

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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IMMIGRATION PROPOSALS

On February 8, 1956 the President sent a special message to Congress on the subject of immigration. As he began this message we came to expect a comprehensive rethinking of our national policies in the matter:

"The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 was developed essentially as a codification of many separate, and sometimes overlapping and inconsistent, immigration and nationality laws. It was thought inappropriate, in connection with that legislation, to revise our basic immigration policies. Moreover, at that time 1950 census information was incomplete.

"The time has now come to consider those policies. Experience in the post-war world demonstrates that the present national-origins method of admitting aliens needs to be re-examined and a new system adopted which will admit aliens within allowable numbers according to new guidelines and standards.

"The Congress has traditionally formulated our basic immigration policies, and will doubtless wish to make its decision as to what new system should be established only after its own study and investigation of all possible choices.

In the President's mind, there are a number of factors which need to be considered:

"There are many factors that must be taken into consideration. Among these are: The needs of this country for persons having specialized skills or cultural accomplishments; close family relationships; the populations and immigration policies of countries sending immigrants to this country; their past immigration and trade relationships with this country and their assistance to the joint defense of the friendly free nations of the world."

BILLS IN CONGRESS

As the President's message unfolded in detail and took shape into administration backed bills in Congress, the rethinking appears much less thorough-going than many desire it to be. The program was offered to the Senate through Senator Watkins in four bills, S. 3167, 3168, 3169,

and 3170. Companion measures in the House are H.R. 9180, 9181, 9182, and 9183.

With reference to the amount of immigration to be permitted, S. 3170 proposes to increase the quota number from 154,657 to about 220,000 by basing the percentage on the census of 1950 instead of 1920. Since the bill proposes to pool unused quota numbers and make them available the next year for the region, e.g. Europe, without reference to particular national origins, the effect of this bill would be to approximately double the number admitted in an average year. 96.8 per cent of immigrants currently come from Europe.

With reference to distribution of immigration opportunities, the bill holds our old quota system intact but allots the additional 65,000 on the basis of actual admissions July 1, 1924 to July 1, 1955. Anthony Lewis of the New York Times estimated that:

"The effect would be to double the number of quota immigrants admitted in an average year and to increase sharply the proportion from Italy, Greece and other countries of southern and eastern Europe.

"A private calculation showed that countries in these areas would be able to send a combined total of up to 125,000 immigrants a year to the United States under the President's proposal. They had been limited to 24,502 by the present quota."

In the meantime the quotas for each of the minimum quota countries, including the Asian countries, would be increased from 100 to 200 per year.

The bill holds out 5,000 quota numbers for people who because of "high education, technical training, specialized experience, or exceptional ability" are likely to benefit the American economy, our cultural interests, or our national welfare. To these visas would be issued without reference to place of birth, nationality, or national origin.

At this point we should note, also, that there is a special bill, S. 3167, in the sequence of four bills, which will admit three kinds of people regardless of quota numbers or standards:

1. Those who have served in the armed forces of the United States during war or emergency;
2. Anyone who is "the spouse, parent, brother, sister, son or daughter of a citizen or of an alien lawfully admitted";
3. Anyone who is "authorized to perform the ministerial or priestly function of a recognized religious denomination" or who is engaged by such a denomination as "missionary, brother, nun, or sister--"

If such persons are ineligible for visas under the regular law, they may be admitted under this bill. These persons are also excluded from the regulations that prescribe deportation procedures and immigrant status. Such actions would be left to the discretion of the Attorney General for the above categories. The bill provides for a maximum of 5,000 admissions.

The majority of those coming under category (2) will no doubt come from the countries where emigration pressures have exceeded our quota provisions during recent decades. The number and nature of immigration under category (3) will be dependent upon the international organization and policies of the denominations. Why the Attorney General rather than the laws and courts of the land should regulate deportation of clergymen has not been learned.

The above provisions project the plans for quota immigration, but the bills also retain the current provisions for non-quota immigration for western hemisphere nations. The amount and the nature of this immigration would be dependent primarily on the population pressures. Some recent estimates based on birth rates have predicated a population of 500 million in Latin America by the year 2000, which would probably be more than twice the population of the United States at that time. How many would come to the United States?

GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND CHURCH AGENCIES

Numerous current legislative proposals have bearings on the finances of private and religious agencies in the fields of health and education. A subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee proposed to recommend exemption from manufacturer's, retail, transportation, and communications excise taxes for elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities operated by nonprofit organizations. The estimated savings to these institutions would be about 3 million dollars, with corresponding lost income to the Treasury. The Treasury Department is said to be opposed to the measure.

On the other hand, S. 3302 proposes to increase the rate of interest charged on housing loans to colleges and universities. The new rate would be about 3.125 per cent as compared with 2.75 per cent at present. The amount of available loans would be increased to 600 million dollars. The loans are available to public and nonprofit institutions.

H.R. 9186 proposes to appropriate 50 million dollars a year for five years "to assist in the establishment of new public or nonprofit medical schools and in the improvement and expansion of teaching and research facilities." Grants are to be limited to 50 per cent of the cost of construction.

H.R. 8912 would extend the hospital and medical facilities survey and construction provisions of the Public Health Service Act for two more years. Federal aid to hospital construction goes back to the original bill offered by Senator Lister Hill of Alabama and Senator Harold H. Burton of Ohio in 1946. The program has been extended several times in subsequent years. In 1953 it was extended to June 30, 1957, with 150 million dollars set as the maximum to be spent in one year in federal aid to hospital construction. Amendments in 1954 extended federal aid into four new categories in addition to general hospital construction, with annual appropriations as shown for 1955, 1956, and 1957:

1. Construction of diagnostic centers, 20 million dollars;
2. Construction of hospitals for the chronically ill, 20 million dollars;

3. Construction of rehabilitation facilities, 10 million dollars;
4. Construction of nursing homes, 10 million dollars.

The 1954 bill also authorized grants to the states for surveys prior to construction. The proposals currently under consideration would authorize extension of these hospital and medical facilities survey and construction provisions for two more years, beyond June 30, 1957.

According to Religious News Service reports, several state legislatures are also considering tax policies which bear on the finances of religious agencies.

In Maryland Governor McKeldin has signed three bills of this nature. One of these exempts religious groups, veterans' organizations, fire departments, and Red Cross chapters from paying registration, gas and other state automobile taxes. Another exempts school buses purchased by religious organizations from the state titling tax. The third exempts clergymen and members of religious orders from the withholding provisions of the state income tax law.

In the meantime Kentucky has a constitutional amendment under consideration which would withdraw tax exemption of church-owned properties which are not used for religious or educational purposes. The proposed amendment saying, "no real property owned by such institutions, which is leased for income and not used solely as a site for or to house any charitable or educational activity of such organization, shall be entitled to tax exemption." The amendment would go to the electorate in November, 1957.

BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

A copy of Dr. Joseph M. Dawson's new book, "Baptists and the American Republic", has just arrived from the publisher, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

The book consists of a series of biographical sketches which are used to highlight the impact of Baptist insights on public policy in the United States. Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, John Leland, Luther Rice, Walter Rauschenbusch, and George W. Truett are the major subjects.

The volume is highly significant. First of all, it records some of Dr. Dawson's distinctive insights in the field that has occupied his interests through many years of productive scholarship. Furthermore, it brings together in readable form some of the highlights of Baptist history with reference to public issues, and should help us recapture the relevance of our theological and spiritual commitments.

The historian, of course, is never through, and the best evidences of a job well done are the larger and more numerous efforts which follow. As Baptists we have just begun to think about our history and about the larger meanings of our history. I am glad to commend Dr. Dawson's work to our readers for he has made an important contribution.

I am also glad to commend his field of study to the productive efforts of many scholars. Church-state relations are volatile all over the world at present. Baptist contributions now and for years ahead will be dependent on the quality and the quantity of current efforts.