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Many Misinformed on Pending Immigration Revision Proposal

EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF
HON. EMANUEL CELLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 28, 1965

Mr. CELLER. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, I have recently become aware of much public misinformation about the pending immigration bill. Some of this misinformation may come from persons who oppose the bill but who have not studied it themselves or do not understand it very well.

I have prepared an outline that is designed to correct mistaken notions which have been circulated about the bill and to provide accurate information on its purposes and anticipated effects.

COMMON MISAPPREHENSIONS ABOUT H.R. 2580

Claim: The bill would bring in an excessive number of immigrants and thereby aggravate our population problems.

The facts: The effect of the bill on our population would be quite insignificant. Our population is now increasing at the rate of about 3 million a year. The total number of quota immigrants now authorized is 158,000 a year and under the bill would be about 166,000, an increase of 8,000 per year. Actually, because the bill would authorize the use of quota numbers that now are authorized but unused, it would result in an increase in immigration of about 60,000 a year. This figure is, however, only about 2 percent of the present natural increase in our population and obviously can have little practical effect on population growth.

The old days of large-scale immigration to this country are a half-century

past, and no one has suggested any legislation to bring them back. The administration's bill certainly would not have that effect; it is designed to deal primarily with the basis on which immigrants are chosen and leaves their number little changed. If at some future time the amount of immigration were to become a real problem from the standpoint of our population or anything else, Congress always has the power to curtail immigration further, and probably would do so.

Claim: The bill would let in hordes of Africans and Asiatics.

The facts: As pointed out above, the bill would not let in great numbers of immigrants from anywhere at all. Persons from Africa and Asia would continue to be quota immigrants, as they are under present law, but would be treated like everyone else. With the ending of discrimination by place of birth, there will be some shift of immigration to countries other than the ones in Northern Europe which are now favored by the national origins systems, but quota immigrants will have to compete and to qualify to get in, and quota immigration will not be predominantly from Asia and Africa. This is because there are many factors besides quotas that limit immigration, factors that the bill will not change. Actually, many countries in Africa do not use their present quotas of 100. The simple fact is that nations differ greatly in the number of their people who have the occupational attainments, or the family ties in the United States, to obtain a preference. There are also marked differences in wealth, earning power, and education which have a determining effect upon the numbers of people who could prove they would not be public charges if they

came here, and who could meet the other prescribed tests for admission. Indeed, very few people from some areas can even pay the cost of tickets to come here. Because of practical and legal factors such as the above, quota immigration under the bill is likely to be more than 80 percent European.

Moreover, all countries will be limited by the bill to a maximum of 10 percent of the total quota immigration, so that no country could take up an excessive share of the overall quota. It should be noted that, in order to relieve hardship and for reasons of foreign policy, it would be possible under the bill to restore present quotas in some cases. This would, at least theoretically, allow the 10-percent limit to be exceeded in the cases of Great Britain, Germany, and Ireland. They happen to be the only countries whose present quotas exceed the 10-percent figures. The conclusion is plain—there would not be any flood of immigrants from any country, any continent, or from all of them put together.

Claim: The bill will lead to an increase in unemployment and in welfare rolls.

The facts: There is no real evidence to support this claim, and there is much evidence to disprove it.

First. Out of the 60,000 additional immigrants a year who would enter under the bill, only 24,000 would be workers. This number of additional workers is microscopic in relation to the U.S. work force—24,000 against our present work force of over 77 million, or about 1 to each 3,000 workers—hardly a drop in the bucket as a practical matter.

Second. For each additional worker admitted, the national economy will benefit from the admission of other per-

sons who are consumers but not workers—elderly parents, women, children—in a ratio of workers to consumers that is as good or better than the ratio in our country today; these consumers should strengthen and not weaken the employment situation.

Third. The bill makes absolutely no change in the provisions of the present law, by which the Secretary of Labor can keep out immigrants who would take work from Americans or depress wages or working conditions here. The Secretary of Labor has testified that enactment of the bill will not increase unemployment.

Fourth. Every immigrant under the bill will have to satisfy the public charge test of present law before he can get a visa. This test was proven, during the depression, to be effective in keeping out those likely to become a public charge, and it will continue to keep out persons who will be unable to get jobs or will be prospects for welfare rolls. Finally, the improved preference structure of the bill will help stimulate business and should thus reduce unemployment through better selection of immigrants with outstanding talents—men like Steinmetz, the electrical genius; Giannini, the banker; Sikorski, the inventor; Fermi, the atomic pioneer. Such immigrants, instead of taking jobs from Americans, help to create whole new industries that make thousands of new jobs for our people.

Claim: The bill would result in the admission of Communists, other subversives, or other undesirables.

The facts: The bill makes no change whatsoever in the safeguards of our present immigration laws which prohibit the

admission of Communists, other subversives, security risks, narcotic addicts, persons with criminal records, illiterates, and other undesirables. Persons with mental afflictions also will continue to be generally excluded, except that if the afflicted person is an immediate relative of a family that can guarantee adequate and safe care here, without public expense, to the satisfaction of the Public Health Service and of the Attorney General, he can be admitted. This is true under present law for an immediate relative excludable for tuberculosis if adequate safeguards and guarantees are provided. Admissions of this kind are based on the humane policy of favoring family unity, provided the public is fully protected.

Claim: Under the bill an immigrant would no longer have to prove he has a job waiting for him.

The facts: This claim shows a misunderstanding of both the bill and the existing law. Under the present law immigrants generally do not have to prove that they have a specific job waiting for them. The bill makes no changes in this regard.

Under existing law, the only immigrant who must prove specifically that he has a job waiting for him is the immigrant who is seeking first preference. The law now provides for giving first preference within a quota to immigrants who can show extraordinary qualifications. This is a fine idea which in theory should strengthen and benefit our country, but in practice the present provision does not work well for two reasons:

First. Due to the national origins system, the preference is given only within a quota for a particular country. As a

result, immigrants from undersubscribed countries can easily enter without having any special qualifications, while those from oversubscribed countries may be kept out for years no matter how much they could do for our country. For example, a housemaid from a favored country may enter quickly while outstanding doctors and scientists from oversubscribed countries are kept out. Since the housemaid does not seek a first preference, she need not prove a personal job offer, while the doctor, even if he proves that a particular hospital wants him badly, must still wait.

Second. The present provision does not work because it tends to favor applicants with personal connections in this country rather than just extraordinary talents. This is true because no matter how outstanding an individual may be, most employers will rarely promise a job without an interview. Therefore, the applicant who cannot get here for an interview will usually get a job offer only if he is lucky enough to have good connections with the employer. The bill would eliminate the need for such connections and also place of birth as a factor in granting a first preference, which would be granted solely on proof of exceptional qualifications that would be especially advantageous to this country. People with such high qualifications will have no problem in obtaining employment. Naturally, no matter how high the qualifications of a first preference applicant, they could not be found especially advantageous to this country if he would displace an American from a job. And the applicant would also have to satisfy all the eligibility tests that other immigrants must meet.

Claim: The bill will lead to an increase in unemployment and in welfare rolls.
The facts: There is no real evidence to support this claim, and there is much evidence to disprove it.
First. Out of the 60,000 additional immigrants a year who would enter under the bill, only 24,000 would be workers. This number of additional workers is microscopic in relation to the U.S. work force—24,000 against our present work force of over 77 million, or about 1 to each 3,200 workers—hardly a drop in the bucket as a practical matter.
Second. For each additional worker admitted, the national economy will benefit from the admission of other persons who are consumers but not workers—elderly parents, women, children—in a ratio of workers to consumers that is as good or better than the ratio in our country today; these consumers should strengthen and not weaken the employment situation.
Third. The bill makes absolutely no change in the provisions of the present law, by which the Secretary of Labor can keep out immigrants who would take work from Americans or depress wages or working conditions here. The Secretary of Labor has testified that enactment of the bill will not increase unemployment.
Fourth. Every immigrant under the bill will have to satisfy the public charge test of present law before he can get a visa. This test was proven, during the depression, to be effective in keeping out those likely to become a public charge, and it will continue to keep out persons who will be unable to get jobs or will be prospects for welfare rolls. Finally, the improved preference structure of the bill will help stimulate business and should thus reduce unemployment through better selection of immigrants with outstanding talents—men like Steinmetz, the electrical genius; Giannini, the banker; Sikorski, the inventor; Fermi, the atomic pioneer. Such immigrants, instead of taking jobs from Americans, help to create whole new industries that make thousands of new jobs for our people.
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