

AMERICA OF THE MELTING POT COMES TO END

Effects of New Immigration Legislation Describe by Senate Sponsor of Bill-Chief Aim, He States, Is to Preserve Racial Type as It Exists Here Today

HOW NEW LEGISLATION WILL CHANGE THE FLOW OF IMMIGRATION FROM EUROPE TO THE UNITED STATES

The two maps show, by comparison, the changes that will take place in the complexion of our immigration if the present quota scheme is abandoned in favor of a law based on the immigration total of 1890, as proposed. The various shadings indicate the size of the quota allowed each country, the range being from black, indicating the countries from which the flow will be heaviest, to white, where it will be held down to a minimum.

Senator Reed was champion of the new immigration bill on the floor of the Senate and is sponsor of the idea which it embodies.

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The immigration policy upon which the two houses of Congress have now substantially agreed marks a new departure in the American attitude on this subject. Until now we have proceeded upon the theory that America was "the refuge of the oppressed of all nations," and we have indulged the belief that upon their arrival here all immigrants were fused by the "melting pot" into a distinctive American type. During the last forty years we have, it is true, established certain physical and moral standards with which our immigrants must comply in order to be permitted to enter the country; but these tests have operated only to exclude the cases of gross unfitness, such as those with contagious diseases and the insane and the notorious criminal.

Until the years 1853-85 the sources from which the greater number of our immigrants came were the same sources from which our country was originally colonized, and as result of this fact the immigrants were easily assimilated in our population upon their arrival here. Beginning about 1885, new types of people began to come. For the first time in our history men began to come in large numbers from Italy, Greece, Poland, Turkey in Europe, the Balkan States and from Russia. As these new sources of immigration began to pour out their masses of humanity upon our shores the old sources in Northwestern Europe seemed to dry up, and whereas in 1890 the natives of Southern and eastern Europe constituted about 8 per cent of our foreign-born population, in 1910 they constituted 39 per cent.

This change brought new difficulties in the problem of assimilation. These new peoples spoke strange languages. It was not to be expected that they would readily fuse into the population that they found here. It was natural that they should not understand our institutions, since they came from lands in which popular government is a myth.

Fate of Roman Empire Recalled

Thoughtful men began to apprehend that the United States was going the way that Rome went. They remembered how the Roman of 200 B.C. prided himself upon physical fitness and upon his readiness to undertake manual labor, no matter how arduous. They remembered how the vast inpouring of captives and of alien slaves had changed this viewpoint of the Roman citizen, so that he came about 200 A.D. to regard all manual labor as demeaning. Rome had developed her white-toga class, and there was no Roman so humble as to do manual labor. From that day the power of Rome waned and she sank into an impotency which made her the prey of every barbarian invader.

America has taken this historical fact to heart and has determined that a similar fate shall not befall her. She has not been deterred from taking this step by the clamor of those who have insisted that the "labor supply" must constantly be imported afresh. She realizes the fallacy of this when she sees how Great Britain, France, Germany and the other countries of Europe find their "labor supply" at home. She realizes that the reason Americans are loath to do manual labor is not because they consider themselves too good for such tasks, but it is because of their unwillingness to associate in intimate daily contact with men and alien speech and thought and habits. It is the association to which they object and not the toil itself, and it is this objection that would eventually make the white-collar class include the whole of our native-born Americans.

Nor has America allowed herself to be disturbed by the cries of alien groups who are already here. The objections that these groups have put forward to the new immigration law have doubtless been put forward in good faith, but with a complete misunderstanding of the purposes of the new law. These purposes are these:

First—America realizes that she is no longer a desert country in need of reinforcements to her population. She realizes that her present numbers and their descendants are amply sufficient to bring out her natural resources at a reasonable rate of progress. She knows that her prosperity at this moment far exceeds that of any other land in the world. She realizes that unless immigration is numerically restrained she will be overwhelmed by a vast migration of people from the war-stricken countries of Europe. Such a migration could not fail to have a baleful effect upon American wages and standards of living and it would increase mightily our problem of assimilating the foreign born who are already here. Out of these thoughts have risen the general demands for limitation of the number of immigrants who may enter this country.

Second—There has come about a general realization of the fact that the races of men who have been coming to us in recent years are wholly dissimilar to the native-born Americans, that they are untrained in self-government—a faculty that it has taken the Northwestern Europeans many centuries to acquire. Thoughtful Americans have been despondent for the future of our country when the suffrage should be exercised by men whose inexperience in popular forms of government would lead them to demand too much of their Government, and to rely too heavily upon it, and too little upon their own initiative.

America was beginning also to smart under the irritation of her "foreign colonies"—those groups of aliens, either in city slums or in country districts, who speak a foreign language and live a foreign life, and who want neither to learn our common speech nor to share our common life. From all this has grown the conviction that it was best for America that our incoming immigrants should hereafter be of the same races as those of us who are already here, so that each year's immigration should so far as possible be a miniature America, resembling in national origins the persons who are already settled in our country.

The third, and last, factor in bringing about the new law has been the conviction that we were handling the business badly and were causing unnecessary suffering in allowing the immigrant to sever his home ties and cross the ocean before his admissibility was decided. It was obvious that much distress and suffering could be avoided if the selection of immigrants and the determination of their admissibility could be done at the source. Obviously, it is impracticable to locate immigration officials abroad; but the idea has gained ground that our Consuls could make a preliminary decision about each immigrant before giving him a visa of his passport.

Out of these principles has arisen the new immigration law of 1924, which has passed both houses, and is now receiving its final polishing in conference committee. This law will entirely supersede the temporary quota law of 1921, which by its own terms expires on June 30 of this year. The new law will be permanent. It will provide, first, for limitation of the aggregate immigration from all sources outside the Western Hemisphere to 161,000 persons per year in the next three fiscal years and 150,000 persons per year thereafter. During the first three years the quotas of the various nationalities will be fixed at 2 per cent of the number of foreign born of each nationality who were in this country in 1890. The reason that that date was fixed is that the 1890 census of foreign born bears a closer resemblance to the national origins of our whole population today than does any other census. After July 1, 1927, the aggregate quota of 150,000 persons will be divided among the nationalities exactly in accordance with the national origins of our whole population according to the latest census, including both native born and foreign born, citizens and aliens.

The reason that the national origins method of quota determination is postponed for three years is to permit a careful calculation to be made by the Census Bureau which will do no injustice to any of the nationalities involved. Every one must realize the obvious impossibility of determining national origins by questioning the persons who are living in the United States today, since comparatively few of our native born could give their complete pedigree accurately.

But the same result can be reached with great accuracy by calculating what part of our present population is the modern descendant of each arriving immigrant. We know the make-up of our population in the year 1790, and we know with almost complete accuracy how many immigrants of each nationality have reached our shores since 1790. The natural rate of increase in each decade is known accurately. Working from these factors, it is easily possible for the Bureau of the Census to say what part of our population of today represents immigrants who have come in from each of the quota countries during our past history.

The method of calculating quotas under our temporary law of 1921 was entirely (sic) unfair to the native-born American, since he was ignored in the ascertainment of the quotas, which were based exclusively upon the census of foreign-born residents. In my judgment, the argument is unanswerable that there was no justice in allowing the unnaturalized (sic) alien resident to be represented in calculating the quota of his country while the native-born American was ignored.

This new method does away with all of this unfairness, and each of us, American or alien, native born or foreign born, has an equal representation in the quotas. The effect is obvious. The "melting pot" is no longer necessary, for each year's immigration that reaches our shores will be but a counterpart of the population that it funds on arrival. The racial composition of America at the present time this is made permanent. The composition of our population will not change in future decades in the same way in which it changed between 1885 and the outbreak of the World War. **It is true that 75 per cent of our immigration will hereafter come from Northwestern Europe; but it is fair that it should do so, because 75 per cent of us who are now here owe our origin to immigrants from these same countries.**

The system of selection at the source has also been adopted. Hereafter no immigrant can receive a visa of his passport until he has established to the Consul's satisfaction that he is admissible under our laws on arrival here. When that fact has been established and the necessary degree of literacy and physical and mental health has been shown, the immigrant will then receive a "visa certificate," which will insure his being within the quota.

Without such a certificate he will not be accepted by the steamship company. With the certificate, however, both the immigrant and the steamship company will know that his place within the quota is bespoken. It is estimated by the committees of the House and of the Senate who have studied the matter that this system will do away with at least 90 per cent of the distress and hardship that have caused by our present system and will avoid almost all of the deportation that have been made necessary by rejection at Ellis Island and other American ports.

Great publicity has been given to the adoption by Congress of the exclusion section which applies to all aliens ineligible for citizenship. This section bars all Chinese, East Indians, Afghans, Burmese, Siamese, Japanese, and other Asiatic and Malay peoples. It had been hoped by many of our citizens who feel a friendship for Japan and her people that an exception of Japan could be made in this exclusion section, and it was hoped that as to her the same result would be secured in other and gentler ways. Unfortunate circumstances, that need not be elaborated upon here, made this impossible and the exclusion section has been extended impartially to all Asiatic and Malay nations. It does not, of course, apply to Government officials, tourists, students, ministers of religion, professors or their families.

Means More Homogeneous Nation

With the wisdom of such a policy of exclusion there can be no real disagreement. It implies no reflection upon the merit of the excluded peoples. It is merely a recognition of their fundamental dissimilarity from ourselves. Many other nations have adopted similar policies. At the present time the Asiatics are excluded from Australia, New Zealand and most of the British colonies in South Africa. At the present time Japan herself excludes Chinese, Koreans and Malays for the very proper reason that their people are essentially dissimilar from her own.

Some of the South American countries by Constitution or by legislative enactment have had similar exclusion policies in effect for many years. The Constitution of the Argentine Republic, adopted in 1853, contains such an exclusion clause for all except European immigrants. Our own Constitution recognized the propriety and likelihood of such exclusion and left it to the action of the Federal Government after the year 1808. The writer believes that the traditional friendship of the United States and Japan will be more lasting under the mutual policy of exclusion of immigrants, than could be the case if either nation sent a considerable number of its nationals to form in the other country an unassimilable nucleus of aliens. The irritation of the moment will give way to a realization that what has been done is for the best interests of both nations.

The foregoing is but a sketchy outline of the new immigration law and the reasons which underlie it. In my opinion, no law passed by Congress within the last half century compares with this one in its importance upon the future development of our nation. Its adoption means that America of our grandchildren will be a vastly better place to live in. It will mean a more homogeneous nation, more self-reliant, more independent and more closely knit by common purpose and common ideas.