

there will be more beauty accessible than there is now?

Mr. Pinchot. Much more beauty will be accessible than now.

Mr. Raker. And by putting in roads and trails the Government, as well as the citizens of the Government, will get more pleasure out of it than at the present time?

Mr. Pinchot. You might say from the standpoint of enjoyment of beauty and the greatest good to the greatest number, they will be conserved by the passage of this bill, and there will be a great deal more use of the beauty of the park than there is now.

•

“The fundamental principle of the whole conservation policy is that of use, to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will best serve the most people.”

•

Mr. Raker. Have you seen Mr. John Muir’s criticism of the bill? You know him?

Mr. Pinchot. Yes, sir; I know him very well. He is an old and very good friend of mine. I have never been able to agree with him in his attitude toward the Sierras for the reason that my point of view has never appealed to him at all. When I became Forester and denied the right to exclude sheep and cows from the Sierras, Mr. Muir thought I had made a great mistake, because I allowed the use by an acquired right of a large number of people to interfere with what would have been the utmost beauty of the forest. In this case I think he has unduly given away to beauty as against use.

For Further Reading

- Michael P. Cohen, *The Pathless Way: John Muir and the American Wilderness*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Stephen R. Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920*. New York: Atheneum, 1969.
- M. Nelson McGeary, *Gifford Pinchot, Forester-Politician*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960.
- Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Our Limits Transgressed: Environmental Political Thought in America*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992.

ARTICLE 3 PRO - YES THEY HARM SOCIETY

Immigrants Harm American Society (1914)

Edward Alsworth Ross (1866–1951)

Between 1880 and 1920 almost twenty-four million immigrants entered the United States. Many of them came from ethnic and religious backgrounds that put them at odds with America’s white Protestant majority. Both the quantity and the ethnicity of the newcomers created much fear among Americans over immigration and its perceived threat to the American way of life. A good summary of the arguments made against immigration comes from the following viewpoint, excerpted from a book by Edward Alsworth Ross, a noted professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

What does Ross believe to be the main problem immigrants bring to America? How do immigrants affect the American system of education, according to Ross? Do his arguments reveal racial, religious, or other prejudices? Use examples from the viewpoint to support your answer.

There is a certain anthracite town of 26,000 inhabitants in which are writ large the moral and social consequences of injecting 10,000 sixteenth-century people into a twentieth-century community. By their presence the foreigners necessarily lower the general plane of intelligence, self-restraint, refinement, orderliness, and efficiency. With them, of course, comes an increase of drink and of the crimes from drink. The great excess of men among them leads to sexual immorality and the diffusion of private diseases. A primitive midwifery is practised, and the ignorance of the poor mothers fills the cemetery with tiny graves. The women go about their homes barefoot, and their rooms and clothing reek with the odors of cooking and uncleanness. The standards of modesty are Elizabethan. The miners bathe in the kitchen before the females and children of the household, and women soon to become mothers appear in public unconcerned. The foreigners attend church regularly, but their noisy amusements banish the quiet Sunday. The foreign men, three-eighths of whom are illiterate, pride themselves on their physical strength rather than on their skill, and are willing to take jobs requiring nothing but brawn.

Barriers of speech, education, and religious faith

From Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: Century, 1914).

split the people into unsympathetic, even hostile camps. The worst element in the community makes use of the ignorance and venality of the foreign-born voters to exclude the better citizens from any share in the control of local affairs. In this babel no newspaper becomes strong enough to mold and lead public opinion. On account of the smallness of the English-reading public,—the native-born men number slightly over two thousand and those of American parentage less than a thousand—the single English daily has so few subscribers that it cannot afford to offend any of them by exposing municipal rottenness. The chance to prey on the ignorant foreigner tempts to cupidity and corrupts the ethics of local business and professional men. The Slavic thirst, multiplying saloons up to one for every twenty-six families, is communicated to Americans, and results in an increase of liquor crimes among all classes. In like manner familiarity with the immodesties of the foreigners coarsens the native-born.

With the basest Americans and the lowest foreigners united by thirst and greed, while the decent Americans and the decent foreigners understand one another too little for team-work, it is not surprising that the municipal government is poor and that the taxpayers are robbed. Only a few of the main streets are paved; the rest are muddy and poorly guttered. Outside the central portion of the city one meets with open sewage, garbage, dung-heaps, and foul odors. Sidewalks are lacking or in bad repair. The police force, composed of four Lithuanians, two Poles, one German, and one Irishman, is so inefficient that "pistol-toting" after nightfall is common among all classes. At times hold-ups have been so frequent that it was not considered safe for a well-dressed person to show himself in the foreign sections after dark. In the words of a prominent local criminal lawyer: "We have a police force that can't speak English. Within the last few years there have been six unavenged murders in this town. Why, if there were anybody I wanted to get rid of, I'd entice him here, shoot him down in the street, and then go around and say good-by to the police."

Social Effects

Here in a nutshell are presented the social effects that naturally follow the introduction into an advanced people of great numbers of backward immigrants. One need not question the fundamental worth of the immigrants or their possibilities in order to argue that they must act as a drag on the social progress of the nation that incorporates them. . . .

While sister countries are fast nearing the goal of complete adult literacy, deteriorating immigration makes it very hard to lift the plane of popular intelligence in the United States. The foreign-born between

twenty and thirty-four years of age, late-comers of course, show five times the illiteracy of native whites of the same age. But those above forty-five years of age, mostly earlier immigrants, have scarcely twice the illiteracy of native whites above forty-five. This shows how much wider is the gulf between the Americans of to-day and the new immigrants than that between the Americans of a generation ago and the old immigrants.

Thanks to extraordinary educational efforts, the illiteracy of native white voters dropped a third during the last decade; that is, from 4.9 per cent. to 3.5 per cent. But the illiteracy of the foreign-born men rose to 12 per cent.; so that the proportion of white men in this country unable to read and write any language declined only 9 per cent. when, but for the influx of illiterates, it would have fallen 30 per cent.

In the despatches of August 16, 1912, is an account of a gathering of ten thousand afflicted people at a shrine at Carey, Ohio, reputed to possess a miraculous healing virtue. Special trains brought together multitudes of credulous, and at least one "miracle" was reported. As this country fills up with the densely ignorant, there will be more of this sort of thing. The characteristic features of the Middle Ages may be expected to appear among us to the degree that our population comes to be composed of persons at the medieval level of culture. . . .

In the South Side of Pittsburgh there are streets lined with the decent homes of German steelworkers. A glance down the paved passage leading to the rear of the house reveals absolute cleanliness, and four times out of five one glimpses a tree, a flower garden, an arbor, or a mass of vines. In Wood's Run, a few miles away, one finds the Slavic laborers of the Pressed Steel Car Company huddled in dilapidated rented dwellings so noisome and repulsive that one must visit the lower quarters of Canton to meet their like. One cause of the difference is that the Slavs are largely transients, who do nothing to house themselves because they are saving in order to return to their native village.

The fact that a growing proportion of our immigrants, having left families behind them, form no strong local attachments and have no desire to build homes here is one reason why of late the housing problem has become acute in American industrial centers.

Not least among the multiplying symptoms of social ill health in this country is the undue growth of cities. A million city-dwellers create ten times the amount of "problem" presented by a million on the farms. Now, as one traverses the gamut that leads from farms to towns, from towns to cities, and from little cities to big, the proportion of American stock steadily diminishes while the foreign stock increases

its representation until in the great cities it constitutes nearly three-fourths of the population. In 1910 the percentage distribution of our white population was as follows:—

	Native		
	White Stock	Foreign Stock	Foreign-Born
Rural districts	64.1	20.8	7.5
Cities 2,500-10,000	57.5	34.5	13.9
Cities 10,000-25,000	50.4	42.0	14.4
Cities 25,000-100,000	45.9	46.7	20.2
Cities 100,000-500,000	38.9	53.4	22.1
Cities 500,000 and over	25.6	70.8	33.6

It is not that the immigrants love streets and crowds. Two-thirds of them are farm bred, but they are dropped down in cities, and they find it easier to herd there with their fellows than to make their way into the open country. Our cities would be fewer and smaller had they fed on nothing but country-bred Americans. The later alien influx has rushed us into the thick of urban problems, and these are gravest where Americans are fewest. Congestion, misliving, segregation, corruption, and confusion are seen in motley groups like Pittsburgh, Jersey City, Paterson, and Fall River rather than in native centers like Indianapolis, Columbus, Nashville, and Los Angeles.

Pauperism

Ten years ago two-fifths of the paupers in our almshouses were foreign-born, but most of them had come over in the old careless days when we allowed European poorhouses to send us their inmates. Now that our authorities turn back such as appear likely to become a public charge, the obvious pauper is not entering this country. We know that virtually every Greek in America is self-supporting. The Syrians are said to be singularly independent. The Slavs and the Magyars are sturdy in spirit, and the numerous indigent Hebrews are for the most part cared for by their own race.

Nevertheless, dispensers of charity agree that many South Italians are landing with the most extravagant ideas of what is coming to them. They apply at once for relief with the air, "Here we are. Now what are you going to do for us?" They even insist on relief as a right. At home it had been noised about that in foolish America baskets of food are actually sent in to the needy, and some are coming over expressly to obtain such largess. Probably none are so infected with spiritual hookworm as the immigrants from Naples. It will be recalled that when Caribaldi and his thousand were fighting to break the Bourbon tyranny in the South [of Italy], the Neapolitans would hurrah for them, but would not even care for the wounded.

Says the Forty-seventh Annual Report of the New York Juvenile Asylum:

It is remarkable that recently arrived immigrants who display small adaptability in American standards are by no means slow in learning about this and other institutions where they may safely leave their children to be fed, clothed, and cared for at the public expense. This is one of the inducements which led them to leave their native land.

Charity experts are very pessimistic as to what we shall see when those who come in their youth have passed their prime and met the cumulative effects of overwork, city life, drink, and vice. Still darker are their forebodings for a second generation, reared too often by ignorant, avaricious rustics lodging in damp cellars, sleeping with their windows shut, and living on the bad, cheap food of cities. Of the Italians in Boston Dr. Bushee writes:

They show the beginnings of a degenerate class, such as has been fully developed among the Irish. . . . If allowed to continue in unwholesome conditions, we may be sure that the next generation will bring forth a large crop of dependents, delinquents and defectives to fill up our public institutions.

Says a charity superintendent working in a huge Polish quarter:

It is the second generation that will give us trouble. The parents come with rugged peasant health, and many of them keep their strength even in the slum. But their children often start life weakened physically and mentally by the conditions under which they were reared. They have been raised in close, unsanitary quarters, in overlarge families, by parents who drunk up or saved too much, spent too little on the children, or worked them too soon. Their sole salvation is the open country, and they can't be pushed into the country. All of us are aghast at the weak fiber of the second generation. Every year I see the morass of helpless poverty getting bigger. The evil harvest of past mistakes is ripening, but it will take twenty years before we see the worst of it. If immigration were cut off short to-day, the burden from past neglect and exploitation would go on increasing for years.

In 1908 nine-tenths of the 2600 complaints of children going wrong made to the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago related to the children of immigrants. It is said that four-fifths of the youths brought before the Juvenile Court of Chicago come from the homes of the foreign-born. In Pittsburgh the proportion is at least two-thirds. However startling these signs of moral breakdown in the families of the new immigrants, there is nothing mysterious about it. The lower the state from which the alien

comes, the more of a grotesque he will appear in the shrewd eyes of his partly Americanized children. "Obedience to parents seems to be dying out among the Jews," says a Boston charity visitor. "The children feel it is n't necessary to obey a mother who wears a shawl or a father who wears a full beard." "Sometimes it is the young daughter who rules the Jewish family," observes a Pittsburgh settlement head, "because she alone knows what is 'American.' But see how this results in a great number of Jewish girls going astray. Since the mother continues to shave her head and wear a wig as she did in Poland, the daughter assumes that mother is equally old-fogyish when she insists that a nice girl does n't paint her face or run with boys in the evening."

•

"Those optimists who imagine that assimilation of the immigrant is proceeding unhindered are living in a fool's paradise."

•

Through their knowledge of our speech and ways, the children have a great advantage in their efforts to slip the parental leash. The bad boy tells his father that whipping "does n't go" in this country. Reversing the natural order, the child becomes the fount of knowledge, and the parents hang on the lips of their precocious offspring. If the policeman inquires about some escapade or the truant officer gives warning, it is the scamp himself who must interpret between parent and officer. The immigrant is braced by certain Old-World loyalties, but his child may grow up loyal to nothing whatever, a rank egoist and an incorrigible who will give us vast trouble before we are done with him.

Still, the child is not always to blame. "Often the homes are so crowded and dirty," says a probation officer, "that no boy can go right. The Slavs save so greedily that their children become disgusted with the wretched home conditions and sleep out." One hears of foreign-born with several boarders sending their children out to beg or to steal coal. In one city investigation showed that only a third of the Italian children taken from school on their fourteenth birthday were needed as bread-winners. Their parents thought only of the sixty cents a week. In another only one-fourteenth of the Italian school children are above the primary grades, and one-eleventh of the Slavic, as against two-fifths of the American school children in grammar grades or high school. Miss Addams tells of a young man from the south of Italy who was mourning the death of his little girl of twelve. In his grief he said quite simply: "She was my

oldest kid. In two years she would have supported me, and now I shall have to work five or six years longer until the next one can do it." He expected to retire permanently at the age of thirty-four.

Not only do the foreign-born appear to be more subject to insanity than the native-born, but when insane they are more likely to become a public charge. Of the asylum population they appear to constitute about a third. In New York during the year ending September 30, 1911, 4218 patients who were immigrants or of immigrant parents were admitted to the insane hospitals of the State. This is three-quarters of the melancholy intake for that year. Only one out of nine of the first admissions from New York City was of native stock. The New York State Hospital Commission declares that "the frequency of insanity in our foreign population is 2.19 times greater than in those of native birth." In New York City it "is 2.48 times that of the native-born."

Excessive insanity is probably a part of the price the foreign-born pay for the opportunities of a strange and stimulating environment, with greater strains than some of them are able to bear. America calls forth powerful reactions in these people. Here they feel themselves in the grasp of giant forces they can neither withstand nor comprehend. The passions and the exertions, the hopes and the fears, the exultations and the despairs America excites in the immigrant are likely to be intenser than anything he would have experienced in his natal village.

In view of the fact that every year New York cares for 15,000 foreign-born insane at a cost of \$3,500,000 and that the State's sad harvest of demented immigrants during the single year 1911 will cost about \$8,000,000 before they die or are discharged, there is some offset to be made to the profits drawn from the immigrants by the transporting companies, landlords, real-estate men, employers, contractors, brewers, and liquor-dealers of the State. Besides, there is the cost of the paupers and the law-breakers of foreign origin. All such burdens, however, since they fall upon the public at large, do not detract from or qualify that private or business-man's prosperity which it is the office of the true modern statesman to promote.

Immigration and the Separate School

In a polyglot mining town of Minnesota is a superintendent who has made the public school a bigger factor in Americanization than I have found it anywhere else. The law gives him the children until they are sixteen, and he holds them all. His school buildings are civic and social centers. Through the winter, in his high school auditorium, which seats 1200 persons, he gives a course of entertainment which is self-supporting, although his "talent" for a single evening will cost as much as \$200. By means of the 400 for-

eigners in his night schools he has a grip on the voters which his foes have learned to dread. Under his lead the community has broken the mine-boss collar and won real self-government. The people trust him and bring him their troubles. He has jurisdiction over everything that can affect the children of the town, and his conception is wide. Wielding both legal and moral authority, he is, as it were, a corporation president and a medieval bishop rolled into one.

This man sets no limit to the transforming power of the public school. He insists that the right sort of schooling will not only alter the expression, but will even change the shape of the skull and the bony formation of the face. In his office is a beautiful tabouret made by a "wild boy" within a year after he had been brought in kicking and screaming. He scoffs at the fear of a lack of patriotism in the foreign-born or their children. He knows just how to create the sentiment. He has flag drills and special programs, and in the Fourth of July parade and the Decoration day procession the schools have always a fine float. He declares he can build human beings to order, and will not worry about immigration so long as the public school is given a chance at the second generation.

But is the public school to have this chance?

Multitudes of the new immigrants adhere to churches which do not believe in the public schools. "Their pupils," observed a priest to me, "are like wild children." Said a bishop: "No branches can be safely taught divorced from religion. We believe that geography, history, and even language ought to be presented from our point of view." Hence with great rapidity the children of Roman Catholics are being drawn apart into parochial schools. In Cleveland one-third of the population is supposed to be Catholic, and the 27,500 pupils in the parochial schools are nearly one-third of all school children. In Chicago there are 112,000 in the parish schools to 300,000 in the public schools. In New York the proportion is about one-sixth. In twenty-eight leading American cities the attendance of the parish schools increased 60 per cent. between 1897 and 1910, as against an increase of from 45 to 50 per cent. in the attendance of the public schools. The total number of children in the parochial schools is about 1,400,000. Separate education is a settled Catholic policy, and the bishops say they expect to enroll finally the children of all their people.

To bring this about, the public schools are denounced from the pulpit as "Godless" and "immoral," their product as mannerless and disobedient. "We think," says a Slovak leader, "that the parochial school pupils are more pious, more respectful toward parents and toward all persons in authority." The Polish, Lithuanian, or Slovak priest, less often the German or Bohemian, says bluntly: "If you send your children

to the public school, they will go to hell." Sometimes the priest threatens to exclude from the confessional parents who send their children to the public school. An archbishop recently decreed that parents who without permission send their children to the public school after they have made their first communion "commit a grievous sin and cannot receive the sacraments of the church." Within the immigrant groups there is active opposition, but it appears to be futile. In the soft-coal mining communities of Pennsylvania 9 per cent. of the children of native white parentage attend the parochial schools, whereas 24 per cent. of the Polish children and 48 per cent. of the Slovak children are in these schools. In a certain district in Chicago where the public-school teachers had felt they could hold their own, the foreign mothers came at last to take away their children's school-books, weeping because they were forced to transfer their children to the parish school.

Now, the parish school tends to segregate the children of the foreign-born. Parishes are formed for groups of the same speech, so a parish school will embrace children of only one nationality—German, Polish, Bohemian, Lithuanian, Croatian, Slovak, Magyar, Portuguese, or French Canadian, as the case may be. Often priest and teachers have been imported, and only the mother-tongue is used. "English," says a school superintendent, "comes to be taught as a purely ornamental language, like French in the public high school." Hence American-born children are leaving school not only unable to read and write English, but scarcely able to speak it. The foreign-speech school, while it binds the young to their parents, to their people, and to the old country, cuts them off from America. Says a Chicago Lithuanian leader: "There are 3000 of our children in the parochial schools here. The teachers are ignorant, illiterate spinsters from Lithuania who have studied here two or three years. When at fourteen the pupils quit school, they are no more advanced than the public-school pupils of ten. This is why 50,000 Lithuanians here have only twenty children in the high school."

When, now, to the removal of the second generation from the public school there is added, as is often the case, the endeavor to keep them away from the social center, the small park field-house, the public playground, the social settlement, the secular American press and welfare work in the factories, it is plain that those optimists who imagine that assimilation of the immigrant is proceeding unhindered are living in a fool's paradise.

Social Decline

"Our descendants," a social worker remarked to me, "will look back on the nineteenth century as our

Golden Age, just as we look back on Greece." Thoughtful people whose work takes them into the slime at the bottom of our foreignized cities and industrial centers find decline actually upon us. A visiting nurse who has worked for seven years in the stock-yards district of Chicago reports that of late the drinking habit is taking hold of foreign women at an alarming rate. In the saloons there the dignified stein has given way to the beer pail. In the Range towns of Minnesota there are 356 saloons, of which eighty-one are run by native-born, the rest chiefly by recent immigrants. Into a Pennsylvania coal town of 1800 people, mostly foreign-born, are shipped each week a car-load of beer and a barrel of whisky. Where the new foreign-born are numerous, women and children frequent the saloons as freely as the men. In the cities family desertion is growing at a great rate among foreign-born husbands. Facts are justifying the forecast made ten years ago by H. G. Wells: "If things go on as they are going, the great mass of them will remain a very low lower class—will remain largely illiterate, industrialized peasants."

The continuance of depressive immigration will lead to nothing catastrophic. Riots and labor strife will oftener break out, but the country will certainly not weaken nor collapse. Of patriotism of the military type there will be no lack. Scientific and technical advance will go on the same. The spread of business organization and efficiency will continue. The only thing that will happen will be a mysterious slackening in social progress. The mass will give signs of sluggishness, and the social procession will be strung out.

We are engaged in a generous rivalry with the West Europeans and the Australians to see which can do the most to lift the plane of life of the masses. Presently we shall be dismayed by the sense of falling behind. We shall be amazed to find the Swiss or the Danes or the New Zealanders making strides we cannot match. Stung with mortification at losing our erstwhile lead in the advancement of the common people, we shall cast about for someone to blame. Ultimate causes, of course, will be overlooked; only proximate causes will be noticed. There will be loud outcry that mothers, or teachers, or clergymen, or editors, or social workers are not doing their duty. Our public schools, solely responsible as they obviously are for the intellectual and moral characteristics of the people, will be roundly denounced: and it will be argued that church schools must take their place. There will be trying of this and trying of that, together with much ingenious legislation. As peasantism spreads and inertia proves unconquerable, the opinion will grow that the old American faith in the capacity and desire of the common people for improvement was a delusion, and

that only the superior classes care for progress. Not until the twenty-first century will the philosophic historian be able to declare with scientific certitude that the cause of the mysterious decline that came upon the American people early in the twentieth century was the deterioration of popular intelligence by the admission of great numbers of backward immigrants.

CON - NO, THEY DONT
HARM SOCIETY

Immigrants Do Not Harm American Society (1914)

A. Piatt Andrew (1873–1936)

The large influx of immigrants at the turn of the century prompted many calls for greater restrictions on immigration. A. Piatt Andrew, in a June 1914 *North American Review* article excerpted here, takes issue with critics of immigration. Andrew, a professor of economics at Harvard University, argues that unwarranted fears of different racial and ethnic groups fuel criticism of immigrants. He defends the new immigrants against charges of inferior character and economic disruption.

How consistent has been the American attitude toward immigrants, according to Andrew? Does he believe that immigrants should try to change and assimilate into American society? What does the debate over immigrants, as represented in these viewpoints, reveal about what Americans believed and felt about their country during the Progressive Era?

The subject of immigration we have always with us in this country. It has been a topic of contentious interest and legislation almost continuously since the first Englishman set foot in the Western World. The Pilgrims and Puritans of Massachusetts Bay were scarcely settled in their log huts before they began planning a policy of exclusion, and already in 1637 they voted to keep out those who were not members of their own religious sect. So in the very earliest decades of the English settlement, immigration began to be restricted, and Quakers and Baptists, Episcopalians and Catholics, were banished and proscribed from the Commonwealth on the ground that American standards were apt to be impaired by their admission. From that day to this the older immigrants and their descendants have tried to keep this country for those already here and their kindred folk. They have looked upon them-

From A. Piatt Andrew, "The Crux of the Immigration Question," *North American Review*, June 1914.

selves as a kind of aristocracy, their supposed superiority being proportioned to the length of time that they and their ancestors have lived upon this continent, and each successive generation of immigrants newly arrived has tended with curious repetition to adopt the same viewpoint, to believe that the succeeding immigrants were inferior to the former in religion, habits, education, or what not, and ought to be kept out. Then for more than a hundred years a further motive for exclusion has found constant iteration. Each generation has been taught to believe that the country was rapidly filling to the brim, and that on that account also the doors of entry ought to be closed.

In the very first decade of our Federal Government, in 1797, when the first Alien Act was under consideration, we find passages in the records of Congress which sound much like the utterances of certain Congressmen in 1914:

When the country, said Otis (in 1797), was new it may have been good policy to admit all. But it is so no longer. A bar should be placed against the admittance of those restless people who cannot be tranquil and happy at home. We do not want a vast horde of wild Irishmen let loose upon us. (McMasters' *History of the People of the United States*, Vol. II, page 332.)

Passage after passage of similar tenor could be cited from every subsequent decade, but I shall only quote one or two examples, beginning with a report made in 1819 by the Managers of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism in the City of New York. In this report of nearly a hundred years ago the fear is expressed that through immigration

pauperism threatens us with the most overwhelming consequences. . . . The present state of Europe contributes in a thousand ways to foster increasing immigration to the United States. . . . An almost innumerable population beyond the ocean is out of employment. . . . This country is the resort of vast numbers of these needy and wretched beings. . . . They are frequently found destitute in our streets: they seek employment at our doors: they are found in our almshouses and in our hospitals: they are found at the bar of our criminal tribunals, in our bridewell and our penitentiary and our State prison. (*Reports of the Industrial Commission*, Vol. XV, page 449.)

This was in 1819. Coming down another score of years, we find the next generation once more extolling the immigration up to its own time, but once more greatly perturbed by the supposedly inferior character of the immigrants then beginning to come. In a paper published in 1835, entitled "Imminent Dangers to the Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration," we read that formerly

our accessions of immigration were real accessions of strength from the ranks of the learned and the good, from enlightened mechanic and artisan and intelligent husbandmen. Now immigration is the accession of weakness, from the ignorant and vicious, or the priest-ridden slaves of Ireland and Germany, or the outcast tenants of the poorhouses and prisons of Europe. (*Hearings before the Committee on Immigration, Sixty-first Congress*, page 327.)

In the course of the twenty years that followed came the great increase of Irish immigrants during the famine in Ireland, and then again many Americans became panic-stricken at the thought of the possible consequences. A great secret order and a new political party, the so-called Know-Nothings, were organized to overcome the dire results that were apprehended. The abject squalor and wretchedness to which these Irish immigrants had for generations been accustomed, it was urged, could not but result in the degradation of American standards, and many seemed to fear that on account of their religion the immigrants would try to overthrow our democratic government and establish an ecclesiastic hierarchy in its stead. Feeling in some places was so bitter that the immigrants were mobbed in the streets, their churches were desecrated, and their children were persecuted in the public schools. One could spend hours reading passages from speeches and pamphlets of this period denouncing the Irish immigration.

Yet the American government still lives and, notwithstanding the abject condition of these Irish settlers and the fears and apprehensions which they aroused, we have absorbed and assimilated some four millions of them and no one has yet observed any deterioration of American standards and ideals in consequence. We and they have flourished and prospered, and we reckon their descendants among our best citizens. The names of many of them are daily on our lips and before our eyes in the headlines, for they are our political magnates, our aldermen and mayors and governors.

Germans and Scandinavians

Passing on to the next generation, during the later seventies and early eighties came a great migration of Germans and Scandinavians, and once more racial prejudice found a new objective. The previous immigrants had for the most part spoken our language, were akin, it was said, to our original stock and familiar with our traditions, but the new immigrants, ignorant of English and with different modes of thought and practice, were held to be unassimilable and to menace our standards and institutions. The apprehension was so great and the objection became so general as to induce in 1882 the first general immigration law. Nevertheless, we have absorbed over four

million Germans and over two million Swedes and Norwegians, and to-day we count no more valuable factors in our national stock than their descendants.

The New Immigrants

But once again the racial currents shifted, and during the last fifteen years new vast streams have flowed to this country from Russia, Italy, and Austria-Hungary, and new smaller streams from Portugal and from Greece, Rumania, and other parts of Eastern Europe. During 1913 Russia, Italy, and Austria-Hungary offered each nearly a quarter of the year's total inflow. So once again the familiar clamor of alarm has been turned in another direction. It is now admitted that the millions of Irish and Germans and Scandinavians who have come into the country have been absorbed without any degradation of our standards, that they have rendered invaluable service in developing the country, and that the earlier fears have proven groundless. But it is said that the new immigrant is of a type radically less desirable than that of the earlier periods, and once more we hear the warning that the situation to-day is different in that the country is now thickly settled and land and opportunities are no longer available. As I recall the similar assertions and fears of earlier periods I must confess that I sympathize with the gentleman from Missouri who expressed a desire to have some evidence submitted. It looks as if in the eyes of some Americans the only good immigrants were the dead immigrants, and that the only opportunities for the country's development lay in the past. I want to know and you want to know in what sense the immigrants of to-day are thought to be inferior to those who preceded them, and on what grounds it is claimed that the country has reached the limit of profitable increase in population.

Important Questions

Are the new immigrants less sound of body and mind than those of earlier generations? Do they more frequently evince criminal proclivities? Are they more apt to become a charge upon the State? Is their standard of living lower? Are they less capable of becoming loyal, worthy American citizens? We may well inquire what the Immigration Commission, with their exhaustive investigations published in forty-one volumes, have to say in answer to these questions, and in this connection we may also turn to the volume upon *The Immigration Problem* prepared by Professors [Jeremiah W.] Jenks and [W. Jett] Lauck, the reputed authors of the Immigration Commission Report, which summarizes the data and conclusions of the Commission.

Are the new immigrants wanting in bodily vigor and health? The authors of the Immigration Com-

mission Report deny this.

Our later immigration laws have forbidden the entrance of those afflicted with any loathsome or contagious disease, or of those in such a condition of health as is likely to make them become a public charge. Under these laws, too, the steamship companies are held responsible and are compelled to return free of charge passengers rejected by our immigration officials, and in the case of the insane or diseased they are fined in addition one hundred dollars for each such passenger brought to this country. This legislation has brought about a very great change in the matter of inspection and exclusion, and the representatives of the Immigration Commission declare that

the careful inspection abroad, sometimes by representatives of the United States Government, otherwise by inspectors of the steamship companies, and the final examination at the port of entry, have brought about the result that with very rare exceptions every immigrant admitted to this country is now in good health, and is not bringing with him the germs of any disease that might prove detrimental. (Jenks and Lauck, page 28.)

And they add that

as far as one can judge from the records kept, the races of the recent immigration, those from Southern and Eastern Europe, are not so subject to diseases that seem to be allied with moral weaknesses as some of those of the older immigration races. (Jenks and Lauck, page 47.)

Are the new immigrants more addicted to crime? Again the authors of the Immigration Commission Report assert that there is no proof of this.

No satisfactory evidence has yet been produced to show that immigration has resulted in an increase in crime disproportionate to the increase in the adult population. Such comparable statistics of crime and population as it has been possible to obtain indicate that immigrants are less prone to commit crime than are native Americans. (*Reports of the United States Immigration Commission*, Vol. XXXVI, page 1.)

Are the new immigrants more likely to become charges upon the community? The authors of the Immigration Commission Report declare the contrary.

The Immigration Commission, with the assistance of the Associated Charities in forty-three cities, including practically all the large centers excepting New York, reached the conclusion that only a very small percentage of the immigrants now arriving apply for relief. (Jenks and Lauck, page 50.)

Is the standard of living of the new immigrants lower than that of the old? Any one who has read the contemporary descriptions of the living conditions of the Irish and German immigrants in the periods

from 1840 to 1880 will hesitate to believe that the standard of living of the immigrants of our day is lower than the standard of living of the immigrants in the earlier period. Nothing could be more pitiful and depressing than the pictures of the poverty and wretchedness of the Irish settlers at the time of the great migration from Ireland. The majority of the Irish people for centuries had been forced to live in hovels with only the barest necessities in the way of furniture and clothing, and many of the thousands who came to this country were in serious danger of actual starvation if they remained at home. The authors of the Immigration Commission Report state that "practically none of our immigrants of the present day are in such a condition" (Jenks and Lauck, page 12).

The Melting Pot

In a very few years, with our free and compulsory schools, our free libraries, and the economic opportunities which this country has to offer, these people were transformed into ambitious, self-respecting, public-spirited citizens. And so it is with the Italians and Poles, the Russian Jews, and other poor immigrants of more recent times. They are often very poor in this world's goods when they enter our gates. One sees the mothers coming in with shawls in place of hats, often without shoes or stockings, and with all their worldly belongings in a rough box or tied in a single handkerchief. But it is one of the miraculous phases of our history how quickly we are able to transform, enrich, and absorb them. A few years later one sees the children of these same immigrants well dressed and ambitious, well educated, and literally undistinguishable in manners, morals, or appearance from the descendants of those who came over in the *Mayflower*. Such is the Aladdin-like power of the great American melting-pot.

It is easy to echo the cry of prejudice if you happen to be of Anglo-Saxon descent, and to assume an air of superiority and denounce the Italians, Greeks, Poles, Bohemians, and Russian Jews, as if they ranked somewhere between man and the beast, but were not yet wholly human. The same intolerant attitude of mind among the Anglo-Saxon Puritan settlers of early colonial days led to the whipping, imprisonment, banishment, and even hanging of Quakers and others of unlike religious beliefs. If you share these prejudices to-day, walk some Sunday afternoon through the galleries of the art-museums in our large cities and note who are the people most interested in their treasures; inquire at the public libraries who are their most appreciative patrons; visit the night schools and observe who constitute their most eager classes; study the lineage of the ranking students in our universities and you will find

that our libraries, art-galleries, universities, and schools often find their best patrons among the offspring of these despised races of Southern and Eastern Europe. Or if you seek your information in books, I would commend you to authorities who have studied the new immigrants at first-hand. If you will examine the volume on *The Italian in America*, by Messrs. [Eliot] Lord, Trenor, and Barrows, you will be reminded of what America owes to the Italians from Columbus down to our own day. And if you will read the study of *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, by Dr. [Emily] Balch, you will be reminded of what we owe to the Poles and Bohemians from the time of Pulaski and Kosciuszko down to our time. And if you will read the story of *The Promised Land* and *They Who Knock at Our Gates*, by Mary Antin, you will find descriptions of what we may expect from the Russian Jews. Incidentally you will also discover that the traditions and heroes of American history find their most ardent admirers to-day among these same people who but recently were aliens.

Immigrant Numbers

There is no evidence that the newer immigrants are inferior to the old. It is only the recurrence of a groundless prejudice which makes some people feel so. But even if the new immigration is not inferior in character to the old, we have still to ask whether there is not a menace in the very numbers of the immigrants now coming in. We hear a great deal these days about the alarming increase in immigration. We are told that more than a million foreign-born are coming into this country every year, that the number is increasing as never before, and that the country cannot absorb so great an influx. What are the facts in this regard?

•

"There is no evidence that the newer immigrants are inferior to the old."

•

As to the amount of recent immigration, the tide ebbs and flows with the alternating advances and recessions of business, and the tendency is for each successive wave to reach a higher level than its predecessors. In 1854 a record of 428,000 arrivals was established; then there was a great recession, and in 1873 a new high level of 460,000 was reached. The next wave culminated in 1882 with 789,000, and in 1907 the highest of all immigrant records was reached, 1,285,000. During the last ten years the average number of immigrants arriving in this country has not fallen much short of a million per year,

and this figure considered by itself does look portentous. One must bear in mind, however, that it represents only one side of the ledger and is subject to very heavy deductions. If you are reckoning the extent to which your property has increased during a given period, it does not suffice merely to count up the income. You must also deduct the outgo. And if you are reckoning the actual addition to our population which results from immigration, if you would have in mind the actual number of immigrants that we have had to absorb, you must take account of both sides of the ledger, of the outgo as well as of the income. During the last six years the number of departing aliens has been carefully collated, and it appears that from 400,000 to 700,000 aliens depart from the United States every year. This leaves a net balance of arriving aliens of only about 550,000 per year, or only about one-half of the total that is commonly cited as representing the annual influx. Even this figure may look precarious, however, until we have considered it in its appropriate relations and comparisons.

America's Capacity

The capacity of the country to assimilate the incoming thousands without any serious modification of our institutions or standards depends in part upon two conditions: first, upon the proportion which the aliens bear to the resident population by which they are to be absorbed, and, second, upon whether the country is already approaching the saturation point as regards the density of its population. Now the proportion of foreign-born in our total population has not varied much in recent decades, and even in the record year of 1907 the percentage of immigrants to population was lower than it has been on several other occasions during the past sixty years. As compared with the population of the country the immigration of recent years has not bulked as large as the immigration of the early fifties, and if we consider only the net immigration, it makes to-day an addition to the total population of the country of only a little more than one-half of one per cent. per year.

Nor need one fear that we are reaching the point in this country where population presses upon the means of subsistence. The number of our people will have to be multiplied sixfold to equal the density of the population of France, to be multiplied tenfold to equal that of Germany or that of Italy, and to be multiplied eighteenfold to equal that of England. If the present population of the whole United States were located in the State of Texas alone, there would still not be two-thirds as many inhabitants per square mile in that State as there are to-day in England. One must, indeed, have little faith in the future of the United States who, in the face of such compar-

isons, believes that the population of this country as a whole is approaching the saturation point, or that from the standpoint of the country as a whole we need be terrified by the dimensions of present immigration. It amounts in annual net to little more than one-half of one per cent. of our present population, and that population will have to increase many hundred per cent. before we have reached a density remotely approaching that of any of the leading countries of Europe.

Timid Americans

There will, of course, always be timid Americans who will wonder how we can possibly hope to assimilate foreigners to the extent of as much as one-half of one per cent. of our population per year and who would prefer to see the country relatively weak and undeveloped than run the risk of continuing the experiment. When Jefferson proposed to purchase all of the great territory west of the Mississippi known as Louisiana, the citizens of Boston organized a public meeting to protest against the project. They thought it would destroy the relative influence of New England in the country's affairs, and they thought that the United States could not assimilate so vast a territory; and though their fears have been proven not only groundless but absurd by subsequent history, there are many still in Boston and elsewhere in the country who feel that our powers of assimilation have now reached their limit of capacity and ought not to be further taxed.

There will, of course, always be Americans absorbed in history and genealogy who will sigh for the good old days when America was only a sparsely settled fringe of seaboard States, and who will wish that the population of the country might still consist of the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution, the Colonial Dames, and the Sons of Colonial Wars. This might, indeed, have been a pleasant condition from certain points of view, but of one thing we may be certain: this country to-day would not be settled from coast to coast; our cities would not be a fifth of their present size; our powers as a nation and our prosperity as individuals would only have been a fraction of what they are had immigration been prevented.

For Further Reading

- Edith Abbott, *Historical Aspects of the Immigration Problem: Select Documents*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926.
 Roger Daniels, *Coming to America*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
 Julius Weinberg, *Edward Alsworth Ross and the Sociology of Progressivism*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1972.
 Thomas C. Wheeler, ed., *The Immigrant Experience: The Anguish of Becoming American*. New York: Penguin, 1971.

