

ARGUMENT OF EMIGRATION COMMISSIONER EDMUND STEPHENSON, OF NEW YORK, BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION, TO PROHIBIT OBJECTIONABLE IMMIGRATION, ENCOURAGE DESIRABLE IMMIGRATION, DEFEND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, AND PROTECT AMERICAN LABOR.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I think it will be conceded by every American citizen, be he native or adopted, that the time has arrived when we should seriously consider the subject of indiscriminate immigration, and seek to ascertain, if possible, from the light of past experience, in what manner our laws can be amended so that desirable immigration may not be retarded, and American labor be protected.

The right to restrict or prohibit immigration rests with the law-making power of the Government. So far as the evils of indiscriminate immigration are concerned, it is a recognized fact that will not be disputed, that it is not a friendly act on the part of other nations to allow the emigration of persons whom the receiving State does not consider desirable additions to its population.

No nation will attempt to defend the right to ship its convicts or paupers to another nation in disregard of its protest. On general principles each nation is bound in honor to provide for its own unfortunates; they are as much its subjects as are its most prosperous citizens.

The enormous amount of emigration from all parts of Europe in recent years, as shown from statistics, reached in the year 1887 nearly one and a quarter million of human souls, a majority of whom came into the United States and Canada. The growth of Europe has never been so great as in the present century. As a rule most of the Governments of Europe are opposed to emigration in its present form, because of the evasion of military duty. Statistics, I think, will bear me out in saying that 55 per cent. of the immigrants, exclusive of children, who enter the United States are males. Perhaps this fact is due in a large degree to unmarried men; another cause is that many who are married come with no fixed determination to remain. Particularly is this true as to the Italian and Hungarian race.

HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION.

It must be clear to any unprejudiced mind that the motive that actuated the Pilgrims to emigrate from their native land is far from the motive that now actuates a very large number who are emigrating at the present day. From the date of the landing of the Pilgrims down to the close of the war of Independence emigrants who left their native land to seek new homes in America were at that time regarded more as colonists than immigrants; down to the year of the inauguration of the first President of the United States may be properly termed the period of colonization.

Since that time the growth of population is due to natural causes and largely to immigration. The history of immigration into the United States, prior to the year 1820, is but little known. Beginning with that year the collectors of customs at sea-ports were obliged to keep a record of aliens arriving by vessels from foreign countries; no record seems to have been kept of over-land immigration until about the year 1840.

From 1820 to 1840 immigration, of which we have any record, was

comparatively small. After the year 1840 may date the first steady increase. In 1846, by combination of circumstances, chiefly among which were the famine in Ireland, and the bad times in Germany, immigration increased in that year and continued to increase from year to year until the year 1854, when it reached nearly five hundred thousand; it then decreased until the breaking out of the late civil war.

From 1863 to 1873 was the largest increase; from 1874 to 1879 there was a very large decrease.

Immigration into the United States is somewhat like the tides; it has its flood and its ebb, but as a rule the new flood is higher than the preceding one. Immigration is chiefly from Ireland, Germany, England, and Italy, but during the last few years immigration from Ireland has decreased one-third from the previous years, while German immigration has increased as much as Irish immigration has decreased.

From May 5, 1847, to January 1, 1890, the number of alien passengers who arrived at the port of New York from Germany was 3,425,208; from Ireland, 2,541,148; from Italy, 317,192. Italian immigration to the port of New York has largely increased within the past fifteen years; in 1873 the arrival of Italians at the port of New York was 6,859; in 1888 it increased to 43,927. From the report of John E. Moore, landing agent at Castle Garden, during the year 1889 there were 891 trips of the various steam-ship lines from foreign ports to the port of New York, bringing 96,686 cabin and 326,227 steerage passengers. Many, if not all, of the steam-ship lines employ thousands of agents in Europe and America; the business of these agents is to sell tickets, ocean and inland, for which they receive liberal commissions. These agents picture in the most glowing manner to the poor peasants of Europe how much better they can do if they emigrate to America. In many cases it has been shown to the commissioners of emigration at New York how, by false representations made by these agents, these poor peasants were induced to sell out their little homes, and expend a life's savings in the purchase of passage tickets to America. In many cases the agent will advance the tickets, taking a mortgage for the payment on whatever property is of value; in some cases the money is refunded and in other cases the agent becomes the owner of the property by foreclosure; the poor peasant in a few months finds himself and family in a strange land without money, friends, or employment, and for the first time in his life he and his family become a public charge upon the community wherein they located.

Competition among the steam-ship lines and the railroads largely affect immigration. In 1888 a war of rates broke out among them, so in that year an immigrant could travel from Liverpool to Chicago for \$10. This low rate offered inducements to foreign governments and foreign charitable societies to rid themselves of the burden of paupers and persons unable to support themselves and families by purchasing for them tickets to America. This class of immigrants rarely ever go beyond the cities. It is a mistaken idea that 70 per cent. of the immigrants go to the West; upon close examination it will be found that not more than 50 per cent. go beyond the Eastern or Middle States. The class of immigrants that go to the West are a better class; as a rule they all have money and friends.

EVIL EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION AND THE SHORT PERIOD OF NATURALIZATION.

Whatever the character of the immigrants it is obvious that the swelling tide of immigration since 1847, as shown from the reports of the commissioners of emigration of New York, and which is beyond

doubt correct, and represents 75 per cent. of the whole number that come to the United States from foreign countries must have a marked effect upon the political life of this country. The number of alien immigrants that have arrived at the port of New York from May, 1847, to December 31, 1889, was 9,639,635; of this number 7,144,513 were from England, Ireland, and Germany, and 2,495,122 from all other countries.

There has never been any decided movement against the short period of time in which those who are eligible may become citizens, and yet in several States the immigrant is admitted to citizenship only on one year's residence; they do not understand our laws or customs or the English language, and in very many cases they neither read nor write. The right of citizenship is thus conferred without test of fitness. "Shall we continue this, and is it not about time to call a halt; is not the admission of this mass of foreigners to political power plainly seen in the effort to win the foreign vote, more especially so the Irish and German?"

Politicians readily yield to their prejudices without regard to the interest of the people at large. Take the liquor question. The German vote in many localities controls the action of the political leaders on this question. The Irish favor the policy of antagonism to the Government of Great Britain.

Another effect of indiscriminate immigration is seen in the riots that have taken place in New York and other States during the past twenty-five years. In 1863, in the city of New York, in which year the famous draft riots took place, no American dared display the flag of his country on his domicile without the risk of having his house burned and destroyed, and again the recent outbreaks of anarchists, nihilists, and socialists in the city of Chicago and other places.

This class of foreigners, who were agitators in their own country, come to this country with the idea that they are privileged to use the freedom they enjoy in this country for the purpose of revolution. The disappointments of many of these people from what they anticipated, and from false representations made to them in their own country by commission agents or runners for steam-ship lines, no doubt to a large extent creates a prejudice in the minds of many of the immigrants. They find employment is not so readily obtained, the cost of living is greater, and wages are not what they expected; it is natural that they are easily led to join the discontented class and become enemies of the Government.

EFFEQT OF IMMIGRATION ON AMERICAN LABOR.

The average number of skilled and unskilled laborers coming into the United States is estimated to be one thousand per day. Considering the present growth of the country, can it fully absorb this constant daily increase without detriment to the American laborer, and does it not tend to lower wages and throw our own citizens out of employment? The voice of the people of the United States as expressed through the ballot-box at the last Presidential election was unmistakably in favor of the American workmen, against competition in foreign products; *my* vote was with that understanding.

What benefit is the protective tariff to American labor if we are to continue to place the American workmen in competition with pauper labor of Europe? For the future of this country it would be better to abolish all tariff laws, the effect of which would be to drive back pauper labor from whence it came, and prevent its coming to America.

The American mechanic can never compete with pauper labor, nor can they fit themselves to the standard of living that is the custom of pauper labor in Europe.

The improvements in machinery of late years have revolutionized nearly all trades in this country, so that a few years ago what then might be termed skilled labor is now unskilled labor. The pauper or lower classes of Europe crowd into our factories, as shown in the report of the Ford investigation of 1888, so that to-day in many of our large factories—notably the cigar trade, the tailoring trade, shirt manufacturing, etc.—what was fifteen years ago 90 per cent. American and 10 per cent. foreign is now 90 per cent. foreign and 10 per cent. American. The same may be said of the mining interest. The Hungarians that are annually imported to work in the mines of Pennsylvania never saw a coal mine until they arrived in this country. I ask, who are those who favor the continuance of unrestricted immigration? It will be found the great majority are those who favor protection, who are engaged in the manufacturing interest of the country, and employing large numbers of workmen. Is it not a protection that protects twice the manufacturer?

If the tariff is to be continued for the protection of American labor, then immigration should be restricted so that pauper labor can not be brought in competition with American labor. It is shown in the testimony taken before the Ford committee that an Italian or Hungarian can subsist in his own country on 15 cents per day. Must the American laborer be brought down to this low level or standard of living for the benefit of the manufacturers and contractors who are opposed to restricting immigration?

I think there can be no difference of opinion upon this question to any unselfish mind who has at heart the future prosperity of his native or adopted country, and that he will agree with me, that unrestricted immigration is the degradation of American labor. Another very important reason to my mind why immigration should be restricted by legislation is that the present law is no barrier to foreign Governments or charitable societies to assist the pauper class whom they are obliged to care for at home; in order to rid themselves of the burden they assist in whole or in part to emigrate to America.

Secretary Bayard in 1888 protested to the British ministers against this class of immigrants. It was of no avail, as shown by the action of the commissioners of emigration, of New York, who detained ninety of this class of assisted immigrants who arrived at the port of New York by the Inman Line, and ordered their return. A writ of habeas corpus was sued out by the Inman Company before Judge Addison Brown, who discharged the immigrants on the ground that the statute did not provide against assisted emigration, and that the only question the Commissioners of Emigration had to deal with when the immigrant presented himself at the port of New York was, is he at the time of landing able to care for himself without becoming a public charge. This decision opens wide the door of every almshouse in Europe. The importance of amending the present act is here clearly shown.

I will now touch on one more subject before I close. I refer now to the head-tax. My judgment, from long experience as a commissioner of emigration of the State of New York, is that the head-tax should be increased so as to guaranty to all the States protection against the care and support of immigrant paupers, or those who for any reason are unable to care for themselves, for a period of five years from the date of landing. Immigrants as a rule generally succeed in one way or another to maintain themselves without public aid during the first year

of residence in this country. After the first year, in many cases, their resources are all gone, their friends are unable to aid them, they find their condition worse than when they emigrated, they become not only dissatisfied but discouraged, the end of which is the insane asylum or an untimely end, leaving their families to the care of a charitable public.

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, OF
THE CHARITY ORGANIZATION SOCIETY OF THE CITY OF NEW
YORK.**

[Presented to the Central Council of the Society, February 11, 1890. Submitted by
the Hon. Nicholas Fish.]

The committee appointed to investigate the question of immigration in connection with charity begs leave respectfully to submit the following report:

At the time your committee was appointed there was very considerable agitation throughout the country in favor of restricting immigration. No fewer than a dozen bills had been introduced into Congress with that purpose in view, and it seemed very probable that some action would be taken during that session. And it then seemed advisable to the officers of the society and to your committee to direct the attention of similar charity organization societies to the subject, in order that concerted action might be procured either in favor of some one bill, or at least in favor of the general principle of a stricter surveillance of immigrants coming to this country.

No one of these bills ever came before Congress for action, and in the early summer of 1888 a special committee was appointed, commonly known as the "Ford Committee," to investigate evasions of the contract labor law, but which, it was understood, would inquire into the whole subject of immigration.

It seemed best to your committee to defer any action on its part until the Ford committee had completed its investigation and reported to Congress, your committee believing that that investigation would disclose many new facts, and that no action could be hoped for from Congress until that committee had reported.

The Ford committee conducted an extended investigation in the cities of New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, and brought out much valuable testimony, a great deal of it pertaining directly to the subject in hand. It did not finish taking testimony until late in December, 1888, and did not report to Congress until January 19, 1889. It was too late in the session to hope for any action, and the Fiftieth Congress adjourned, having done nothing. The testimony was not printed and in the hands of the public until some time later.

The majority of the Ford committee reported in favor of a very severe restrictive measure, limiting the number of passengers to one passenger for every five tons ship burden, imposing a head-tax of \$5, requiring each immigrant to bring a certificate from a United States consular officer abroad, and absolutely prohibiting the immigration of any one who is an idiot, insane, a pauper, or liable to become a public charge, of convicts, criminals, polygamists, anarchists, socialists, contract laborers, diseased persons, etc.

During the last year the number of immigrants has decreased considerably, especially from those countries where the immigration has