

A PAPER ON
IMMIGRATION
BY
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READ BEFORE

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That our present federal immigration laws permit an influx of immigrants of such quality and in such quantity as imminently to endanger the very foundations of our national life and American institutions has recently been so impressed upon the Tacoma Rotary Club that it feels justified in asking each club and the National Convention to join in a petition to Congress urging the immediate further restriction of immigration to our shores.

The following paper, here condensed, played an important part in crystallizing this opinion into the conviction expressed in the appended resolution.

Have this paper read at your next meeting. It bears a message. It will force thoughtful men to needed action.

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IMMIGRATION--PROMISE OR MENACE?

This study of our immigration problem presents very briefly the history of immigration and of restrictive immigration legislation, discloses the composition and present condition of the immigrant stream, and the effect of our immigration policy on our national life. Some solutions of the problem are suggested.

The year 1882 stands out as a prominent landmark in the study of immigration. Up to this time the stream of immigrants had steadily increased until in this year it reached 790,000, a figure which was not again reached until 1903. This year marks also the beginning of federal immigration legislation, and affords a definite line of demarcation between the so-called Old Immigration and the New Immigration.

Of the Old Immigration from 1819 to 1882, 95% came from Germany, the British Isles, and the Scandinavian countries and could be at least partially assimilated. This percentage had dwindled to 19 in 1907, when the total influx had reached 1,285,000. Of this 1,285,000 67% were from Italy, Russia and Austria-Hungary alone, and Southern and South-eastern Europe added enough to bring the figure to 81%.

The Commissioner General of Immigration has predicted that left unchecked

immigration would never again fall below the million mark. Economic laws operating at the close of the European war and the opening of the Panama Canal will turn toward our shores additional millions from Southern Europe who so differ from us physically, mentally and socially as to be totally unassimilable.

The history of legislation governing immigration may be summed up in a few words. The act of August 3, 1882, imposed a head tax, excluded all foreign convicts, and provided that the persons excluded should be returned at the expense of the ship owner. Since this law there have been passed various other laws which regulate the mode of entry, prohibit contract labor, limit the means used by the transportation companies in inducing aliens to migrate, provide for better conditions in the steerage, increase the head tax to four dollars, impose numerous punishments for the violation of these laws, and systemize the general routine in the business of regulating immigration. Besides, there have been further restrictions until at present the law so reads that the following persons may be excluded from this country by the immigration authorities; all Chinese, convicts, paupers, persons liable to become public charges, persons suffer-

ing from a loathsome or contagious disease, polygamists, epileptics, persons who have been insane within five years previous, persons who have had two or more attacks of insanity at any time previously, professional beggars, anarchists, prostitutes or women for the purpose of prostitution, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, persons afflicted with tuberculosis, persons having a mental or physical deficiency which may affect their ability to earn a living, persons who admit having committed a crime involving moral turpitude, persons who are supported by or receive in full or in part the proceeds of prostitution, and children under the age of sixteen not accompanied by at least one parent.

But these are absolutely all the aliens that can be kept out of the country under the present laws. Anyone whom the authorities can not clearly prove belongs to one of these classes is admitted. Still we hear people saying that we get only the best from Europe—only the purest stock. These people are all examined thoroughly before they leave their home country, yet in 1910 there were 33,606 sent back from our ports of entry. Of these there were 1077 idiots, 3254 with loathsome diseases, 15,605 liable to become public charges. Think of it, 33,606 sent back for causes that we have men-

tioned—and that after an examination had been made abroad and all the worst ones refused transportation. If our immigrants are "selected" woeful indeed must be the stock from which they are selected.

The causes of immigration are many and varied but they all hinge on underlying principles—dissatisfaction with one's lot at home and hope of improvement in the new country. This discontent arises naturally, through religious persecution, compulsory military service, and the chances of improving one's lot in the new country, or from artificial causes. These latter causes, which form a very large percentage of the whole, are based on a misconception of conditions in America.

The transportation companies, through their agents and returning immigrants, paint in much too bright colors the glories of life in America. They tell the poor European peasants of the wonderful freedom found in no other place on earth. Immigrants have actually landed on Ellis Island believing that gold could be picked up on the streets. Reasons for this are obvious. The steamship companies receive \$75,000,000 per year from the immigrants in fares to America. They have divided the countries between themselves, each one taking a certain

portion and there is no competition. By means of the most pernicious methods they have filled the people with discontent. They create the determination to migrate. True, there is a law against this but it is easily avoided. Certain it is that a great percentage of immigrants come to our shores who would never have started had they known the true conditions here in America. When it is realized that the railroads and steamship companies make millions from this stream from southern Europe, it is seen how difficult it is to get a real curtailment of immigration. They will not allow Washington to kill the goose which lays the golden egg.

Statistics, showing the condition and characteristics of the arriving immigrants, are anything but encouraging. In the first place the deception practised by the transportation companies in order to get the alien into this country, does not increase, in the mind of the alien, respect for our laws. Further if these people had any moral standard, when they left home their experiences in the steerage have shaken it to the foundation. The whole voyage, to say the least, is not conducive to a good start in the process of making citizens. By the time they have passed Ellis Island, a large percentage have been disillusionized and



are already sorry that they made the attempt. It is true that the immigrants themselves are not to blame for this, but neither is the United States government. We have the laws to stop this proselytizing, but it is impossible to enforce them. These poor people have been deceived. A great many are in heavy debt, having had to mortgage property for their transportation. If they ever had any sense of shame their experience destroys it. They are homesick, bitter and discouraged. What can we expect?

The social and economic condition of this immigrant stream as it leaves Ellis Island to search for work forbodes little good to America. As they come through the gates to our country, men of every nation, color and condition, we must look upon them as future American citizens if we are to welcome them. Our problem is assimilation—a remolding into our ways of living, our powers of thinking, our ideas of government and good citizenship, our ideals for home, for country, and for our civilization.

First, we notice that 85% of these people are mature men and women whose habits of life can not easily be changed. True they are at the most productive age, but they can not be easily influenced.

Second, we notice that 73% of the New Immigration are males who have left their families at home, so that they get no home life here. Says Prof. Jenks of Cornell, a member of the former U. S. Immigration Commission, "they come with the intention of enduring the hardships of toil for a season and then returning to Europe for their permanent place of abode. It seems of all the immigrants coming to this country, about one-third return to Europe, and it seems reasonably clear that approximately two-thirds of those who return to Europe remain there. This migratory tendency of the New Immigration has a most important influence on the difficulty of assimilation of the immigrants of the great body of American citizens."

Third, the professed occupation of the people is as follows: professional, .3%, skilled laborers 9%, farmers .9%, servants, common laborers, and farm laborers 68%, no occupation including women and children 21%. Of the English immigrants 30% are skilled, of the Scotch 38%; while of the Roumanians 2%, and of the Ruthenians 1.8% only are skilled in any way whatsoever. This means we have to provide work for about 3000 more absolutely unskilled laborers every working day of the year—3000 a day. This in itself is a herculean task.

Fourth, the illiteracy of the Old Immigration averages 2.5%, of the New 44%.

Fifth, the average amount of money per capita in the possession of each immigrant entering during 1910 was \$15.83, throwing these aliens within a few days upon their own earnings. The hardships these poor people undergo are pathetic in the extreme.

In order to be able to show the effects of immigration on this country, something must be known about the conditions of the immigrants after they have become established here.

The old immigration was toward the farms. In this manner vast territories were opened to cultivation, but now the new immigrants are turning to the most congested districts and are almost wholly engaged in some line of industrial labor, 89% of the immigrants now go to the North Atlantic and North Central states. The result is a congestion of the worst kind. The immigrants wishing to be with people of their own race, form colonies, thus almost completely isolating themselves from any Americanizing influences.

The home life of these people, the great number of whom are males, is not conducive to the making of Americans. They form the great percentage of the tenement districts of our cities. There are over 2,000,000 of these unmarried

men in this country. Can any one ask what this leads to? The slum with all its evils is the home of the foreign born.

The wage of these unfortunates is below the cost of bare existence if there is a family. If the wage is not kept down by the American manufacturer, it is lowered by the more enlightened of the immigrants themselves. Men who have been here long enough to know the language take advantage of the ignorance of their fellows in every conceivable way. This is called the padrone system. The newly arrived immigrant turns to a man from his own country for assistance. This is given and in return the padrone takes every advantage of his ignorant brother. Extortion is common, and is stopped only when the immigrant has become familiar with our customs, when he too becomes a padrone. Peonage is practiced to a large extent. Because the immigrant is afraid of the American bank, he gives his earnings to some friend, grocer or saloon man to keep. In this way a great system of pseudo banks has grown up, and needless to say the immigrant has lost heavily by trusting his friends. His illiteracy and inability to speak English make him an easy prey to every swindler.

In every way then is the immigrant surrounded by unwholesome conditions

which tend to keep him from being molded into an American citizen. There is no family life, no privacy, and, we must admit, little help given by the average American citizen.

In trying to show the effect of the new immigration on this country, it must be remembered that it has been going on only a few years and consequently some of the effects can not be proven by statistics. All that can be shown is a tendency in certain directions.

The first and greatest effect has been the lowering of the standard of living and a consequent racial displacement as a result of this low standard of living. In other words it is doubtful whether or not the 29 million immigrants we have admitted have really increased our population at all.

Because of their ignorance and willingness to work for a small wage, the immigrant keeps the wages of the native American at a very low figure. In colonial times when land was plentiful, the immigrant was welcomed because he tilled the soil and did not affect wages. Under these conditions the native Americans increased at a very high rate. The population was almost wholly native. They were one people with a vast expanse of virgin soil to be developed. These are ideal conditions for a rapid

increase of the native population. Between 1790 and 1830 the population increased from 4,000,000 to 13,000,000, or 227% in 40 years. At this rate of increase, the population of the U. S. in 1900 would have been over 100,000,000. Instead it was 76,000,000 including 19,000,000 immigrants. This shows that the native birth rate has fallen off rapidly. It is important to note that this decrease is noticeable about 1830 at just the time the effects of immigration were first felt. With the increase of immigration, the native birth rate has decreased until at present in New England it is not even maintaining itself. Wherever the immigrants congregated, there the decrease in the native birth rate has been most pronounced.

In the native American community, where the people desire to live as well as their neighbors and to educate their children, the native with his high standard of living finds it impossible to maintain this standard and raise his children as he wishes if he has thrust into his midst people whose standards are far below his own and who instead of considering children as an added expense look upon them as a means of livelihood because they put them at work as soon as possible. The native, with his high standard of living, finds it impossible

to maintain this standard and raise his children as he wishes. He must either lower his standard and keep the same sized family, or keep his standard and limit his family. The average American clings very tenaciously to his standard of living and the result is he limits his family. Instead of the immigrants forcing the native laborers into better places, they force them to limit the family so that the few born may have the better places. Competition with the foreigners compels young men to wait longer before marriage and the birth rate is cut in this way also.

As long as this country had a frontier, men forced out by foreign competition could push forward and bring land under cultivation, in this way maintaining their standards of living. But the frontier has gone. The ratio of man to land has decreased from 20.9 Sq. Mi. per man to .3 Sq. Mi. in 1910. There is little land now to be opened. The result is that the American laborer is forced into direct competition with the cheap immigrant labor, and his standard of living lowered.

There are few American laborers now. In some parts of the country the native population is not even maintaining itself. Not only this, but many people of real value to us are leaving. For example, from 1900 to 1910—175,781 Ameri-

cans emigrated to Canada. We should keep these people, but competition with foreign labor is driving them out. Says Prof. H. P. Fairchild, of Yale University, and an authority on immigration, "the standard of living is the index of the comfort and true prosperity of a nation. A high standard is a priceless heritage and should be maintained at all cost. The United States has always prided herself on the high standard of living of the common people. Immigration can have only one out-come—the depression of the wage scale of the American workman. If immigration has not absolutely lowered the wages and the standard of living of the American workmen, it certainly has kept them from rising to the level they otherwise would have reached." Authorities agree that immigration checks the native birth rate and tends to lower the standard of living of American workmen.

On the other hand, the increase of American born foreigners is very rapid. The fecundity of the immigrant women is very much greater than that of American women. The only addition to our native stock is by birth, while the foreign element is increased by over a million a year in addition to a birth rate nearly twice as great as our own. Today in our cities of over five hundred thousand

we have 33.6% of the entire population foreign born. Add to this, the difference in the birth-rate, and the outlook for native stock is none too pleasing.

In the matter of crime, it is difficult to say just what the effect has been. The immigrants commit crime more often because of their ignorance of our laws. While it can not be said that the foreigners increase crime beyond the percent of their population, yet they have changed the character of crime in this country, increasing crimes against chastity, and crimes of personal violence. These are especially noticeable in the activities of the Black Hand and the White Slave traffic. The activities of the Black Hand are well known as it is an organization, if such it may be called, of foreigners alone. The White Slave traffic is a business peculiar to the foreign element. Nearly all the persons deriving money from this source are foreigners. They work successfully because of the ignorance of the foreign girls. In this way prostitution and other forms of vice have greatly increased. "But," say some, "this may be true of the immigrants themselves but how about the children? They are brought up in America and become Americanized." If this were true, there would be no immigration problem. But it is not.

There is a marked tendency for the children of immigrants toward delinquency. Immigration reports show that the ratio of juvenile delinquency between the children of the native whites and the foreigners is out of all proportion.

Professor Fairchild states that this tendency toward lawlessness among the second generation of immigrants is indisputable, and is one of the most disturbing elements in the whole situation.

Pauperism and insanity are sources of further trouble. Investigation tends to show in many cities over one-half the paupers were foreign born.

As regards insanity, we find about the same average or even worse. In New York state the foreign element furnishes three-fourths of all the inmates of the insane asylums and it costs \$8,000,000 per year to care for them, making \$20,000,000 for New York state annually to care for its insane foreigners and its foreign born paupers.

In politics and in organizations of many kinds, we find the immigrant causing us trouble. Take Tammany Hall, for instance, an organization which could never have existed had it not been for the poor, ignorant foreigner. Tammany Hall for 20 years survived exposure, because it always had a fresh supply of foreigners to work with.

Other organizations such as the I. W. W. and the Red Socialists are composed of the foreign element. Such parties of malcontents create unrest, depress business, and do not add materially to the sum total of human happiness. "The plain truth is," says Prof. Ross, of the University of Wisconsin, and one of our authorities on immigration, "that rarely does any new immigrant bring in his intellectual baggage anything of value."

There is one more point. These immigrants from southern Europe are a floating population, most of them males, with no thought of America or of trying to become Americanized. They save what money they can and invest it in America? Indeed no. They send it back to the old country where it means more. In 1907 \$275,000,000 were sent back in this way. Four hundred dollars actual cash goes out for every able bodied laborer that enters. Count Wichenbury, an Austrian authority, says, "Italy, which was on the brink of economic ruin 20 years ago, is today, because of its emigration to the United States, financially so strong that she is able to carry on a long and costly war without the slightest convolution." What country supplies the money?

Many other things might be mentioned concerning the effects of immigration

but time forbids. It is sufficient that we realize the volume to be over 1,000,000 yearly. That the racial characteristics of these people makes them unfit for citizenship, and until we change the nature of the American himself there is little chance of Americanizing the immigrant; that the effects of immigration are: lowering of wages, displacement of native stock by decreasing the birth rate, lowering the standard of living, increase in the worst kind of crime, the increase of insanity and pauperism, the existence of such organizations as the I. W. W. and Red Socialists, the exportation of millions of gold, corruption in polities, and unrest among the laborers, foreigners as well as natives. "Something must be done and done immediately," says Prof. Ross, "If immigration ceased today, the burden from past neglect and exploitation would go on for years. Thoughtful people whose work takes them into the slime at the bottom of our foreignized cities and industrial centers find that deterioration is actually upon us."

We cannot allow this to continue. We dare remain indifferent no longer. It is high time for the American voter to interest himself in this question, and then do something. We will have to admit that we Americans are to blame for



many of the conditions surrounding the immigrant. We do not associate with them; we do not try to Americanize them. However, that does not alter conditions one whit. You can not change the American's unwillingness to associate with the Italians any more than you can remodel the Italian into an American citizen in a year or two. If immigration continues as it has, there are only two possibilities: first, the development of a new race in America, a race neither American, nor Italian, nor Russian—but a composite race; or, second, the growth of separate racial groups within this country, and this means absolutely no assimilation.

Do we want either of these? Our country has more laborers than it needs; we have agitation and unrest everywhere. Are we going to try some new remedy on this disease, or are we going to its source and restrict immigration?

Several methods have been suggested to restrict immigration, the best of which are as follows: **First**, the exclusion of those unable to read and write. This measure has three times passed both houses of Congress and been vetoed by the President. **Second**, the exclusion of unskilled laborers unaccompanied by wives or families. This would do away with the floating population and aid in

assimilation. **Third**, increase in the head tax. Canada has done this in the case of the Chinese. It now amounts to \$500 and is very effective. **Fourth**, the material increase in the amount of money required to be in possession of the immigrant at the port of entry. **Fifth**, the limitation of the number of each race arriving each year to a certain percentage of the average of that race arriving during a given period of years.

It is this last method that the Tacoma Rotary Club favors. It will cut down the immigration from Southern Europe and is absolutely fair to every nation. Our Japanese and Chinese restriction acts would then be unnecessary. In spite of all that has been published, the discussions, the dickerings in Congress; in spite of all the evils of unrestricted immigration, no efficient laws have been passed. Yet authorities are agreed that immigration should be restricted. Three Congresses have passed laws, but the great masses of the people have been indifferent. In vetoing the last immigration bill, President Wilson said: "If the people of this country have made up their minds to limit the number of immigrants by arbitrary tests and so change the policy of all generations of America that have gone before them, it is their right to do so; but I do not believe they

have. I respectfully submit that no one can quote their mandate to that effect."

Rotary can give this mandate.

We of Tacoma believe that no organization is better adapted to take this matter up and see it through. Rotary is a vital, living force in every community. It is exerting a powerful influence in each of the hundred and forty-seven cities where clubs exist. Let the different clubs discuss this question and at the international convention in San Francisco, let us get together, decide on the one restriction we want and then **Do Something**. This is not a political subject any more than is the management of our city parks. Religion does not enter into it. It is a burning national question which must be answered. It affects the very foundations upon which our country rests today. If the 20,000 members of Rotary get together and put their shoulders to the wheel we can accomplish anything. Every member of Rotary is a power in his community. We have accomplished wonders in our several cities, but the time has now come when we must do greater things. We have the opportunity to serve not only our city, not only our state, but the whole country, and in the end it will be better for all humanity. The Tacoma Club unanimously votes to take this step and we be-

lieve that the Rotary spirit is capable of putting an immigration restriction law upon the statute books. Are we willing to make the effort? Are we as citizens willing to give time and thought to one of the most vital questions before the American people today? Are we willing to forget ourselves and do something which will make our country a better and cleaner place in which to live? In these days of strife, is the protection of the Stars and Stripes worth it? Rotary answers aye.

The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the ROTARY CLUB OF TACOMA :

WHEREAS, It is our firm conviction that the immigrants we are now receiving so far exceed our powers of assimilation that they are menacing the very foundations upon which our American institutions rest; and

WHEREAS, Unprejudiced authorities who have given this subject the most exhaustive study agree that immigration should be further restricted immediately; and

WHEREAS, The European war and the opening of the Panama Canal mean more immigrants than we have ever before received; and

WHEREAS, The indifference of the voters alone will make possible the continuation of this deplorable state of affairs; therefore be it

RESOLVED, By the Rotary Club of Tacoma:

FIRST, That this Club demands, in the best interests of our foreign born population as well as our native element, the immediate restriction of foreign immigration to this country,

and a more rigid selection of those who would become immigrants.

SECOND, That we as a club, and individually, will use all means within our power to place the real facts of the immigration problem before the voters in Tacoma and the neighboring communities.

THIRD, That the Tacoma Rotary Club take up this question with every Rotary Club in the United States, asking each member of these clubs to inform himself on this subject so that the International Convention in San Francisco may take some decided stand, and by agitation throughout the whole country make it imperative that our government place an immigration restriction law upon the statute books.

FOURTH, That a memorial be sent to the next Congress by each Rotary Club asking for the immediate passage of legislation that will at once further restrict the immigration to this country.

FIFTH, That this Club urges the restriction of immigration by fixing the number of immigrants to be accepted from each of the foreign nations in accordance with a fixed percentage of the number of immigrants from any one nation who were admitted to citizenship in the United States within the past twenty-five years.

W. CARR MORROW, Chairman.
R. M. SHAFFER.
GEO. W. BALL.
A. J. RITCHIE.
J. B. KAISER.

