

WILL NOT CHANGE IMMIGRATION LAW

Republican Leaders Decide Congress Cannot Pass New Act at This Session.

TOLD OF LABOR SHORTAGE

Representatives of Many Industries Declare That Lack of Foreign Laborers Is Hampering Progress.

Special to The New York Times.
WASHINGTON, Feb. 20. — Although witnesses representing many industries urged the Senate Committee on Immigration today to let down the bars to admit labor from abroad, Republican leaders decided, after conferences with Senators and Representatives, that no change shall be made by this Congress in the restriction law.

Senate leaders said that, even though the House passed the new bill, based on 2 per cent. of the 1890 census, instead of 3 per cent. of the 1910 census, as at present, the Senate could not, under present conditions in its chamber, enact new immigration legislation. Opposition to the changed basis and exclusion of Japanese were issues in the new bill which would make its acceptance doubtful at any time, and certainly it could not be passed now, with the filibuster in progress, Senate leaders said.

Witnesses before the Senate Committee on Immigration today argued that economic chaos would follow if the present shortage in common labor continued. Fourteen representatives of as many industries were among those who sought to demonstrate that there was a shortage of labor in many of the great producing States.

The testimony was in support of the bill introduced by Senator Colt of Rhode Island, which provides that the immigration quota be figured on the net instead of the inflexible 3 per cent. basis, and that the Secretary of Labor have power to permit the admission of immigrants in excess of the quota when such necessity is made clear to meet certain industrial requirements.

Opposed to "Prohibition" of Labor.

James A. Emery, general counsel of the National Association of Manufacturers, headed the group of manufacturers heard. He told the committee the manufacturers were not opposed to "restriction," but did not believe in "prohibition" of immigration. He said they did not maintain that there was a general shortage of labor, but that there was a decided shortage in certain industries, which threatened industry as a whole.

Mr. Emery testified that the United States was dependent on foreign labor for development; that up to 1919 the average net immigration had grown to something more than \$25,999 a year, but that the war reduced it to a minimum, and there had been only one year of considerable immigration since. The inevitable result, he said, was a drain on industries that could not be supplied from native channels and had not been met through those channels in many years.

R. C. Marshall Jr., General Manager of the Associated General Contractors, testified that there was an actual labor shortage in the construction industry, and there "would be a need for 300,000 more men than they were going to have this Spring."

Senator Colt, Chairman of the Committee, asked if construction was held back because of inability to get labor. Mr. Marshall said that this was true, adding that he had recently come from Los Angeles, where 300 contractors did not see how their program for the Spring could be carried out.

R. M. Welch of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company of Youngstown, Ohio, said there was a shortage of common labor, not only in his particular mills but in the Youngstown section generally, and that this was reflected in the labor above common. His plant now needed 300 laborers, and there was a similar shortage throughout the iron and steel industry.

Says Miners Are Unavailable.

Mr. Welch said it was impracticable for the steel plants to use unemployed miners, as the transportation expense was a serious drawback.

Some members of the committee seemed to think that as the steel industry had run full blast during the war there should be little trouble now in obtaining labor for all jobs, but Mr. Welch replied that during the war many so-called non-essential industries were closed down and their employes sought places in the steel mills.

Asked by Senator Willis of Ohio, what would happen if the immigration bars were kept up, the witness said the time would soon come when people would quit buying goods at the high prices required to be asked because of high prices of production due to an extent to high wages for common labor.

Senator King, of Utah, remarked that he was opposed to the Colt bill, saying, "Any form of contract labor savors much of servitude and causes a revulsion of feeling on the part of the American people."

Advocates of the bill replied that the plan proposed in the Colt bill was similar to one adopted after the Civil War, and that Lincoln favored the idea.

Frank W. Noxon of the Railway Business Association of Philadelphia said there was a shortage in the railway business and that replies to a questionnaire had shown a shortage of 31,000 men. If the same ratio were applied to all members of the association, he said, there would be a shortage of 255,000 men. There would be need, he said, "for 300,000 men in the railway business in the Spring."

S. H. Kilcutt, representing the Immigration Restriction League, appeared in rebuttal of the claims of the manufacturers. He favored further restriction and contended that there was no such shortage as claimed.

Representative Albert Johnson, Chairman of the House Immigration Committee, who denounced "preying immigration lawyers" yesterday and said they were housed in a New York city building known as the "Den of Forty Thieves," still declined to divulge the location of the building.

"I intend to make my information against these lawyers more effective," he said. "I will tell the Grand Jury about their doings very shortly."