

A PAPER ON
IMMIGRATION

BY
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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 crystalizing 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.

direct.

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 effects 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-