

President Vetoes the Immigration Bill

Under a Washington date of January 28, a staff correspondent of the Chicago Herald sends the following:

President Wilson today sent to the house of representatives a veto of the literacy test restrictive immigration bill. In a special message he based his veto on opposition to an educational test for alien immigrants and the destruction of the "right of asylum" in this country of the oppressed of other nations.

TEXT OF MESSAGE

President Wilson's message was as follows:

"It is with unaffected regret that I find myself constrained by clear conviction to return this bill (H. R. 6060, an act to regulate the immigration of aliens to and the residence of aliens in the United States), without my signature.

"Not only do I feel it to be a serious matter to exercise the power of veto in any case, because it involves opposing the single judgment of the president to the judgment of a majority of both houses of the congress, a step which no man, who realizes his own ability to error, can take without great hesitation, but also because this particular bill is in so many important respects admirable, well conceived and desirable.

"Its enactment into law would undoubtedly enhance the efficiency and improve the methods of handling the important branch of the public service to which it relates. But candor and a sense of duty with regard to the responsibility so clearly imposed upon me by the constitution in matters of legislation, leave me no choice but to dissent.

CLOSES GATES OF ASYLUM

"In two particulars of vital consequence, this bill embodies a radical departure from the traditional and long established policy of this country, a policy in which our people have conceived the very character of their government to be expressed, the very mission and spirit of the nation in respect of its relations to the peoples of the world outside their borders. It seeks to all but close entirely the gates of asylum which have always been open to those who could find nowhere else the right and opportunity of constitutional agitation for what they conceived to be the natural and inalienable rights of men; and it excludes those to whom the opportunities of elementary education have been denied without regard to their character, their purposes, or their natural capacity.

"Restrictions like these adopted earlier in our history as a nation would very materially have altered the course and cooled the humane ardors of our politics. The right of political asylum has brought to this country many a man of noble character and elevated purpose who was marked as an outlaw in his own less fortunate land, and who has yet become an ornament to our citizenship and to our public councils.

RADICAL CHANGE IN POLICY

"The children and the compatriots of these illustrious Americans must stand amazed to see the representatives of their nation now resolved, in the fullness of our national strength and at the maturity of our great institutions, to risk turning such men back from our shores without test of quality or purpose. It is difficult for men to believe that the full effect of this feature of the bill was realized when it was framed and adopted, and it is impossible for men to assent to it in the form in which it is here cast.

"The literacy test and the tests and restrictions which accompany it constitute an even more radical change in the policy of the nation. Hitherto we have generously kept our doors open to all who were not unfitted by reason of disease or incapacity for self-support or such personal records and antecedents as were likely to make them a menace to our peace and order or to the wholesome and essential relationships of life. In this bill it is proposed to turn away from tests of character and of quality and to impose tests which exclude and restrict, for the new tests here embodied are not tests of quality or of character or of personal fitness, but tests of opportunity. Those who come seeking opportunity are not to be admitted unless they have had one of the chief opportunities they seek—the opportunity of education. The object of such provisions is restriction, not selection.

"If the people of this country have made up their minds to limit the number of immigrants

by arbitrary tests and so reverse the policy of all the generations of Americans that have gone before them, it is their right to do so. I am their servant and have no license to stand in their way. But I do not believe that they have. I respectfully submit that no one can quote their mandate to that effect.

"Has any political party ever avowed a policy of restriction in this fundamental matter, gone to the country on it and been commissioned to control its legislation? Does this bill rest upon the conscious and universal assent and desire of the American people? I doubt it. It is because I doubt it that I make bold to dissent from it. I am willing to abide by the verdict, but not until it has been rendered. Let the platforms of parties speak out upon this policy and the people pronounce their wish. The matter is too fundamental to be settled otherwise.

"I have no pride of opinion on this question. I am not foolish enough to profess to know the wishes and ideals of America better than the body of her chosen representatives know them. I only want instruction direct from those whose fortunes with ours and all men's are involved."

REQUIRES ABILITY TO READ

The much disputed literacy test would provide that "all aliens over 16 years of age, physically capable of reading, who can not read the English language or some other language or dialect, including Hebrew or Yiddish, shall be excluded from the United States."

Exempted, however, are those who prove they emigrated to escape religious persecution, and any admissible alien might bring in his father or grandfather over 55, his wife, mother, grandmother or unmarried or widowed daughter, who can not read.

Aside from various other restrictions the bill proposes that any immigrant who advocates destruction of property or resistance to law and order—in short, revolutionary tendencies—might be barred or deported within five years of his admission. To that feature, opposition no less determined than that to the literacy test, was conducted by those who contended it would bar men who struggled to throw off the yoke of despotic governments.

THE MICHIGAN TEMPERANCE CLUB

The December number of The Commoner gave a report of the Ann Arbor meeting at which Mr. Bryan presented a total abstinence pledge and asked the young men present to sign with him. The boys who attended the meeting have been circulating the pledge, and up to February 8th ten thousand signers had been secured. It is hoped that the book of pledges, when forwarded to Mr. Bryan, will contain many more signers.

"What an army of boys! A grand army it will be; and what a power for good in Michigan. Why not have a similar army in every state? The Commoner has already a great many enrolled on its books, and the plan has been taken up by the Lincoln Y. M. C. A. for use in Nebraska.

The value of the pledge is illustrated by the letter of one of the Michigan boys, who in sending in his list, wrote:

"I am returning the pledge sheet. One of the fellows who signed this sheet last month told me that two or three times since he has been kept from drinking wine because he signed it. He wasn't very anxious to sign it at first, but now he says that he is glad that he did."

Let the good work go on.

W. J. BRYAN.

Secretaries McAdoo and Redfield gave to the senate a statement of facts relating to the extortion being practiced by the owners of ocean freighters. This showed that rates had been advanced from 50 to 900 per cent. The answer of the republicans to the effort of the democrats to relieve this situation by providing an effective competition at the hands of the government was a filibuster. This was equivalent to saying, we have no plan of our own, but we don't like yours.

Henry Ford told the New York reporters who interviewed him the other day that he is a republican because his father was one. Mr. Ford has overcome so many natural obstacles in his career that he should not find it a difficult task to leap this one.

The preponderance of distinctively foreign names among the lists of those wounded in riots in industrial strikes is fair testimony as to the manner in which protection to American labor works out under the republican theory of tariff-making.

TAFT OPPOSED TO CURB ON EXPORTS

A press dispatch to the Washington Post from New Haven, Conn., dated Feb. 9, says: William Howard Taft made public today a letter he wrote on January 26 to Prof. Edmund von Mach, of Harvard University, in which the former president opposes the enactment of a law forbidding the supply of munitions of war from this country to the belligerent nations.

The letter was in answer to a request from Prof. von Mach, asking Mr. Taft to write a letter, to be read at a "neutrality meeting," favoring passage of the bill introduced by Senator Hitchcock, providing for such interdiction.

The letter, which was not read at the meeting, Mr. Taft says, follows:

"My Dear Prof. von Mach: I have yours of January 24. I can not write to a neutrality meeting such a letter as you would wish. I think that to interdict the supply of ammunition and arms from this country to the belligerents in the war would be to adopt a policy that would seriously interfere with our own welfare, should we ever be drawn into a war against our will by the unjust invasion of some power who was fully prepared, and who would always find us unprepared.

"Such a policy as that you indicate would mean that the power who is armed capable would always have at a disadvantage those countries that were not in such a state of preparation. It would, therefore, lead to even greater pressure upon all the countries of the world than that we have seen in the last two decades, to increase their armaments, a result which we would all deplore.

"For this reason, I can not think that it would be wise to pass a law changing all the rules of international law heretofore prevailing with respect to the sale of ammunition and arms to belligerents by neutral countries. Nor do I think that in the present exigency it would be an act of neutrality to do so, because it would inure only to the benefit of one of the belligerents. Sincerely yours, WILLIAM H. TAFT."

ENDORING PRESIDENT WILSON

In the lower house of the Texas legislature, Mr. Boner offered the following resolution, which was adopted:

Be it resolved by the house of the thirty-fourth legislature of the state of Texas, that we heartily endorse the administration of President Wilson and commend him for the statesmanlike manner in which he has conducted the affairs of this nation; be it further

Resolved, That we commend him for the wisdom shown in his policy adopted concerning Mexico, and for the strict neutrality maintained with the belligerent nations of the eastern continent; be it further

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to President Wilson.

IF LINCOLN WERE PRESIDENT

If Lincoln were president during this European war, could anybody doubt he would confine himself strictly to the proper rights and undeniable duties of the United States? Would he not again be tactful, patient, just? Would he not be cold to agitators of all nations, and especially to agitators of American birth or naturalization, and to newspapers and politicians who urge departures planned to obtain partisan support? How can those who trust the genius of Abraham Lincoln best celebrate his birthday? Not better than by dedicating their support to the foreign policy that since last July the American government has pursued.—Harper's Weekly.

The perennial attempt to lead the people back into the convention system of making nominations is being made in various state legislatures under the guise of strengthening the primary by making it easier for the voters to choose between candidates whose worth is guaranteed by a convention. The plan might have a greater appeal if there was anyone to guarantee the independence of the convention from secret control.

Many people who pride themselves on being progressive are really only possessed of an impressionable mind which absorbs every new idea without any thought of its value. Such people would throw away all of the past accumulation of knowledge just because it is old, and would accept all the new just because it is novel.—Roger W. Babson.