STATEMENT OF MR. MURRAY I. GURFEIN, REPRESENTING NATIONAL JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS LISTED BELOW

Mr. Gurfein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name has been given already, Murray I. Gurfein.

I represent today a number of national Jewish organizations who have submitted a general statement on the immigration legislation under consideration, which we have respectfully requested to be inserted in the record of these hearings. These include the American Jewish Committee; American Jewish Congress; Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; Jewish Labor Committee; Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.; National Council of Jewish Women; National Community Relations Advisory Council, the community relations coordinating body for six of these national Jewish organizations and seventy-four Jewish community councils in all parts of the United States, listed in the Appendix to this statement; Synagogue Council of America, coordinating body for rabbinical and synagogue groups representing Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jewry in the United States; Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; United Synagogue of America and United Hias Service.

In addition my organization, as the voluntary operating agency in the field of Jewish migration, has submitted a separate and complementary statement.

To save the time of this Committee and with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I will read only brief excerpts from the general statement of the various organizations listed and I will read in toto the United Hias statement after that.

In that way it will be unnecessary for me to ask the privilege of again appearing before the Committee although you were most generous in offering us that opportunity.

The excerpt I should like to read from the general statement is simply this: "For many years we have stressed the need for immigration legislation which among other things would abolish the national origins quota system and introduce the new method of selecting immigrants that will better reflect American concepts of the dignity and worth of the individual. The bills here considered will accomplish these purposes."
They would also give due consideration to such desirable ends as family reunion, the admission of persons with skills needed by the United States, and the granting of asylum to refugees, persecutees and escapees, objectives which we note have frequently been sponsored by the Chairman and other members of this Committee."

Now I should like to address myself to the United Hias statement.

We are an American Jewish voluntary organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, providing migration assistance and related services to Jewish refugees and migrants in various parts of the world. Our organization is now an octogenarian, having become eighty years of age this year.

On behalf of my organization, I wish to express my appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present our views on immigration bills currently under consideration by the Congress. I wish to take the opportunity also to express my appreciation to the Subcommittee for its actions during the period over since the end of World War II in recommending special consideration for refugees of all faiths to make it possible for them to emigrate to the United States, despite limitations of quotas under our current basic immigration legislation.

These recommendations by the Subcommittee and subsequent enactment of such legislation by the Congress demonstrated their understanding of the humanitarian problems of refugees resulting from war, Nazism, the spread of Communism and natural calamities. We have always joined with other organizations, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and non-sectarian, in supporting such emergency legislation. It has been the conviction of our organization, however, that the basic immigration legislation of the United States should be revised in accordance with our position of leadership in the free world. For this reason we have supported in the past, President Truman's and President Eisenhower's recommendations to revise the national origins quota system. We now wholeheartedly support H.R. 7700 and S. 1932, as recommended by the late President Kennedy, by President Johnson and supported by many members of both parties in the Congress.
The present bill provides for a gradual elimination of the national origins quota system. We are for this change for the reasons so eloquently stated by the President, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General and eminent Senators and Representatives of both parties. This bill is not intended to open the flood-gates. It does not substantially increase the number of immigrants who may be admitted. But it does do two things: First, it removes the stigma of second-grade nationality status from our statute books. Second, it enables a better selective system of immigration to function so that the skilled or the close relative is not barred merely because he was born in the wrong place.

Furthermore, we believe the special quota of refugees is the most reasonable method for Congress and the Administration to make it possible to meet unexpected refugee problems whenever they may arise. The members of Congress have always shown their sympathy to these problems but the existence of permanent legislation will make our action less complicated, less time-consuming and enable us to cooperate expeditiously with other free nations in meeting these problems.

In making these recommendations, I should like to say at the outset that at the present time, Jewish refugees and migrants do not constitute a major part of the prospective immigrants who are on the current waiting list of persons desirous of immigrating to the United States. The problems facing the Jews of Europe in the aftermath of World War II when six million had been murdered by the Nazis and when hundreds of thousands of survivors were seeking a home in safety, have in substantial measure been resolved.

This solution was achieved through the new opportunities for immigration to Israel which has received more than 1,100,000 immigrants, and through the opportunities offered by other free lands including the United States, Canada, Australia, Latin America and Western Europe. There are still, to be sure, a significant number of Jewish men, women and children, especially in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, who are desirous of joining their kin in the United States. Our major concern for a change in our immigration law is not only because of the people whom our agency serves.

We are for H. R. 7700 and S. 1932 because we believe that this legislation is fair, constructive and in the interest of the United States.

We would like to mention that in our 80 years of experience of resettling Jewish migrants in the United States, it has been demonstrated over and over again that these newcomers have made significant contributions to the economic and cultural development of this country. The members of this
Committee are familiar with the contribution of outstanding Jewish immigrants and children of Jewish immigrants in the fields of science and government: Dr. Albert Einstein, General David Sarnoff and Admiral Hyman Rickover; in medicine, Dr. Jonas Salk and Nobel Prize winner Dr. Selman Waksman, not to mention the long list of outstanding figures in government including members of this Congress.

Mr. Chairman, we hear talk occasionally that the immigrant is a threat to the employment of American workers. The Attorney General and the Secretary of Labor pointed out how minimal was the problem in relation to the numbers of immigrants permitted under this bill. I should like to make an additional point. Many of these people with creative spirit and energy quickly become American businessmen. They become founders of businesses and create jobs for others.

A recent study by the New York Association for New Americans found that of 100 Jewish families surveyed who were refugees from Hitler, 45 heads of families own and operate their own businesses. 22 of these are small family businesses. The other 23 employ about 130 people. Many of the others have become skilled workers in essential industries and others have helped to relieve shortages in the professions including medicine, chemistry and physics.

We feel certain that the immigrants to come will also contribute to the American economy.

Yet the impact of the immigrant upon America is not only in what he produces, America is a land in which immigrants have made their marks as loyal and dedicated citizens in war and in peace. They have contributed to the freedom under law that has made this Republic the greatest adventure in government known to man.

Hospitality to the stranger has long been a byword of our American culture. When the stranger who comes into our midst becomes one of us and contributes to the maintenance of our standards of liberty and freedom, it is both the immigrant and the nation who are benefited.

The farsightedness and generosity of spirit of the Congress of the United States has been shown in the past. Let me read to you a letter I received recently which should more appropriately have been addressed to the Congress itself:

"Your organization was kind enough to help my nephew Mr. Jacques T---- of Alexandria, Egypt to emigrate to the U.S.A. out of quota and settle in Los Angeles, California."
"I think you will be pleased and proud to know the accomplishment of said Jacques T."

1. He invented an electronic device which was used in the capsule of Astronaut Gordon Cooper.

2. He contributed in outstanding inventions and research in the firm which he works.

3. He contributed several scientific articles.

4. He has delegated several times to represent his company in Electronic Conventions.

"In stating the above facts, I would like to express again to you and to the personnel of the Has, my thanks. Very truly yours, J.J.H.--.""

As I said, that letter should more appropriately have been addressed to the Congress of the United States, which made it possible for this young man to come.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we are for this bill because it is workable and because it is in our national interest. We are for it because it redresses long standing grievances inherent in the very nature of the national origins quota system. We are for it because in our humble view, it will raise up the image of this country in every part of the world as the champion of fair opportunity and equal rights.

Mr. Feighan. Thank you, Mr. Gurfein, for your presentation.

Mr. Chelf?

Mr. Chelf. I have no questions.

Mr. Feighan. Mr. Poff?

Mr. Poff. I shall not examine the witness but I want to take this opportunity to pay my appreciation to the witness who was unintentionally and unavoidably inconvenienced when he appeared first to testify. I am sure I speak for all our colleagues when I say thank you.

Mr. Gurfein. Thank you, Congressman Poff. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chelf. May I say, too, I never felt so bad in all my life as I did then. We were just caught in one of those impossible situations with Committee hearings and floor work, and there it was.

Mr. Gurfein. I do appreciate the opportunity to come.
Mr. Chelf. Thank you for your understanding.

Mr. Feighan. You have been extremely considerate and kind and understanding. You realize, of course, the situation that faces this Subcommittee with reference to having testimony from witnesses. We are endeavoring to beat the deadline, as it were, before proposed sine die adjournment on August 22, and we are certainly doing our utmost to give each and every organization and individual who request the opportunity to testify the opportunity to do so.

It is our hope that time limitations do not preclude any organization or any individual. In the event time makes it impossible we will certainly make the hearings open and available for insertion of the testimony in the hearings of any person or organization who because of exigencies of time may be otherwise precluded from personal appearance.

Mr. Gurfein. I would like to add one point to my prepared statement if I may.

There is little opportunity for rebuttal and obviously the only questions the witness can ask are rhetorical questions. It struck me I would like to propose very respectfully that the existing legislation on the books is not holy writ. If we look at it from the point of view of what we would do now, that is to say what Congress would do now, I think it difficult to believe that we would go back to the census of 1920 in this year of 1964 or that we would subscribe to the national origins quota system.

It is therefore our request and our hope that the Congress will consider this immigration problem de novo from the point of view of method as the colloquy with Mr. Carey indicated, and that there be an affirmative justification now, not merely the passage of time, for any statement that Americans of a particular ethnic background are superior to Americans of another ethnic background.

I think if we have that in mind and if we have presented that to this Committee today, we should have felt our time was well spent.

Thank you again, gentlemen.

Mr. Feighan. Mr. Rodino?
Mr. Rodino. Mr. Gurfein, I wish to thank you for the presentation you have made. I am aware of the fine efforts of your organization and its many, many humanitarian interests.

I think your statement is eloquent and speaks for itself.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Feighan. Mr. Moore?

Mr. Moore. Mr. Gurfein, I want you to know I very much appreciate your statement. I read it completely previous to your recitation. I also want to say that I have been privileged on several occasions to have worked with Mr. Rice, whom I have seen at a number of refugee conferences. He does a very outstanding job for your organization.

In addition, Mr. Gurfein, may I say that I have also worked with representatives of Hias in Rome inquiring about some of the refugees now coming from Rumania and spent considerable time with your organization representatives there in analyzing some of the cases. I commend your organization for the work you have specifically done in the refugee field to which you devote a great portion of your time.

I think your statement today, while it is general with respect to our immigration law, makes the point which probably is not so very well understood, that those of the Jewish race represent so small a number on the waiting lists of the various over-subscribed groups who wish to emigrate into the United States.

Mr. Gurfein. We are talking as Americans across the board.

Mr. Moore. I appreciate your statement.

Mr. Feighan. Thank you, Mr. Gurfein and Mr. Rice.