

The Coming Immigration Law

I—The Outline of a Policy

By ALBERT JOHNSON

Chairman of the Committee on Immigration, House of Representatives

AFTER years of study, including investigations in lands across the Atlantic and lands across the Pacific, the majority of the members of the House Committee on Immigration are, I believe, of the opinion that mankind is literally at the crossroads. The distresses of the peoples of the world, white, black, and yellow, are so many and the increase in the birth rate in all countries except France and Mexico is so great that the probabilities are that our own children will resent the fact that we have not been more successful in passing more stringent immigration restrictive acts. Our grandchildren will, fifty or sixty years from now, in all probability, be scratching hard for a foothold and food in the United States of America—the past land of boasted riches and untold resources.

I believe that the majority of the people of the United States, including even those of alien birth, have come to a very firm conclusion with respect to immigration. They think, and the majority of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization agrees, I believe, that—

1. Immigrants shall never again come to the United States as mere commodities in the labor scheme.

2. That the name melting-pot is a misnomer and that the asylum idea is played out forever.



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3. That the countries of the world shall no longer dump upon the United States their criminals, their feeble, their aged, and their undesirables.

4. That if we are to clean house and provide those guaranties for every last alien now within our borders, each one of whom is included in those magnificent words which begin the first sentence of the Preamble to the Constitution, "We,

the people of the United States," that we should, as far as possible, admit the husbands or wives, minor unmarried children, fathers and mothers, and even grandfathers and grandmothers, of those aliens now here, but decline to admit other dependents in any number under any quota scheme from any country; as a matter of fact, eighty-five per cent of all immigrants who have come to the United States in the past ten years have come to relatives, and for the last fiscal year ninety-eight per cent of all immigrants who came from Poland came to relatives, nearly all supplied with money furnished by these relatives; and although a very large number started without money and arrived without money, they were able within three weeks to find the money to send for more relatives.

5. That in order to prevent the growth of racial hatred, with its accompanying religious differences, it is highly desirable to keep out from the United States as many new arrivals as possible until we have thoroughly cleaned house.

6. That the United States should not continue to admit for permanent residence within its borders those who are, under the law, ineligible to citizenship, and that sooner or later the United States must amend its Constitution so as to deny citizenship to those born here whose parents were ineligible to citizenship.

II—The Plan Before Congress

By JOHN L. CABLE

Congressman from Ohio and Member of the House Committee on Immigration

THE selection of future citizens to this United States should not depend upon the horse-power of steamships. The admission of immigrants to this country is too serious a matter to be determined by a race of ships across the ocean, the speediest vessels being able to land the more fortunate ones at Ellis Island after executing a transatlantic Marathon.

This unsatisfactory condition is the result of the present three per cent restrictive Immigration Act. Unless extended or amended, it expires June 30,

1924. Only three per cent of the number of foreign-born nationals who reside in the United States as determined by the 1910 Census may be admitted during the fiscal year, and not more than twenty per cent of these are admissible in any one month.

Therefore, because of this regulation, we have the spectacle of public health doctors and inspectors working overtime at the beginning of each month, making hurried examinations of those eagerly seeking admission to this country. At the same time, we know that nothing is

more important than the proper selection of those who, as potential citizens, are to become associated with the country's future.

The new bill framed by the House Committee on Immigration, which will be submitted to Congress during its present session, provides for a radical change in this respect. The proposed new legislation will eliminate this particularly bad feature of the present Immigration Act.

I may say in connection with this proposed new legislation that about eighty-five per cent of the members of the

House of Representatives favor a more restrictive measure. This fact has been shown both by their votes and by their great interest in this all-important question.

In providing for a new law, that will cope with the difficult problem of immigration, special emphasis has been placed on the so-called "certificate plan." This represents a part—the most essential part, it seems to me—of the proposed new measure.

This carefully thought out method of determining future citizenry of foreign birth at their native homes will, I believe, serve to eliminate many evils that experience has shown to exist in former immigration measures.

Not only are the American people concerned with the number who may come here, but they also reserve the right to know something about the kind of immigrant who seeks a permanent residence here. There is no good reason why this country should make of itself an asylum for the physically, mentally, or morally unfit. This question is too serious a one to be treated lightly or with the apparent laxity which certain figures show has too often been the case in the past.

For example, the foreign-born make up 14.7 per cent of the population of the United States, yet they, the foreign-born, furnish 20.83 per cent of the numbers in institutions housing social inadequates. And when we consider the result of this to the taxpayer, we find that of the State governmental expenditures 3.57 per cent is used in the maintenance of aliens in State institutions. Certainly, self-protection demands a law that will prohibit these undesirable persons from being admitted here.

I have hope of great benefit resulting from this proposed certificate plan of admission to this country. In a word, this represents a system of selective immigration. Its operation begins at the home of the prospective immigrant. We learn something about the newcomer before he actually leaves his country.

For example, Sweden has a quota for the year of 20,000. Under the proposed certificate plan, that number of certificates will be printed and sent to the American Consuls, who will have charge of the viséing of passports of immigrants from Sweden.

With this passport the immigrant, under the law, will be required to furnish essential information pertaining to himself and his family, including the family record of health; also in this manner it will be determined if the applicant has ever been arrested, and, if so, the facts concerning the offense with which he was charged; his ability to read at least one language or dialect, as already prescribed

by law; his occupation; and, if the custom of registering its people is in vogue in his country, then he will be asked to submit a copy of his record to the United States authorities.

With this information at hand, the American Consul will then pass on the application, and if the applicant appears to be admissible his passport will be viséed; otherwise not. To-day the Consul



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has little latitude. All he is able to do under the circumstances, in many cases, is to warn the immigrant of the likelihood of being refused admission at our ports.

The proposed certificate to be used by the immigrant will be made out in duplicate, the immigrant retaining the one when he is admitted, the Secretary of Labor retaining the other for his files. Thus every immigrant and his native record, sworn to under oath, will become a part of what the Secretary of Labor hopes will constitute a new registration system for the handling of immigrant cases.

The final examination for admission should be made at our ports of entry by American doctors and inspectors on American soil, surrounded by American influence, where we have American hospitals and buildings for the temporary detention of those whom it may appear necessary to hold for further examination.

With the certificate plan in operation, every immigrant coming here will have the assurance that, so far as the particular quota under which he comes is concerned, he will not be turned back and be compelled to repeat the long sea voyage and at considerable expense, because

of the fact that speedier ships bringing numbers of his countrymen had already exhausted the quota.

Under this new arrangement, the congestion at Ellis Island will cease, for the last of the month or the last of the year will be as safe as the first for those holding such certificates.

With the orderly flow of immigrants through Ellis Island a more thorough examination, at the same time, will be insured, and a better opportunity given for the weeding out of any chance undesirables.

The primary duty of Congress is to legislate for the American people; still there are those who press the claim that the present law is too restrictive. The records, however, refute this. Before the war, for instance, a million admitted of both immigrant and non-immigrant classes was a fair average. Let us compare this figure with the last fiscal year. North and South American and adjacent islands are not included within the quota territory. While 357,803 only may be admitted under the present quota, yet in round numbers 523,000 immigrant aliens were admitted, many coming from Mexico and Canada. The non-immigrant alien includes those who come here for business or pleasure—professional, skilled, learned classes, and the like. In addition, it is a safe guess that there were around 100,000 who came in unlawfully, seeping in over the border and from Cuba. This total of 773,000 compares very favorably with the million before the war. But, based on evidence submitted to the Committee, an additional million immigrants each year would have come to America under pre-war legislation.

Under the proposed act, one objectionable feature of immigration should be removed. I refer to the numerous personal appeals made to the members of Congress in behalf of families that have been divided through the rigidity of the present quota law.

This appeal presents unlimited opportunities for fraudulent and shyster lawyers and dishonest go-betweens, of whose activities this Committee has abundant proof. These irresponsible persons often use the names of Senators and Representatives without their knowledge, and their "interest" in the immigrant is made at great cost to these uninformed, unsuspecting, and helpless strangers.

On the whole, our duty lies first with the alien now in our land. Give him the privilege of an education, teach him the history and ideals of our country, the duties and obligations of citizenship. This is the highest of duties—the making of Americans for a bigger, better America.