

**Warne, F. J. (1913). *The immigrant invasion*. New York, NY: Dodd,**

**Mead & Co.**

Different people studying and observing the immigration phenomenon do not always see the same thing— they receive different impressions from it. Sometimes the other view is apparent to their consciousness but usually their mind is so taken up with their own view that the other is of lesser significance.

### **Two Views of Immigration**

One view of immigration is that which is conspicuous to the worker who has been and is being driven out of his position by the immigrant; to members of the labour union struggling to control this competition and to maintain their standard of living; to those who see the socially injurious and individually disastrous effects upon the American worker of this foreign stream of cheap labour; to those who know the pauperising effects of a low wage, long hours of work, and harsh conditions of employment; to those personally familiar with the poverty in many of our foreign "colonies"; to those acquainted with the congested slum districts in our large industrial centres and cities and the innumerable problems which they present; to those who long and strive for an early realisation of Industrial Democracy. . . .

The other view is seen, however, by those who believe that the immigrant is escaping from intolerable religious, racial, and political persecution and oppression; whose sympathies have been aroused by a knowledge of the adverse economic conditions of the masses of Europe; by those immigrants and their children already here who desire to have their loved ones join them; by producers and manufacturers seeking cheap labour; by those holding bonds and stocks in steamship companies receiving large revenues from the transportation of the immigrant; by those who see subjects of European despotism transformed into naturalised citizens of the American republic, with all that this implies for them and for their children.

The so-called good side of immigration is seen primarily from the viewpoint of the immigrant himself. Any perspective of immigration through the eyes of the alien must necessarily, as a rule, be an optimistic one. Although some of them are possibly worse off in the United States than if they had remained in their European home, at the same time the larger number improve their condition by coming to America. Let us admit, then, that immigration benefits the immigrant.

Thus are indicated two views of immigration. These opposite views are very rapidly dividing the American people into two camps or parties—those who favour a continuance of our present liberal policy and those who are striving to have laws passed that will further restrict immigration. The different groups are made up for the most part of well-intentioned people looking at identically the same national problem but who see entirely different aspects or effects....

### **The Real Issue**

Those who are desirous of settling the immigration question solely from the point of view of the best interests of the country are quite frequently sidetracked from the only real and fundamental argument into the discussion of relatively unimportant phases of it. The real objection to immigration at the

present time lies not in the fact that Slavs and Italians and Greeks and Syrians instead of Irish and Germans and English are coming to the United States. Nor does it lie in the fact that the immigrants are or become paupers and criminals. The real objection has nothing to do with the composition of our immigration stream, nor with the characteristics of the individuals or races composing it. It is more than likely that the evils so prominent today would still exist if we had received the Slavs and Italians fifty years ago and were receiving the English and Irish and Germans at the present day.

The real objection to immigration lies in the changed conditions that have come about in the United States themselves. These conditions now dominate and control the tendencies that immigration manifests. At the present time they are giving to the country a surplus of cheap labour—a greater supply than our industries and manufacturing enterprises need. In consequence this over-supply has brought into play among our industrial toilers the great law of competition. This economic law is controlled by the more recent immigrant because of his immediate necessity to secure employment and his ability to sell his labour at a low price—to work for a low wage. Against the operation of this law the native worker and the earlier immigrant are unable to defend themselves. It is affecting detrimentally the standard of living of hundreds of thousands of workers—workers, too, who are also citizens, fathers, husbands.

### **Immigrants and Machines**

But who will do the rough work that must be done if we cannot get the immigrant? asks the liberal immigrationist. And to clinch his argument he goes into raptures over the industrial characteristics of the immigrant and points out enthusiastically the important part the alien has played in America's material upbuilding.

Immigration tends to retard the invention and introduction of machinery which otherwise would do this rough work for us. It has prevented capital in our industries from giving the proper amount of attention to the increase and use of machines, says Professor John R. Commons in "Races and Immigrants in America."

The cigar-making machine cannot extensively be introduced on the Pacific coast because Chinese cheap labour makes the same cigars at less cost than the machines. High wages stimulate the invention and use of machinery and scientific processes, and it is machinery and science, more than mere hand labour, on which reliance must be placed to develop the natural resources of a country. But machinery and science cannot be as quickly introduced as cheap immigrant labour. . . . In the haste to get profits the immigrant is more desired than machinery.

As long as cheap labour is available this tendency will continue. Even in spite of the large supply of immigrants who work for a low wage, what has already been accomplished along the line of adapting machinery to do the rough work is but indicative of what would be done in this direction if immigration were restricted....

### **U.S. Immigration Hurts Other Countries**

When anyone suggests the restriction of immigration to those who believe in throwing open wide our gates to all the races of the world, the conclusion is

immediately arrived at that the proposer has some personal feeling in the matter and that he is not in sympathy with the immigrant. As a matter of fact the restriction of immigration is herein suggested not alone from the point of view of the future political development of the United States, but also from that of the interest and welfare of the immigrant himself and his descendants. It is made in order to prevent them from becoming in the future an industrial slave class *in* America and to assist them in throwing off in their European homes the shackles which now bind them and are the primary cause of their securing there so little from an abundant world.

One of the strongest arguments in the past of the liberal immigrationist is that the downtrodden and oppressed of Europe are fleeing from intolerable economic, political, and religious conditions into a land of liberty and freedom which offers opportunities to all. It may be very much questioned if these immigrants are finding here the hoped-for escape from oppression and servitude and exploitation, for since the newer immigration began in the eighties there has come to dwell in America a horrible modern Frankenstein in the shape of the depressing conditions surrounding a vast majority of our industrial toilers. But even granting that the immigrants coming to us do better their condition, a very pertinent question is as to the effect the prevention of this immigration would have upon the countries from which it comes. If we grant that the immigrants are able-bodied, disposed to resent oppression and are striving to better their condition, are they not the very ones that should remain in their European homes and there through growing restlessness and increasing power change for the better the conditions from which they are fleeing? As it is now, instead of an improvement in those conditions the stronger and more able-bodied—the ones better able to cope with them and improve them—are running away and leaving behind the less able and weaker members, who continue to live under the intolerable conditions.

If immigration to the United States were stopped one would not likely be far wrong in prophesying that either one of two things would happen in these European countries: Either a voluntary remedying by the European Governments themselves of political, religious, and economic evils, or else those countries would soon be confronted by revolutions springing from this unrest of the people which now finds an escape through emigration to the United States.... Pent up discontent, unrelieved by emigration, would burst its bounds to the betterment of the general social conditions of the European masses.

Another phase of this same aspect of immigration is the fact that indirectly the United States which, if it stands for anything, stands in opposition to nearly all that is represented by the European form of government—this country, to a considerable extent, helps to keep in power these very governments against which it is a living protest. This is done in one way through the enormous sums of money that immigrants in the United States send each year to the European countries.

It is estimated that from two hundred to two hundred and fifty million dollars are sent abroad annually to the more important European countries by the foreign born in the United States. Part of this enormous sum finds its way by direct and indirect taxation into the coffers of the Government and the Bureaucracy and thus tends to support and continue them in power. When this fact is kept in mind—the fact that nearly two hundred and fifty million dollars are sent abroad each year by immigrants in the United States—it is an argument that answers thoroughly the claim of large employers of labour that immigration is an advantage to the country in that it brings to us annually through the immigrant nearly \$25,000,000. The fact is that an amount nine

times greater than that brought in is sent out of the country each year by the immigrant. . . .

### **Needed: More Restrictions**

Virtually all objection or opposition to any suggestion as to immigration restriction comes from the immigrant races themselves. As for the attitude of the native, he seems for the greater part to be apathetic when it comes to taking some practical action to remedy conditions, although his grumbling and open opposition is becoming louder than ever before.

Our present statutes, except as they relate to labourers brought in under contract, exclude only such manifestly undesirable persons as idiots, the insane, paupers, immigrants likely to become a public charge, those with loathsome or dangerous contagious diseases, persons whose physical or mental defects prevent them from earning a living, convicted criminals, prostitutes, and the like. Even a strict enforcement of these laws makes it possible to keep out only the poorest and worst elements in these groups who come here.

Referring to the fact that certain undesirable immigrants are not being reached by the present laws the Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island, Mr. William Williams, says:

We have no statutes excluding those whose economic condition is so low that their competition tends to reduce the standard of our wage worker, nor those who flock to the congested districts of our large cities where their presence may not be needed, in place of going to the country districts where immigrants of the right type are needed. As far back as 1901 reference was made by President Roosevelt in his annual message to Congress to those foreign labourers who 'represent a standard of living so depressed that they can undersell our men in the labour market and drag them to a lower level,' and it was recommended that 'all persons should be excluded who are below a certain standard of economic fitness to enter our industrial fields as competitors with American labourers.' There are no laws under which aliens of the class described can be kept out unless they happen to fall within one of the classes now excluded by statutes (as they sometimes do); and yet organised forces are at work, principally on the other side of the ocean, to induce many to come here whose standards of living are so low that it is detrimental to the best interests of the country that the American labourers should be compelled to compete with them.

To regulate, and this means to restrict immigration so that we may continue to receive its benefits while at the same time the welfare of the country is safeguarded against its evils, is the issue. . . .

It is a curious fact, but none the less a fact, that too much, even of something that in moderate amounts is good for us, may become very injurious—so injurious as to necessitate the regulation of the quantity we should have. The quantity of present immigration is no bugaboo but a real danger threatening most seriously the success of "The American Experiment" in government and social organisation. It is such as to over-tax our wonderful powers of assimilation....

In the case of the immigration stream now pouring in huge volume into the United States, have we, through our public schools and like safeguards, erected a sufficiently strong dam to protect our institutions? Our forefathers be-

queathed to us an educational system that was designed and which was supposed to be strong enough to withstand any flood of ignorance that might beat against our institutions. But this system was not devised in any of its particulars to care for the great volume of ignorance which is now washing into the United States with tremendous force from out of eastern and southern Europe. In many respects it is even now too late to strengthen this educational system. What effect is this volume of ignorance, which is breaking in and overflowing our safeguards, to have on political and religious structures and our social and national life? . . .

The American Republic, with its valuable institutions, approaches the parting of the ways. Fortunately the writing on the signboards is plain. The choice the people are to make as to which way they shall go will determine the kind of civilisation that is to have its home in the United States for coming generations. This choice has to be made—there is no way out of it. It will be made even if no political or governmental action is taken. In this case the choice will be to continue our present policy of unrestricted immigration in cheap labour. This will mean a continuance of the development in feverish haste of the country's material resources by an inpouring of labourers with low standards of living and the perpetuation of a debased citizenship among both the exploited and the exploiters.

The alternative is to restrict immigration so that we can catch our breath and take an inventory of what we already have among us that must imperatively be raised to a higher standard of living and a safer citizenship.

### **America's Choice**

Our decision means a choice between two conditions. By continuing our present policy we choose that which is producing a plutocratic caste class of idle nobodies resting upon the industrial slavery of a great mass of ignorant and low standard of living toilers. By restricting immigration we influence the bringing about of a condition that will give to a large body of citizens a decent and comfortable standard of living. This desired result is to be obtained by a more just distribution of wealth through wages and prices and dividends.