

Table 3.—Number and percentage distribution of Indochina refugees, by quarters of coverage and sex, 1975–76

Quarters of coverage	Workers					
	Total ¹		Male		Female	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	57,802	100.0	37,990	100.0	19,586	100.0
1	6,558	11.3	3,201	8.4	3,331	17.0
2	7,684	13.3	4,028	10.6	3,618	18.5
3	7,043	12.2	4,033	10.6	2,986	15.2
4	9,367	16.2	6,228	16.4	3,096	15.8
5	13,119	22.7	9,836	25.9	3,231	16.5
6	11,930	20.6	9,115	24.0	2,781	14.2
7	1,371	2.4	921	2.4	444	2.3
8 ²	730	1.3	628	1.7	99	.5

¹ Includes 226 persons with sex unrecorded.

² The refugees did not begin entering the United States until the second quarter of 1975, but under the law a worker received 4 quarters of coverage for a calendar year if the maximum taxable—or specified amounts in self-employment or agricultural employment—was earned

(94 percent) were aged 15–49. For men, the proportion aged 15–49 was 93 percent; for women, it was 95 percent (table 2).

Quarters of Coverage, 1975–76

About 58,000 Indochina refugees worked in OASDHI-covered employment in the period 1975–76 and acquired at least 1 quarter of coverage (table 3). This figure represents about 43 percent of those to whom a social security number was issued and processed through the end of 1976. Fifty-three percent of the men workers issued numbers had acquired at least 1 quarter of coverage, compared with 32 percent of the women.

To be currently insured, a worker needs at least 6 quarters of coverage in the past 13-quarter period. At the end of 1976, 24 percent of the 57,802 refugees with quarters of coverage met this requirement. Among the men, 28 percent had 6 or more quarters of coverage; 17 percent of the women were currently insured.

Social Security Related Legislation in 1978*

During the second session of the 95th Congress the President signed into law more than a dozen bills relating to programs administered by the Social Security

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Administration. Relevant changes contained in the new laws include the following:

Public Laws 95–227 and 95–239 (enacted, respectively, on February 10 and March 1, 1978) liberalize the eligibility provisions and make other changes in the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, under which coal miners and their dependent survivors receive benefits for black lung disease. The new provisions were outlined in an earlier issue of the **Bulletin**.¹

Public Law 95–380 (enacted September 22, 1978) authorizes the issuance of substitute checks—including those for social security cash benefits, black lung benefits, and supplemental security income (SSI) payments—without requiring the recipient to sign a statement promising to repay the Treasury Department if both the original and substitute checks are lawfully cashed, except as the Secretary of the Treasury may require.

Public Law 95–458 (enacted October 14, 1978) provides for a special Federal payment of \$10 a month in lieu of food stamps to SSI recipients in California who generally would meet food stamp eligibility criteria. The payments will be made for 1 year—through September 1979:

Public Law 95–472 (enacted October 17, 1978) provides that any contribution, payment, or service excludable from an employee's gross income because it is under a qualified group legal services plan will also be excluded from "wages" for tax purposes under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act.

Public Law 95–588 (enacted November 4, 1978) provides a new method for determining Veterans Administration (VA) benefits: reducing the maximum annual VA benefit rate dollar for dollar by the other income of the beneficiary (such as social security benefits), including certain income of other family members. The law also provides for annual automatic indexing of the maximum annual pension rates to the consumer price index so that VA increases will coincide with increases in social security benefits.

Public Law 95–595 (enacted November 4, 1978) requires annual reports on the financial status of Federal Government and other public employee retirement plans (other than the social security and railroad retirement systems).

Public Law 95–600 (enacted November 6, 1978) forgives tax liabilities (including social security taxes) incurred in 1979 or earlier by businesses whose workers were treated as independent contractors but later were determined to be employees by the Internal Revenue Service; eliminates the requirement that employers report charge-account tips for tax purposes; increases the

¹ See "Black Lung Amendments of 1977," **Social Security Bulletin**, August 1978, pages 26–27.

Federal funds available for grants to States' social services programs from \$2.5 billion to \$2.9 billion in fiscal year 1979; triples the amount of Federal support for assistance programs in Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands and increases the Federal matching rate from 50 percent to 75 percent; and makes the earned income-tax credit permanent. The credit will continue to be disregarded for the purposes of federally financed public assistance programs, including SSI and aid to families with dependent children, through December 31, 1979; subsequently, it will be counted as earned income under the programs.

Public Law 95-602 (enacted November 6, 1978) authorizes the Secretary of Labor to establish a community service pilot program for handicapped individuals. Under this program, no wages, allowances, or reimbursements for transportation or attendant care will be considered as income or benefits for any other program or provision of Federal or State law, unless the Secretary makes a case-by-case determination of inequitable treatment. The law also requires that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare study the impact of vocational rehabilitation services on recipients of benefits under the social security and SSI disability programs. The study will include the cost and savings of services and recommendations for increasing the amount of savings.

Public Law 95-615 (enacted November 8, 1978) replaces the exclusion from social security coverage of self-employment income earned abroad by U.S. citizens with an overall income-tax deduction for excess foreign living costs, effective for taxable years after 1978. Persons may elect to use the deduction in place of the exclusion for the 1978 tax year.

Book Review

Social Security

Today and Tomorrow

By Robert M. Ball
528 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
\$14.95.

With a skill that blends experience in the field and knowledge of the subject, Robert M. Ball, former Commissioner of Social Security, guides readers through the pros and cons, past, present, and future, of the U.S. social security program. Using a question and answer format, the author begins with an historic survey of social insurance in the world. He moves from the question of "What is social security?" through various aspects of the elements of the program and how they

have changed over the years to conclude with "A Program for the Future," in which he presents 31 propositions. He also explains wage indexing, replacement rates, and other terms in easily understood language with good examples.

In reviewing this book for *The Washington Post*, Charles I. Schottland, a predecessor of Mr. Ball as Commissioner of Social Security, states, "The major controversies today center on methods of improving social security: its financing, the size of the payroll tax, the level of benefits and relation of social security to private pensions. Robert M. Ball deals with these issues . . . in simple nontechnical language. . . . there is no book presently available so full of specific information."

The all-encompassing scope of the book makes it an excellent text for those seeking basic information about the social security program. Each program area is considered in depth, creating a valuable tool for researchers. Cost-saving and cost-producing proposals are presented in table form, giving quick access to the data. For each change he suggests, the author shares his knowledge of how current practices began, the practical implications of the change, and arguments for and against it.

One cannot treat lightly the recommendations of an authority in any field, and certainly this author gives much food for thought along with his calls for change. He gives top priority to proposals to increase benefits for workers by 12.5 percent and at the same time scale down benefits for dependent spouses from one-half to one-third of the worker's benefit.

With regard to administration of the program, Ball urges a return to the original concept. He calls for a separate board or corporation to be established directly under the President, taking it out of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Financing also comes in for major consideration. Ball favors taxing the full payroll of employers, evenly dividing the contribution rates between employer and employee, and gradually introducing a contribution from general revenues. He concedes that general funding could lead to a program that is more welfare and less insurance, thus reducing public support. He therefore proposes limiting to one-third the Government contribution while continuing to use employer-employee contributions for the rest of the financing. He is adamant that social security funds be kept separate to protect long-term commitments. Social security benefits currently are not taxed, but the author proposes that in the future half the benefit be taxed to recognize the input that has been made by the employer.

Much attention has been focused on women and social security, and the author does not ignore problems

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