



EDITORIAL



OUR ILLS.

Some one asked us when this perverted economic condition of ours will end; when the dollar will revert to its normal value; when labor will be less scarce; when industrial conditions will settle. The question is the most momentous before the American people just now—and rightly so. A vicious circle has been formed—and the business is growing from bad to worse. Soon there will be another rise in coal—and as soon as the railroad employes receive their increase in wages, everything will have to go up, because higher freight rates mean an increase in the commodities that are shipped. As soon as prices go up, wages will have to take another jump, and there you are again.

In the meantime the rise in wages is not as high in proportion as the rise in the necessities of life. There is an unequal struggle—with the result that dissatisfaction is growing all around us.

Now it may not be just the province of a sectarian journal to discuss a matter like the high cost of living. Yet we do believe that under the conditions a discussion is not out of place—especially when the matter discussed touches the Jews as well as everybody else.

It seems to us that there will be no remedy for the conditions that exist until we go back to the fundamentals upon which this, our country was built. We will never become normal until we restore those conditions which obtained while the country was normal. America has been made by certain forces—and when these are removed, we suffer. And to this there can be no denial.

The most important of the elements that have gone towards making America what it was before the war, was immigration. The hundreds of thousands who came to our shores annually and made this their home, contributed millions upon millions to the resources of our country; they made the bulk of its population and they supplied the labor market. They were the industrial balance of power and it was the immigrant which stabilized the industrial unbalance. It is true that in times of crisis, the excess of labor gave us the industrial unrest that we suffered in crucial times. But the legislation of the last few years has practically stopped the possibility of financial panics such as we had in 1907.

For the last four years we have had no immigration. First our anti-immigration legislation, and then the war stopped the influx of foreigners. Gradually we absorbed the pre-war immigrant population. Let us rather say that the industrial conditions which the war caused, forced the pre-war immigrants to higher labor levels. A number of new industries like that of the automobile and truck industry, manufacturing of moving picture films, and others permitted the withdrawal of men who had become partially specialized in their own fields, to become more highly specialized in these other fields which pay more. For instance, a machinist who became an automobile mechanic made more as the latter than as the former. But because of the lack of immigration, there is nobody to take the place of the former machinist. The same kind of a development has taken place in many indus-

tries—and the result is that the lower grades of industry are begging for help. A good example of the need of men is shown by the statement recently made by an employer in which he says that the negro boy who was his porter at \$40 per month, now gets \$35 a week as a skilled mechanic.

The question of women is also involved. It may sound strange, but the question of domestics is a most important one. There are none any more to speak of. And why should there be, when the girls who formerly did our cooking at six or seven dollars a week can go to the factories and earn sixteen and eighteen. But the point is that NONE HAVE COME into the country to take the place of those who have moved up. And yet the factories are short of female help, the mills are clamoring for more women—and the housewives—well, they are giving up housekeeping and going to hotels when they can afford it—a very unsalutary influence upon family life—and when they cannot afford to give up their homes—they worry along without help. The good old days of having to “break in” Hungarian, or Polish or German girls seem to have gone never to return.

Some years ago the laboring men of the country began a systematic campaign against immigration. Labor felt that the constant influx of foreigners who had to work under handicaps, was a detriment to it. Labor felt that as long as an immigrant was willing to work for less than a native-born American laborer, so long would the latter be at an disadvantage. And the feeling was correct so far as the individual status of the laborer at that time was concerned. In the person of the late Congressman Burnet of Alabama, labor found a champion, and after some years of effort, the Burnet Immigration Law was passed, which practically excluded immigrants. About that time or shortly after, we went into the war, and since that time, our condition is known.

There is no doubt that fundamentally, the only way to remedy our present unsatisfactory condition is to reverse our un-American policy of anti-immigration, and throw open our gates to those foreigners who, like the fathers of many of us, came here with the sincere purpose of making their homes here, rearing their children as Americans, and giving the best that was in them, to the land of their adoption.

It is true that within recent years, our foreign population has not been absorbed. That is our fault, not the fault of those who came here. We need not repeat our old mistakes. But no one can deny that an ample supply of labor would be the fundamental process in readjustment. It would mean a lowering of wages for a time—but it would also mean a lowering of the cost of living. Indeed after the scale of wages begins to slide backward, the cost of living will take longer leaps proportionately, backwards, just as it leapt forward.

It is unfortunate that the poor man gets the pinch first, but under the organiza-

tion of society at present—and it is the best that human experience has so far evolved—this cannot be helped. The fact remains that the scarcity of men and women in labor, coupled with an extraordinary demand for everything usable, have forced us into a condition where a new influx of humanity has become a dire necessity, if conditions are to be remedied.

As the average reader knows, we Jews are deeply interested in the question of immigration. We have suffered—by we, we mean our brethren—more than anyone else, because of the terrible persecutions in the lands of their birth. Of course there have been provisos in the immigration bills, and there will be certain provisions in the one that is now being drawn, but our policy for the last few years has been narrow enough to keep out those very men and women whom we need.

We know all about the dangers of Bolshevism from foreigners. What our anti-immigration friends do not know, is the Bolshevism of the native-born, who are excluded by immigration bills, and who do the greatest harm.

Attorney General Palmer has stated the situation, and we quote from a speech of his recently delivered. The thing that we deem necessary with immigration, is a period of probation, and of this we will speak later. From Attorney General Palmer's speech, we draw attention to the following:

“We have been a hospitable people. In the beginning the strip of land along the eastern coast, from Massachusetts to Georgia, was peopled by courageous freedom-loving men and women who found here all the real essentials of life which were denied them across the sea. In later times by reason of the open generosity of the government their most boundless stretches of the West were covered by the homes of men who became owners of the soil, a cause and effect never dreamed of in the Old World, where the land was only held by those classes who had held it throughout the centuries.

“The new land owners thus felt themselves important factors in the makeup of the great republic under a people which was conscientiously designed to make one great homogenous people out of a population gathered from every corner of the globe. No regret is anywhere expressed for this broad-minded and farsighted policy. But just to the degree that we have been generously and unselfishly hospitable we naturally represent the abuse of that hospitality.

“We cannot back track on the policy halloved by more than a century of usefulness. We cannot be less willing now than we have always been that the oppressed of every clime shall find here a refuge from disorder and distress. But we can insist with more emphasis than we have employed heretofore that those who come to our shores shall come in the right spirit and with the right purpose; that those who remain shall stay with the intent to become Americans in every sense.”