

*From Frank Julian Warne, The Immigrant Invasion (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913), pp. 289-290, 295-296, 316.*

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 to-day 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. . . .

When any one 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. . . .

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.

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.

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