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America is a unique sociological fabric, and it bespeaks poverty of imagination not to be thrilled at the incalculable potentialities of so novel a union of men. To seek no other goal than the weary old nationalism,—belligerent, exclusive, inbreeding, the poison of which we are witnessing now in Europe,—is to make patriotism a hollow sham, and to declare that, in spite of our boastings, America must ever be a follower and not a leader of nations. . . .

The failure of the melting-pot, far from closing the great American democratic experiment, means that it has only just begun. Whatever American nationalism turns out to be, we see already that it will have a color richer and more exciting than our ideal has hitherto encompassed. In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation. The voices which have cried for a tight and jealous nationalism of the European pattern are failing. From that ideal, however valiantly and disinterestedly it has been set for us, time and tendency have moved us further and further away. What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun. Nowhere else has such contiguity been anything but the breeder of misery. Here, notwithstanding our tragic failures of adjustment, the outlines are already too clear not to give us a new vision and a new orientation of the American mind in the world. . . .

3. The World's Work Favors Restrictive Quotas (1924)

Some Americans, fearing that the massive influx of new immigrants would fundamentally alter the ethnic composition of the United States, proposed an end to the traditional policy of open immigration. The Immigration Act of 1924 was the era's grand monument to this restrictionist impulse. Known as the Johnson Bill as it made its way through Congress, it limited immigrants from any given country to 2 percent of the number of foreign-born residents of that country recorded in the U.S. census of 1890—a census taken before the full weight of southern and eastern European immigration was felt. This meant, for instance, that in determining how many Italian immigrants should be allowed, officials would set the limit by taking 2 percent of the number of Italian-born people counted in the 1890 census—a formula that would cut Italian immigration from roughly 42,000 to 4,000 a year. In the following editorial, the World's Work magazine endorses the bill as a way to preserve the nation's traditional ethnic and cultural identity. How compelling is the argument that quotas based on a later census would discriminate against "the old American stock"?

One point at least is apparently settled in the matter of immigration; the quota system is sound and will be used indefinitely as the method of restricting the influx of aliens. Differences of opinion turn upon the particular census which is to be used as the quota basis. The Johnson bill, adopted by the House Committee, limits new

³ "Discriminating Against the American Stock," *World's Work* 48 (May 1924): 13-14.

arrivals to 2 per cent of each nationality as disclosed by the census of 1890. The first result accomplished would be a great reduction in the number of immigrants. It would let in only 169,083 Europeans a year, compared with the million and more that were coming before the European War. The mass of these would come from those northwestern countries which would give the future population that homogeneous character essential to the stability of any country. It would annually admit 62,658 from Great Britain and Ireland and 50,329 from Germany, and only 4,089 from Italy, 9,072 from Poland, and 1,992 from Russia. The law is framed, of course, to accomplish this very discrimination. It rests upon the conviction that the United States, in its peoples, its laws, its customs, its religion, its conception of morals—in everything, that is, constituting the stuff of the national mind and character—is preëminently a product of northwestern civilization. The purpose arrived at is to guarantee the maintenance of that character. We are not a Mediterranean or an Oriental people, and any attempt to introduce into our national composition a mass of Slavs, eastern Jews, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Sicilians, southern Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, Turks, and other Asiatic races can have only the most deplorable consequences.

Apparently, however, the Immigration Committee of the Senate, under the chairmanship of Mr. Colt, of Rhode Island, does not share this view. Instead of taking 2 per cent of the census of 1890, Mr. Colt would base his quotas on the census of 1910. There should be no mistake about precisely what this means. It discriminates against the races that created the United States and gave it its existing qualities, in favor of the eastern European and Mediterranean and Asiatic peoples who have only recently, in large numbers, come to our shores. . . . The racial groups objecting to quotas based on the 1890 census assert that it represents a deliberate attempt to discriminate in favor of the old American stock—still the overwhelming majority in our population. Instead, they propose a quota system intended just as deliberately to discriminate against it and in favor of the peoples of eastern and southern Europe.

The chief argument against the wholesale admission of unassimilable aliens is that it creates nationalistic and racial blocs which are constantly bringing pressure to bear upon law-making bodies in the interest of their particular nationalities, which do not think like Americans, or act like Americans, but which retain indefinitely their European and Asiatic consciousness. The history of the present attempt to restrict immigration is a splendid illustration of this contention. . . .

[The Senate significantly altered the House version of the Johnson Bill. The final act capped overall immigration at 150,000 persons per year and left the benchmark of the 1890 U.S. census in force only until 1927, when it was to be replaced by a comprehensive survey of the national origins of all Americans as recorded in the census of 1920. Thereafter, the number of immigrant visas allotted to any country would bear the same ratio to 150,000 as the number of U.S. inhabitants derived from that country had to the total U.S. population in 1920. Further controversy, including disagreement over a proper method for defining "national origin," prevented the law's full implementation until 1929. Ultimately basing its calculations on dubious assumptions about surnames, the government determined that 82 percent of Americans derived from northern and western European ancestry. The law therefore stipulated that 82 percent of all future immigrants should come from those areas, leaving only

16 percent of immigrant visas to be allocated to the countries of southern and eastern Europe, and 2 percent to those of other regions (the quota system did not apply to Canada or Latin America). This explicitly discriminatory national origins system remained the basis for U.S. immigration policy until 1965, although its impact was largely overwhelmed by the Great Depression and World War II, which suppressed immigration far more dramatically than mere legislation could do.]

4. The New Republic Opposes Racialized Quotas (1924)

Like most Americans, the editors of the New Republic did not oppose the idea of restricting immigration. They did, however, object to what they considered the "pseudoscientific" assumptions of Anglo-Saxon superiority driving the Johnson Bill. According to the editors, how did the bill's racialized quotas intensify the problem of assimilation?

... Two hundred thousand persons of alien habits and mostly of alien speech are perhaps as many as the United States can profitably absorb, at least so long as we leave the work of assimilation to haphazard and often misguided forces. Except the doctrinaire free immigrationists and the employers of large masses of common labor, few persons in America, whether native or foreign born, would object to the quantitative restriction. There is, however, widespread and bitter opposition to the way in which the restriction is effected through the Johnson immigration bill.

The adoption of the 1890 census as the basis of the quota is accepted almost universally as a deliberate discrimination against certain nationalities—Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Czechs, Poles, and Russians—or, to be frank, Russian and Polish Jews. It is viewed as a discrimination ostensibly based on considerations of assimilability, but actually based on the judgment that these races are inferior. The framers of the bill deny any intention of imputing inferiority to certain races, but the popular and pseudoscientific propaganda for the bill is not so scrupulous. The races of southern and eastern Europe are being charged in popular discussion with every sort of defect and degeneracy. It is loosely asserted that a remarkably large proportion of them stand low in the scale of native intelligence; that crime, insanity and susceptibility to disease is common among them, that they are so diverse in physical and mental type from the north European stock that the mixing of blood, inevitable in time, will produce nothing but wretched mongrels, having the vices but not the virtues of both stocks.

What such a propaganda is doing to set the foreign born and their children against the older American stocks is in evidence on every hand. We have a graver nationality question in America today than we ever had in our history. The chief object of the restriction of immigration is to promote assimilation. No flood of unrestricted immigration could have operated so effectively to check the process of assimilation as the Johnson immigration bill.

We could have attained the results we were seeking in a way that would not have been offensive to any nationality. We should first have fixed the number we would admit—say, 200,000. Then we should have based the quota for the several nations on specific proof of assimilation. A fair proof would be the number of each

⁴"The Immigration Question," *New Republic*, February 27, 1924, p. 7.

nationality who had become naturalized. And instead of taking any specific year for a basis, the latest available naturalization statistics should be used. If this plan discriminated in fact against any nationality, the fault would lie squarely with them.

The Johnson bill will be pressed with great vigor, but we doubt that it can pass, unless it is radically amended. We hope that it will fail. Nothing is gained by putting on the statute books a measure which is certain to evoke an increasing volume of bitter discontent. It would be far better to extend the present quota law, with all its inadequacies, until our legislators have had time to work out a measure which will operate to make us a more homogeneous nation, instead of splitting us into a collection of mutually hostile racial stocks.

5. Samuel Gompers Favors Restriction (1924)

Samuel Gompers, the nation's most prominent spokesman for organized labor, long favored immigration restrictions. Along with many other labor activists, he insisted that unrestricted immigration harmed the American worker by providing a steady flow of cheap foreign labor, thus depressing wage rates and standards of living for workers already in the country. Until 1924 Gompers avoided linking the cause of labor with the ethnocentric arguments of the nativists. Here, however, he conspicuously combines the two—borrowing extensively from Gino Speranza, one of the most outspoken advocates of ethnic quotas. Why might Gompers have decided to take advantage of the ethnic issue?

... The enactment of immigration legislation began in 1820 and for the last twenty-five years immigration has been an important issue in American politics and an issue of importance in relation to the economic well being and stability of our country. For the last five years the issue has become much more acute, largely by reason of the world war and the general dislocation of economic life throughout the world.

The United States enacts immigration legislation for certain definite reasons, some of which are: First, protection of American standards of living against attack by low-wage workers coming in masses from countries where the conditions of labor are vastly inferior to the conditions of labor in the United States; second, prevention of an influx of persons who, because of physical, mental or moral conditions, are undesirable either as residents or citizens; third, safeguarding American citizenship and American social and political institutions against the undermining influence of immigrant masses either hostile to those institutions or unable to understand them. All of these reasons are worthy and valid. . . . Every effort to enact immigration legislation must expect to meet a number of hostile forces, and, in particular, two hostile forces of considerable strength. One of these is composed of corporation employers who desire to employ physical strength ("broad backs") at the lowest possible wage and who prefer a rapidly revolving labor supply at low wages to a regular supply of American wage earners at fair wages. The other is composed of racial groups in the United States who oppose all restrictive legislation because they

⁵⁷From Samuel Gompers, "America Must Not Be Overwhelmed," *American Federationist* 31, April 1924, pp. 313-317.

In time, I learned that not everything in America was what it seemed to be. I discovered, for instance, that a spare tire could be filled with substances other than air, that one must not look deeply into certain binoculars, and that the Teddy Bears that suddenly acquired tremendous popularity among the ladies very often had hollow metal stomachs.

"But," it might be asked, "where do all these people get the liquor?" Very simple. Prohibition has created a new, a universally respected, a well-beloved, and a very profitable occupation, that of the bootlegger who takes care of the importation of the forbidden liquor. Everyone knows this, even the powers of government. But this profession is beloved because it is essential, and it is respected because its pursuit is clothed with an element of danger and with a sporting risk. . . .

Yet it is undeniable that prohibition has in some respects been signally successful. The filthy saloons, the gin mills which formerly flourished on every corner and in which the laborer once drank off half his wages, have disappeared. Now he can instead buy his own car, and ride off for a weekend or a few days with his wife and children in the country or at the sea. But, on the other hand, a great deal of poison and methyl alcohol has taken the place of the good old pure whiskey. The number of crimes and misdemeanors that originated in drunkenness has declined. But by contrast, a large part of the population has become accustomed to disregard and to violate the law without thinking. The worst is that, precisely as a consequence of the law, the taste for alcohol has spread ever more widely among the youth. The sporting attraction of the forbidden and the dangerous leads to violations. My observations have convinced me that many fewer would drink were it not illegal.

2. Fiorello La Guardia Pillories Prohibition (1926)

Wholesale violations of the prohibition law became so notorious that in 1926 a Senate judiciary subcommittee held extended hearings. It uncovered shocking conditions. Stubby, turbulent, fiery Fiorello ("the Little Flower") La Guardia, then a congressman from New York and later to be the controversial reform mayor of New York City, expressed characteristically vigorous views. Which of his statistics seem least susceptible to proof? Which of his arguments would probably carry the most weight with the average taxpayer?

It is impossible to tell whether prohibition is a good thing or a bad thing. It has never been enforced in this country.

There may not be as much liquor in quantity consumed to-day as there was before prohibition, but there is just as much alcohol.

At least 1,000,000 quarts of liquor is consumed each day in the United States. In my opinion such an enormous traffic in liquor could not be carried on without the knowledge, if not the connivance, of the officials entrusted with the enforcement of the law.

I am for temperance; that is why I am for modification.

²Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Sixty-ninth Congress, First Session (April 5-24, 1926), on . . . Bills to Amend the National Prohibition Act, vol. 1, pp. 649-651.

I believe that the percentage of whisky drinkers in the United States now is greater than in any other country of the world. Prohibition is responsible for that. . . .

At least \$1,000,000,000 a year is lost to the National Government and the several states and counties in excise taxes. The liquor traffic is going on just the same. This amount goes into the pockets of bootleggers and into the pockets of the public officials in the shape of graft. . . .

I will concede that the saloon was odious, but now we have delicatessen stores, pool rooms, drug stores, millinery shops, private parlors, and 57 other varieties of speakeasies selling liquor and flourishing.

I have heard of \$2,000 a year prohibition agents who run their own cars with liveried chauffeurs.

It is common talk in my part of the country that from \$7.50 to \$12 a case is paid in graft from the time the liquor leaves the 12-mile limit until it reaches the ultimate consumer. There seems to be a varying market price for this service created by the degree of vigilance or the degree of greed of the public officials in charge.

It is my calculation that at least \$1,000,000 a day is paid in graft and corruption to Federal, state, and local officers. Such a condition is not only intolerable, but it is demoralizing and dangerous to organized government. . . .

The Prohibition Enforcement Unit has entirely broken down. It is discredited; it has become a joke. Liquor is sold in every large city. . . .

Only a few days ago I charged on the floor of the House that 350 cases of liquor of a seizure of 1,500 made by Federal officials and stored in the Federal building at Indianapolis, Ind., had been removed. The Department of Justice, under date of April 9, 1926, confirmed my charge. The Attorney General admits that since this liquor was in the possession of the Federal authorities in the Federal building at Indianapolis, 330 cases are missing. If bootleggers can enter Federal buildings to get liquor, the rest can be easily imagined. . . .

I have been in public office for a great many years. I have had the opportunity to observe first the making of the present prohibition laws as a member of Congress, and later as president of the Board of Aldermen of the largest city in this country its attempted enforcement. In order to enforce prohibition in New York City I estimated at the time would require a police force of 250,000 men and a force of 200,000 men to police the police.

3. The WCTU Upholds Prohibition (1926)

Mrs. Ella A. Boole, president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), appeared before the same Senate judiciary subcommittee. Hailing from the same metropolitan area as La Guardia, Boole was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), held a Ph.D. from the University of Wooster, and was a Presbyterian. She had run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate on the Prohibition ticket in 1920. What values underlay her insistence on enforcing unpopular laws, despite widespread flouting?

³Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Sixty-ninth Congress, First Session (April 5-24, 1926), on . . . Bills to Amend the National Prohibition Act, vol. 1, pp. 1068-1071.

You have listened to testimony of shocking conditions due to corruption of officials, and lack of enforcement, some of which suggested no remedy except a surrender to those who violate the law, while the propaganda of all these organizations is encouraging continued violation. Permit me to show another side of the picture, and propose that instead of lowering our standards we urge that the law be strengthened, and in that way notice be served on law violators that America expects her laws to be enforced and to be obeyed. . . .

Enforcement has never had a fair trial. Political patronage, leakage through the permit system, connivance at the violation of law, and spread of the propaganda that it is not obligatory to obey a law unless you believe in it, and to the effect that the responsibility for the enforcement of law rested with the officers alone, when it should be shared by the individual citizen, have materially hindered the work of enforcement—all this with the result that the United States has not derived from prohibition what it would have derived had all the people observed the law and had there been hearty cooperation of the press and the people. . . .

It is not easy to get at the facts about the effect of prohibition on health, morals, and economic [life] because they are interwoven with other causes, and partial statistics may be misleading. But the elimination of a preventable cause of poverty, crime, tuberculosis, the diseases of middle life, unhappy homes, and financial depression brings results insofar as the law is observed and enforced. . . .

The closing of the open saloon with its doors swinging both ways, an ever-present invitation for all to drink—men, women, and boys—is an outstanding fact, and no one wants it to return. It has resulted in better national health, children are born under better conditions, homes are better, and the mother is delivered from the fear of a drunken husband. There is better food. Savings-banks deposits have increased, and many a man has a bank account to-day who had none in the days of the saloon.

The increase in home owning is another evidence that money wasted in drink is now used for the benefit of the family. Improved living conditions are noticeable in our former slum districts. The Bowery and Hell's Kitchen* are transformed.

Safety-first campaigns on railroads and in the presence of the increasing number of automobiles are greatly strengthened by prohibition.

The prohibition law is not the only law that is violated. Traffic laws, anti-smuggling laws, as well as the Volstead [prohibition] Act, are held in contempt. It is the spirit of the age.

Life-insurance companies have long known that drinkers were poor risks, but they recognize the fact that prohibition has removed a preventable cause of great financial loss to them.

The wonderful advances in mechanics in the application of electricity and in transportation demand brains free from the fumes of alcohol, hence law enforcement and law observance contribute to this progress. . . .

Your attention has been called to the failures. We claim these have been the result of lax enforcement. The machinery of enforcement should be strengthened.

*The Bowery and Hell's Kitchen were two notorious immigrant ghettos in turn-of-the-century New York.

[The federal enforcement machinery finally broke down, and the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed in 1933. Prohibition had done much good but at a staggering cost. In addition to the evils already noted, gangsterism was flourishing, and the courts and jails were clogged. With repeal, the control of liquor went back to state and local governments.]

D. New Goals for Women

I. Margaret Sanger Campaigns for Birth Control (1920)

*Few other feminists could rival Margaret Sanger in energy, daring, and genius for organization and publicity. Prosecuted in 1914 for publishing a radical journal, *The Woman Rebel*, she fled to England, where she made the acquaintance of the noted sexual theorist Havelock Ellis. She returned to the United States in 1915 and launched herself on a lifelong crusade for birth control. Despite being arrested several more times in subsequent years, she persevered in founding the American Birth Control League (later Planned Parenthood) in 1921. For the next decade and more Sanger tirelessly championed her cause. What arguments does she emphasize here in favor of contraception? What was her view of women? of men? of the relation between the sexes? Critics sometimes accused her of drinking too deeply from the well of racism and nativism that seemed to overflow in the 1920s. Do the remarks that follow offer any evidence in support of such a charge?*

The most far-reaching social development of modern times is the revolt of woman against sex servitude. The most important force in the remaking of the world is a free motherhood. Beside this force, the elaborate international programmes of modern statesmen are weak and superficial. . . .

Only in recent years has woman's position as the gentler and weaker half of the human family been emphatically and generally questioned. Men assumed that this was woman's place; woman herself accepted it. It seldom occurred to anyone to ask whether she would go on occupying it forever. . . .

Caught in this "vicious circle," woman has, through her reproductive ability founded and perpetuated the tyrannies of the Earth. Whether it was the tyranny of monarchy, an oligarchy or a republic, the one indispensable factor of its existence was, as it is now, hordes of human beings—human beings so plentiful as to be cheap, and so cheap that ignorance was their natural lot. . . .

The creators of over-population are the women, who, while wringing their hands over each fresh horror, submit anew to their task of producing the multitude who will bring about the *next* tragedy of civilization.

¹Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (New York: Brentano's, 1920), *passim*.