to fulfill the present legal requirements as to health, good character, etc.

There is clear precedent for this sort of legislation. Back in 1958, a similar bill was enacted to help victims of a volcanic eruption in Portugal's Azores Islands.

I believe that this new situation is equally compelling and perhaps more so. Many of the Italian earthquake victims, unlike the Portuguese, are also close relatives of United States citizens who have encountered long delay in obtaining visas to join their families in the United States.

These are good bills in a good cause, and I hope that this committee will report them favorably for House consideration.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES S. JOELSON

Mr. Chairman, I have been pleased to co-sponsor the measure pending before the subcommittee offering relief to homeless victims of the recent earthquakes in Sicily.

The bill under consideration today would authorize the issuance of 2,000 special immigrant visas to those who are now homeless and therefore urgently in need of assistance. The 2,000 aliens who qualified for these visas could bring their spouses or children to the United States as well, without having them charged against present quotas. Such a provision is necessary to insure swift issuance of visas to these needy applicants without separating families. However, the aliens must still qualify for their visas under the Immigration and Nationality Act and, as stipulated in Section 3 of the bill, visas cannot be issued immediately upon application. This would permit consular authorities time to process visa applications and eliminate undesirable applicants.

Another important provision of this legislation is the section exempting from payment of the usual visa fees the aliens issued visas under this act. Under such grim circumstances the usual charge for the privilege of gaining entrance to the United States can be lightly waived.

I believe the proposed measure will prove to be a solution for many of the unfortunate residents of Sicily who were uprooted. I hope the committee will agree, and that it will report the bill out favorably and recommend its consideration by the Congress speedily.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM A. BARRETT

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to present my views and support of the pending legislation to offer relief to victims of the earthquakes which occurred earlier this year at Sicily, Italy. As you know, I introduced H.R. 14943, which you have for consideration. This proposal will

authorize the issuance of 2000 special immigration visas to Sicilians, who are unable to return to their place of residence and are in urgent need for the essentials of life, and who seek to enter the United States as immigrants. The bill also provides that the spouse and children of such aliens, if accompanying or following to join, may be issued special immigrant visas notwithstanding such numerical limitation.

As I said at the time I introduced this proposal: "The American people and the Government of this great Nation have always generously responded to the plight of human suffering—throughout the world and without regard to the race, color, or creed of those who have suffered. We have a history of opening our doors and hearts to those stricken by disaster."

Whether it be the bill which I introduced or another bill before this Committee to accomplish the same end, there is an urgent need for immediate action. I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your prompt consideration of this much needed, humanitarian proposal. In past instances the Congress has moved promptly and deliberately to alleviate the conditions of other ethnic groups in similar circumstances. We can hope it will do the same in this instance.

Germane to the matter before you for consideration is a letter which I received from the American Committee on Italian Migration, wherein that wonderful organization pledges its assistance and services in the resettlement of those refugees who will benefit from this emergency legislation. I believe that the contents of this letter should be called to the attention of this Committee and the Congress and therefore respectfully request that it be included in the hearing record following my statement.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I urge the prompt approval of this legislation by the Committee and its report to the Congress at the earliest possible time for action.

Thank you.

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON ITALIAN MIGRATION,
New York, N.Y., February 7, 1968.

DEAR MR. BARRETT: The recent earthquakes in Sicily have caused damages which have not yet been accurately assessed. Notwithstanding the fact that the Italian government has allocated a large amount of money for repairs and reconstruction, and that voluntary organizations are exerting a remarkable effort in alleviating suffering through relief projects practically throughout the world, there will remain a good number of refugees, possibly thirty or forty thousand, people whose homes were completely destroyed and who must start anew.

We have been gratified in noting your prompt response to this human problem so tangibly expressed by introducing emergency legislation in behalf of the Sicilian refugees.

We concur with your thinking that immigration is the only means of relief for several thousand of these refugees. While in fact many will prefer to settle in continental Italy and some in other countries of Europe or elsewhere, it is certainly to be expected that a good number of them will look for a better opportunity in life by migrating to this country.

The admission of several thousands of Sicilian refugees will further prove the solidarity of the United States with the Republic of Italy. Further, it is our opinion that such immigration will not create undue difficulties in resettlement in this country. It can be safely anticipated that they will be smoothly absorbed into the already assimilated Italian-American community. It will, in fact, be recalled that under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, sixty thousand Italians were admitted into this country and smoothly resettled largely through the assistance of Catholic Relief Services and the American Committee on Italian Migration.

We favor and support emergency legislation in which the principle is the alleviation of the tragic human distress, and in which the sole criterion of eligibility is the refugee status of the applicant.

As before, this Agency pledges its assistance and services in the resettlement of those refugees who will benefit from this emergency legislation.

Appreciative of your interest and support and confident that you will continue your efforts toward speedy enactment of emergency legislation, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Rev. JOSEPH A. Cogo, C.S.

STATEMENT OF HON. CORNELIUS E. GALLAGHER

Mr. Chairman, on January 15, 1968, a series of disastrous earthquakes shook western Sicily. Hundreds of people perished in the 51 towns and villages affected. Thousands were injured. So far more than 250 bodies have been found, but hardly a day passes that some more victims are not discovered amid the wreckage. Most of the towns have been reduced to piles of rubble. Structures left standing after the ferocious force of the earth tremors are unsafe for future habitation and will eventually have to be torn down. Disease is rampant.

Mr. Chairman, the wake of human suffering and misery that has followed the January earthquakes is tremendous. Families—many having already suffered the death or grievous injury of one or more members—are consigned to existing in temporary tent cities. Experts predict that it will take years to clear away the wreckage and rebuild a normal existence in the areas worst-hit by the quakes. The Italian government is now constructing army-type barracks to house those who have lost their homes and possessions. Many have left for other parts of the country. Families are being forced to separate in order to exist.

Mr. Chairman, in a humanitarian response to the sufferings and hardships of those unfortunate people of western Sicily I introduced a bill on January 30 to make a special exemption in our immigration laws which would allow those natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes after January 12 to come to America. I feel that this legislation is well in keeping with the established American tradition of offering a haven to the distressed victims of oppression or disaster.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that this committee look with compassion on the distressed circumstances and sufferings of our fellow men and approve this legislation. We can give a measure of hope for the future to those who can now see only extended hardships, deprivation and despair.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES J. HOWARD

Occasionally in the course of human history, natural catastrophes occur rendering man helpless before the elements. These events, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tidal waves, and floods, leave man agape at the awesome power of nature. In previous ages all that man could do was to bury his dead, comfort his injured, move, and start all over. This complicated age has precluded such simple remedial activity, yet the destructive forces of nature continue to play havoc with human fortunes. Today we have the opportunity to assist our fellow man most recently ravaged by the Beldame.

Since the fourteenth of January, 1968, over 110 earthquake tremors have shaken the western portion of the island of Sicily, taking 235 lives and injuring over 625 residents, while causing over \$435 million damage. But these figures tell only part of the story, for the real tragedy is the plight of the survivors, over 63,000 of whom are homeless with 14,311 men unemployed as a result of the destruction of the existing factories. The task of reconstruction is beyond the means of many of those most affected by the earthquakes.

These people do not want charity, but rather the chance to pull themselves up by their bootstraps as have so many Americans in the earlier years of this nation. Thus I was happy to introduce HR 14948, a bill identical to the legislation introduced by the dean of the New Jersey congressional delegation, the Hon. Peter W. Rodino, to grant special visas to the victims of the Sicilian earthquakes. These visas would permit 2,000 of those left homeless and in need of assistance for the essentials of life to enter the United States without affecting the quota of immigrants for Italy. The immediate family of these workers would also be allowed entry to accompany or to follow to join their men. All those entering would of course be subject to the existing regulations concerning health and good character.

There are four important arguments in favor of this legislation: precedent, the humanitarian tradition of the United States, the familial ties of many of those who would be admitted, and the economic benefits to the nation from the skills of these immigrants.

In 1958, the Congress passed a similar non-quota visa measure for the relief of 1500 Portuguese victims of volcanic eruptions in the Azores. This action underscores the humanitarian tradition of the people of the United States, who have always been willing to assist needy persons seeking the means to lift themselves out of the depths of poverty, ignorance, and ill-fortune.

Many of those who would be admitted have close relatives already in America and this bill would cause the reunification of many families separated by the formidable Atlantic. Those who would be admitted would also enhance the American economy with the skills they bring with them, for many of them are skilled craftsmen in the tradition of Italian quality.

In conclusion, let me state that the arguments in favor of helping our fellow man on the island of Sicily are so overwhelming that passage of this legislation is demanded by the conscience of every Member and by the moral conscience of the entire American people. The good it will do will not be measurable solely in terms of numbers or dollars, but will be of inestimable value for the pride and integrity of the Sicilians and in the prestige and position of the United States, which has always been willing to open its "golden door" to the "homeless, tempest-tossed" masses, and now more than ever, in the hour of their desperate need.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT L. LEGGETT

Mr. Chairman, I have introduced special legislation, under the bill number H.R. 14949, to authorize the immediate entry into the United States of 2,000 natives of Italy and their families who have lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the tragic earthquakes in Sicily a few weeks ago.

We are all by now well acquainted with the tremendous damage to life, livelihood and property that has been caused by the quakes. I will not belabor the point except to point out that even with several hundred dead, with injured numbering in the thousands, and with an estimated one-third of the over 100,000 persons driven from their homes having nothing left to return to, the situation continued to deteriorate.

About 10 days after the quakes, severe storms pounded the disaster area. Rain, hail and cold winds turned the tent camps and improvised shelters of some 80,000 displaced refugees into quagmires and brought warnings of possible epidemics. We should not forget that they too are now experiencing their winter season.

As of this Wednesday, February 20, a State Department spokesman estimated that 30 to 40,000 persons were homeless.

The United States has already done an admirable job of providing short term medical aid and supplies of all types, but these actions are as I said "short term". Unfortunately, the effects of the disaster will be a much longer term. For example, at least six towns—Montevago, Gibellina, Salaparuta, Santa Margherita di Belige, Poggioreale and Camporeale—with total populations of 35,000, have been declared totally uninhabitable, probably for a year or more.

My legislation would provide some of the needed long term relief.

My bill if enacted would make available 2,000 special immigrant visas to those persons uprooted from their homes and in urgent need of other assistance. The wives and children of such aliens would also be issued special visas. In total, this bill might benefit some 10,000 to 20,000 persons depending on the number of quake victims who want to immigrate to the United States.

Prospective immigrants will have to fulfill the eligibility qualifications for immigration under present law as to health, good character, et cetera.

Any visas issued would not in any way affect our present immigration quotas nor affect the status of other prospective immigrants who are not victims of the quake.

In closing I want to stress the need for haste in the enactment of this legislation. The Italian Government has been reacting well both to the situation and to this legislation. However, hasty action on our part will go a long way toward relieving the enormous pressures they are now working under.

For these reasons I urge the prompt adoption of this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES J. DELANEY

Mr. Chairman, I deeply appreciate this opportunity to express my strong support for H. R. 14806 and similar measures, including my own bill, H. R. 14958, which provide relief to victims of the recent Sicilian earthquakes.

This nation's response to the Sicilian tragedy was the immediate extension of aid in the form of food, medicine, clothing, and shelter tents. The legislation

being considered today constitutes a further extension of American aid by making available special immigrant visas to these earthquake victims.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, at least six towns between Palermo and Trapani were totally uninhabitable due to a series of earthquakes and tremors accompanied by a cold wave, floods, and thunderstorms. The result was an estimated 80,000 refugees with some 300 casualties.

The immediate and continued response of the American people to these events is in keeping with our tradition of compassion for those suffering disasters and emergencies. This compassion has manifested itself in special legislation passed by this Congress to aid the victims of such disaster. As early as 1812 Congress appropriated funds to aid the suffering of Venezuelan earthquake victims. In 1847 two naval ships were authorized for the transportation of American contributions to Ireland and Scotland during their terrible famine. The record of such American aid is long and distinguished, including, for example: aid to Cubans suffering the aftermath of the Spanish-American war in 1899; aid to victims of an Italian earthquake in 1909; aid to the starving people of Russia in 1921; aid to victims of the Japanese earthquake in 1925; and aid to the Chilean earthquake victims in 1960.

Further, Mr. Chairman, there is established precedent for the type of legislation being considered today. As our distinguished colleague from New Jersey, Mr. Rodino, who serves so ably on this Subcommittee, pointed out in his remarks on the floor of the House on January 25, 1968, similar assistance was provided to the Portuguese victims of volcanic eruption by the Act of September 2, 1958, Public Law 85-892.

This traditional American compassion for the unfortunate is the prime consideration before us. However, there is another factor that should be considered in your deliberations. That is the fact that this nation has a long enduring common bond with the people of Italy. This unique relationship was well expressed by Albert Q. Maisel in his book, *They All Chose America*. In speaking of the Italian immigrants he said:

"[They] have created a stream that flows both ways, between the land they left and the one to which they came. Over it courses a commerce not merely in goods but in art and music, in cooking and song, in language and customs, in ideas and ideals; a cultural interchange that has made all Italy a little bit American and given all Americans some share in the great Italian heritage."

A nation with whom we have close, common ties, Mr. Chairman, has experienced a terrible disaster. Our nation immediately responded with aid. I consider the passage of this legislation a further extension of this aid. It has a noble purpose, and is entirely in keeping with American precedences and traditions.

Thank you.

STATEMENT BY HON. LESTER L. WOLFF

Mr. Chairman, I greatly appreciate this opportunity to submit this statement in support of my bill, H.R. 14968.

The United States has historically offered open arms to peoples oppressed and peoples who find themselves the victims of a natural disaster. It is certainly part of the American destiny to fulfill such a role. As His Holiness the Late Pope Pius XII said: "The American people have a genius for splendid and unselfish action, and into the hands of America, God has placed the destinies of afflicted humanity."

Affliction, in the form of a series of most violent and destructive earthquakes, struck the Island of Sicily last month. In a grave natural disaster hundreds were killed and thousands left homeless.

Now I ask that consistent with our heritage we open our arms to the afflicted people of Sicily. H.R. 14968 proposes that the United States permit 2,000 victims of the Sicilian earthquakes and their dependents to enter the United States.

There is, as you are well aware Mr. Chairman, adequate precedent for such legislation. After the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and again after the communist takeover in Cuba, the United States opened its arms to people in need. What is proposed for the victims of the Sicilian earthquakes, then, is not unique; a special case is not being made.

At this point it is appropriate to note that Italian immigration, under existing law, is often quite difficult. To those who have suggested that there exists a discriminatory policy toward Italian nationals wanting to enter the United States, we should through prompt passage of H.R. 14968 (or an identical piece of legislation) demonstrate our deep respect and friendship for Italy.

It is only just and proper that the United States continue on our path of friendship and humanitarian concern by welcoming those made homeless by the recent earthquakes in Sicily.

STATEMENT OF HON. JACOB H. GILBERT

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you in support of my own bill, H.R. 15028, and similar bills to offer relief to victims of the recent earthquake in Sicily.

I urge the committee's approval of this legislation to open the doors of the United States to these unfortunate victims. The earthquake killed some 235 people and left 65,000 homeless. It is contrary to the tradition of our country to stand by indifferently in the face of such suffering. It is essential that we respond with open hearts, particularly in view of the long history of warm relations between the United States and Sicily. Surely we shall in future times be able to measure the benefits of our own country of welcoming 2,000 Sicilians to our shores.

Mr. Chairman, Sicily has always been a poor island, scarce in the opportunities it has offered to its citizens. It has sent many of its finest people to the United States, where we have been amply repaid for our hospitality by the important contributions they and their heirs have made to American society.

This bill provides simply for the issuance of 2,000 special visas to victims of the earthquake. The Administration has come to the support of this measure and has indicated that it is in the national interest. The Justice Department and the State Department are in favor of this legislation, that is in the highest tradition of our country which has, on so many previous occasions, offered a helping hand to victims of natural disasters.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, and again I respectfully ask your favorable consideration of this legislation.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD L. OTTINGER

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to speak in support of my bill, H.R. 15050, and other legislation designed to permit the immediate admission into the United States of victims of the disastrous Italian earthquakes. I commend you and the subcommittee for taking such prompt action on this vital matter.

I know that all of us were deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic earthquakes which occurred in Sicily last month. Thousands of Sicilians lost their lives, homes and livelihoods as a result of this great natural disaster. Emergency shelter and assistance were provided for most of these people but I understand that many of the temporary quarters were destroyed by subsequent tremors and floods. Unfortunately, the outlook is not encouraging and the future is bleak in this underdeveloped area.

The United States Government has joined the Government of Italy in its relief efforts and we have made available temporary housing, food supplies and medical services. I've been informed that we have also pledged to help those who choose to remain in Sicily to rebuild their homes and lives. I'm afraid, however, that this is not enough as the earthquake damage was too great and there's little hope of rebuilding a large number of the farms, shops and villages which were destroyed.

Various nations of Western Europe have opened their doors to the earthquake victims. However, although many of these homeless people are close relatives of American citizens and have already waited for a considerable time to obtain visas to join their families in this country, our immigration laws do not take their current plight into account and they are counted against the ceiling of total Italian immigration. It seems clear, therefore, that the Congress has a great moral obligation to pass legislation authorizing special immigrant visas for the immediate entry into the United States of Italian earthquake victims. My bill, H.R. 15050, authorizes 2,000 special immigrant visas while others authorize different numbers. Nevertheless, whatever the number, this special legislation is desperately needed.

This legislation is certainly consistent with our traditional policy of aiding those made homeless by catastrophe or oppression and similar legislation was enacted in 1958 to assist Portuguese victims of the volcanic eruptions in the Azores.

My bill applies to only those earthquake victims whose homes and means of support have been destroyed and they must still fulfill all of the present eligibility requirements for the issuance of immigrant visas such as health, good character and so on. However, in light of their very poor financial situation, it does exempt these unfortunate people from paying the issuable visa fees. Furthermore, in order to preclude the needless separation of families and the imposition of additional emotional burdens, my bill provides that special immigrant visas shall also be issued to the spouse and children of any earthquake victim receiving a visa under this measure.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this legislation will make a very important contribution to the relief of an extremely tragic situation. I know full well that American citizens—including a good number of my own constituents—stand ready to offer their comfort and assistance and I believe we have an obligation to remove this legal barrier which threatens to prevent them from doing so. We must act with great urgency to help alleviate the suffering and distress of these unfortunate people and I urge that this legislation be favorably reported and promptly enacted.

Thank you again for affording me this opportunity to speak in support of this legislation.

STATEMENT OF HON. GEORGE P. MILLER

Mr. Chairman, I am highly appreciative of the opportunity to express my interest in H.R. 14806 and related bills, including my bill H.R. 15085, providing for the relief of certain Italian nationals who are refugees of the recent catastrophic earthquakes in Sicily.

This legislation is in the best tradition of this country in that it offers a refuge to victims of a great natural disaster who would otherwise remain homeless. Such an act of humanitarianism and friendship cannot fail to impress upon the people of Italy, and indeed all of Europe, that the United States has not abandoned its historic role as a haven for the victims of distress and disaster.

I have been contacted by several groups made up of Americans of Italian ancestry and I am satisfied that the persons who would be admitted into the United States under this legislation will be smoothly absorbed into American social and economic life.

This legislation will allow these people to share in the opportunities of this country and in turn to make their contribution to the greatness of the United States, as so many of all nationalities have done before them.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES A. VANIK

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on January 12, 1968, one of the most severe earthquakes in recent years struck the heavily populated island of Sicily. This disaster caused at least 235 known deaths in the island and left 57 orphaned children in its wake. In addition, some 625 Sicilians were injured. This was Sicily's first and most tragic loss, but the property damage was also devastating. Striking through three provinces, the earthquake caused nearly half a billion dollars worth of damage. At latest count, 8,880 homes were totally destroyed and 13,931 more were damaged, often severely. Translated into human suffering, these figures mean that some 63,138 Islanders were left homeless and are now living in the most temporary of shelters and tents.

Not only did the disaster of January 12th leave a trail of dead, injured and homeless people, but it destroyed places of employment throughout the island and caused massive unemployment, just when employment and earned income was most needed. In all, some 14,311 were left unemployed by the destruction of their workplaces.

In Sicily's time of need, I was gratified at America's immediate response to the disaster. By January 16th, a U.S. Army medical team had arrived and was operating in Sicily. In addition, food, tents, field kitchens, communications equipment and trucks were supplied. In all, some \$210,000 in disaster relief was provided from the Agency for International Development.

But Sicily faces a long-term problem of jobless, homeless displaced persons. Her own labor market is a surplus market, so that work and employment—and earned income—will be hard to find for the disaster victims.

America's long-term response to Italy's need lies in immigration relief. It is entirely fitting that we should provide such relief. Precedent is in Public Law 85-892 which provided immigration relief to some 4,800 Portuguese who had to leave the earthquake and volcano plagued Azores in 1957 and 1958.

Ordinary quota relief is not sufficient, since Italy has a backlog on immigration visas of about 60,000 people—of which 27,000 or so live in Sicily.

Thus, Mr. Chairman, I urge that the Committee accept some form of special immigration visa legislation for "natives of Italy who were uprooted by the earthquakes in Sicily subsequent to January 12, 1968." I have introduced such legislation, H.R. 15095, which is identical to legislation introduced by my colleague, the Honorable Peter Rodino, and which provides up to 2,000 special immigrant visas for heads of households.

With the backlog of visa applications in Italy, the way is paved for nearly instant relief, if some form of special visa legislation will only be approved by this committee and passed by the Congress. I hope that this can be done as soon as possible so that all unnecessary waiting and painful delay can be avoided and so that victims of this earthquake disaster may be established in new homes and new jobs—and in many cases, join American relatives in the United States.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM H. BATES

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to make this statement with respect to the urgent legislation your Committee is considering today to permit some of the homeless refugees of the recent Sicilian earthquakes to come to the United States to start life anew.

That I am very much in favor of this legislation is evidenced by my having introduced one of the bills before you, H.R. 15327, which is similar to Mr. Rodino's H.R. 14808, authorizing the issuance of 2,000 special immigration visas outside the present limited quota for Italy.

I was pleased to learn that both the Department of State and the Department of Justice have signified their approval of the basic objective sought by all of the bills being considered today. There is, however, one suggestion contained in the State Department report which I believe merits special attention. It is a proposal that legislation of the type I have introduced be amended so as to afford preferential treatment for those Sicilian earthquake victims who are the beneficiaries of approved petitions according them status under Section 203(a) (1) through (6) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Among the 30,700 holders of such preference status who are registered at the American Consulate General at Palermo are many of the refugees of the earthquake disasters, including some who are relatives of residents of my Congressional district in Massachusetts. These are all people who already have ties here in the United States to help rehabilitate them, and I feel that this is a highly important consideration. If some additional preference is accorded them in this relief legislation, therefore, they will be saved the added heartache of the otherwise further indefinite waiting period before they might receive their visas under the existing provisions of the law.

Additionally, I believe this legislation should also provide that any residuum of the total number of authorized special immigrant visas could be issued to similarly homeless persons who do not have the benefit of preference petitions.

I hope sincerely, Mr. Chairman, that the Congress will provide relief for as many Sicilian earthquake victims as deemed justifiable. While it has been my belief that the provisions of my bill, and others similar to it, are most desirable as far as they go, I wish to be recorded as strongly urging an amendment to the phraseology of a final bill to provide for the preferential treatment I have outlined.

Thank you for your kind attention to my views on this matter.

STATEMENT OF HON. LUCIEN N. NEDZI

I am pleased to join my many colleagues in introducing legislation to authorize the entry into the United States of 2,000 natives of Italy and their families who have lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the recent tragic earthquakes in Sicily.

While the United States should not, and cannot, shoulder the entire burden, we can help.

This proposed legislation is in our long and honorable tradition of lighting beacons, and providing refuge, for the victims of earthquakes and other disasters. In this instance, where the livelihood of the victims has been completely

destroyed, a helping hand from the United States would be an appropriate response.

The proposed legislation would complement the relief efforts we have already made to provide food and medical services.

The number of visas to be authorized in this instance would be outside any existing numerical ceiling on immigration from Italy. The special allowance would, in my judgment, be within the spirit of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

I urge favorable consideration of these proposals.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH Y. RESNICK

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. On January 12th, and for two to three weeks following this date, a series of devastating earthquakes wracked the southwestern tip of the tiny nation of Sicily, turning much of the region into heaps of rubble and leaving thousands of victims destitute and homeless.

Tragedy is not new to Sicily. The picturesque, but ill-fated island has been plagued by natural and human disasters for hundreds of years. But this was the worst tragedy in recent years.

And, as if the quakes did not cause enough death and destruction, the aftermath of rain, hail and cold winds washed out tent camps and improvised shelters of many of the refugees, and brought fear of possible epidemics.

In response to a request for assistance from the Italian Government, the United States stepped in and made available emergency supplies and services. The Agency for International Development allocated funds from its worldwide disaster relief contingency fund to meet the cost of U.S. Government relief assistance.

U.S. help also took the form of food, equipment, medical supplies and personnel, and airlifts—as much physical aid as was requested by the Italian Government.

But there is yet another way that we can help these homeless and hungry people—we can give them new hope and a new future here in the United States.

During my travels around New York States, I have been besieged by people asking me to do what I could to further aid the disaster victims. I believe there is a way that we can be of further help.

I have introduced a bill which would authorize special legislation to permit the immediate entry into this country of 2,000 natives of Italy and their families who lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the earthquakes.

These immigrants would be issued special visas so that their entry would not count against the ceiling on Italian immigrants permitted entry into this country. In this way, Italians who have already applied for entry into the U.S. would not be penalized. Wives and children of disaster victims would also be issued special visas so that actually some 10,000 to 20,000 people would benefit.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has always come to the aid of those who have asked for our help—and the victims of the Italian earthquake disaster are certainly no exception. I know that a number of my colleagues have introduced similar proposals, or have expressed interest in doing so. Because of the urgency of the situation, I strongly urge that this Subcommittee act on this legislation as quickly as possible.

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 26, 1968.

HON. MICHAEL FEIGHAN,
Chairman, Immigration and Nationality Subcommittee,
Washington, D.C.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am very appreciative of this opportunity to urge favorable action on H.R. 14808, a bill to facilitate the immigration to the United States of some of the unfortunate victims of the catastrophic earthquakes in Italy.

Surely there could be no more fitting application of the inscription on the Statue of Liberty than to these people who have lost their homes, positions, and business, many who have spent the winter living in tents.

The United States has always been quick to go to the aid of those who suffer from natural or political disasters. I hope your committee will take favorable action on this urgently needed legislation.

Hon. JOHN A. VOLPE,
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE,
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION,
Washington, D.C., February 19, 1968.

Hon. MICHAEL A. FEIGHAN,
Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN FEIGHAN: I want to thank you and your committee for the most humanitarian interest being shown for the victims of the recent earthquakes in Sicily.

We would like to lend our voice in support of your proposal and those of your colleagues in the House to enact legislation to provide for expeditious admission to the United States for some of these unfortunate persons who, because of natural calamity, have lost everything including their homes and have become displaced.

The resources of many governments and the voluntary agencies have been marshalled to provide for the immediate relief of these unfortunate persons. However, this is only a stop-gap and it does appear that the only possible hope for the future of thousands of these persons is through emigration.

You may be assured of our wholehearted support for any measure that will provide the desired relief. Thought might be given to the admission of those already registered for visas on the basis of petitions now approved. If legislation were enacted to grant a nonquota status to the beneficiaries of petitions approved prior to January 1, 1968, this would not only bring immediate relief to the earthquake victims but would also clear up the tremendous backlog of approved petition cases which from all indications will be a serious impediment to the orderly operation of the new immigration law when it becomes fully effective on July 1 of this year.

With kindest personal regards, I remain,
Most sincerely,

JOHN E. MCCARTHY, *Director.*

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