

“Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor”?

Part A. The Immigration Act of 1924 set an annual quota (limit) on immigrants of any nationality at two percent of the foreign-born residents of that nationality living in the United States as determined by the Census of 1890. Every country, including China and Japan, was allowed a minimum of 100 immigrants per year. On your own paper, write the main idea of each of the following documents. Your completed notes should help you to answer the following questions: (1) How was the Immigration Act of 1924 discriminatory? and (2) What fears of the American people does the law reflect?

Document A

Historic Tides of Immigration

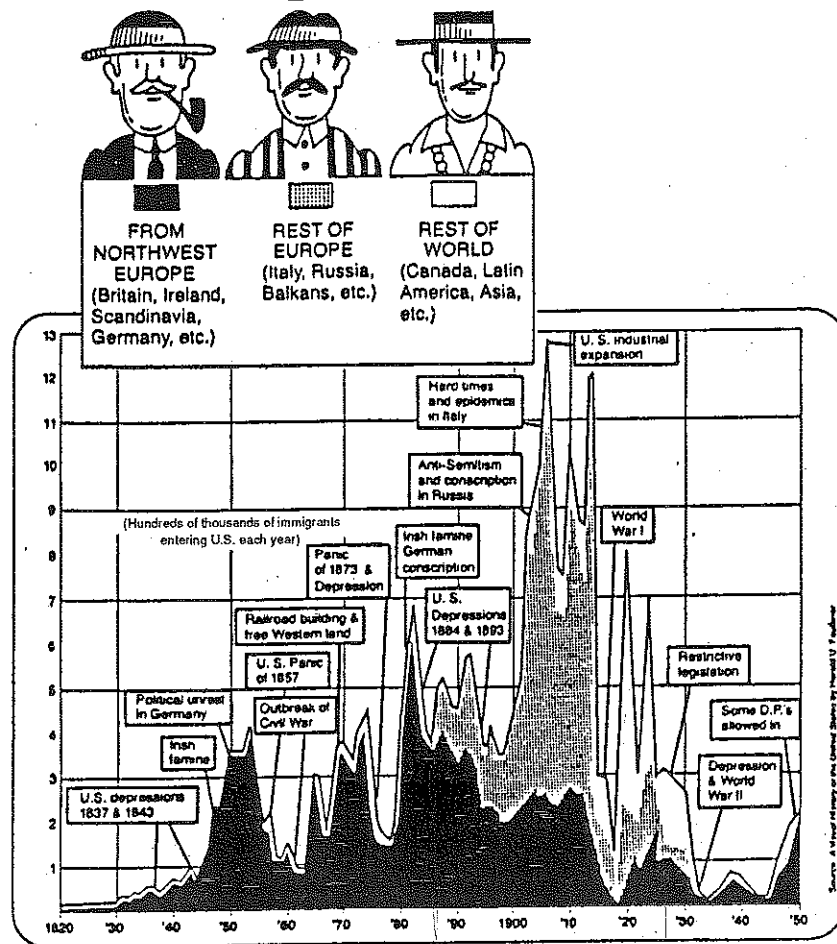


Figure 4.1 From Harold U. Faulkner, *A Visual History of the United States* found in “Immigration: An Anatomy,” *Newsweek News Focus* (December 1980), Visual 7.

Document B

COMPARISON OF QUOTAS OF SELECTED NATIONALITIES UNDER THE 1921 AND 1924 IMMIGRATION LAWS

Country	QUOTA UNDER 1921 LAW	QUOTA UNDER 1924 LAW	RELATIVE PERCENTAGE
United Kingdom	77,342	34,007	44.0
Germany	67,607	51,227	75.8
France	5,729	3,954	69.0
Norway	12,202	6,453	52.9
Sweden	20,042	9,561	47.7
Poland	21,076	5,982	28.4
Austria	7,451	785	10.5
Yugoslavia	6,426	671	10.4
Czechoslovakia	14,557	3,073	21.1
Hungary	5,638	473	8.4
Italy	42,057	3,845	9.1
Rumania	7,419	603	8.1

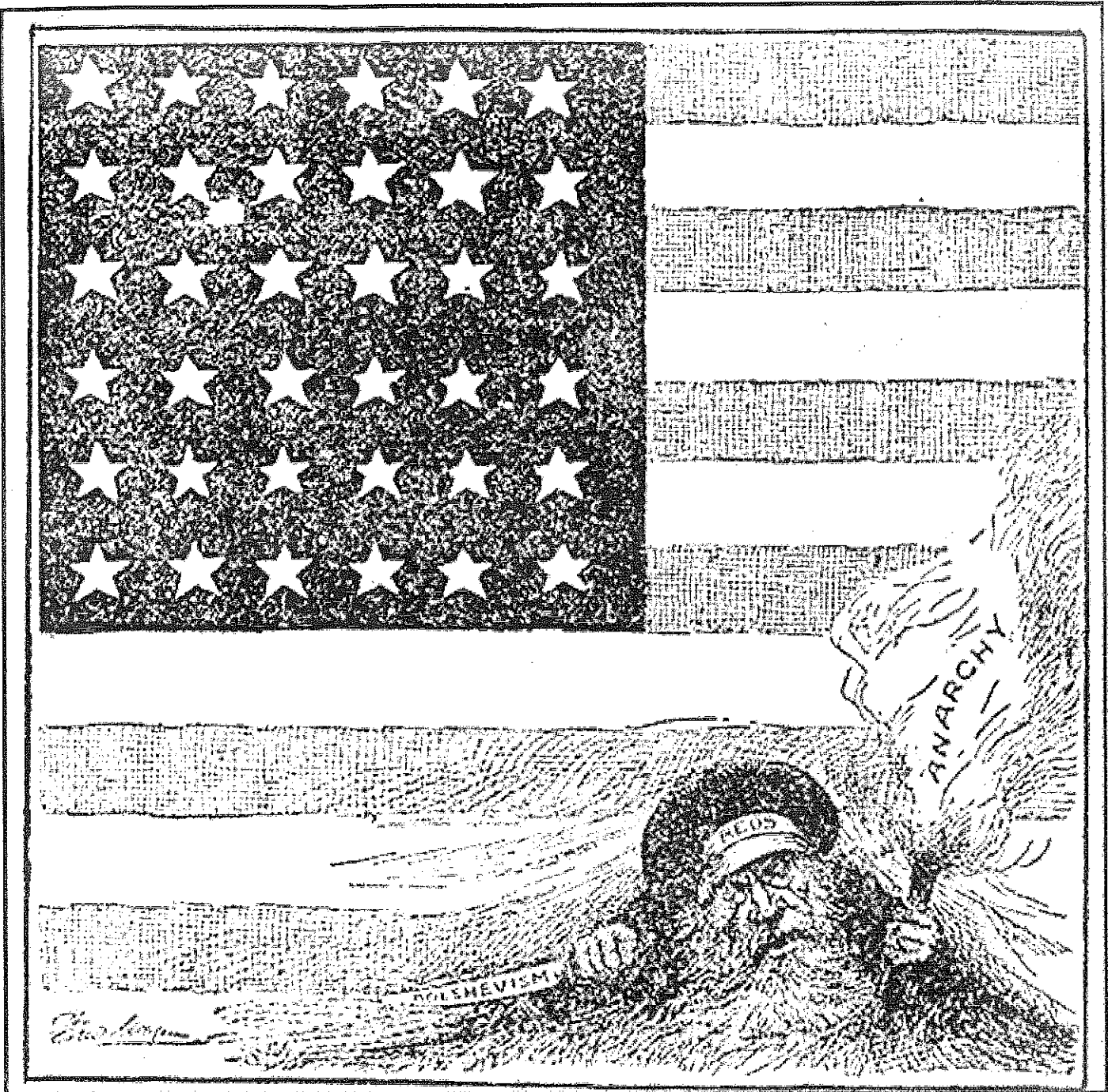
Table 4.1 Compiled from House of Representatives Report No. 1621, 1924, p. 190; United States Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner—General of Immigration*, 1924, pp. 24 ff.

Document C

I have spent all my life either as a workingman or an employer of workingmen: hence I have had an unusual opportunity to observe the influence of immigrants upon the standard of living among workingmen. . . . When I was quite a young boy, I, with many others, was thrown out of employ, our places having been given to immigrants who would work cheaper. Being unable to secure work at a living wage nearer home, I was compelled to travel, walking most of the way, nearly 1,500 miles in search of employ. During this journey I saw hundreds of men walking from place to place looking for work, and I have seen them forced to ask for bread. . . . It may not be uninteresting to observe that while looking for work myself and during the many years of my activity as a leader of workingmen, I have never seen a newly-arrived immigrant tramping the highways seeking employ. On the surface this statement may seem to be a tribute to the immigrant, but, as a matter of fact, properly interpreted, it means that the newly-arrived immigrant has underbid the American workingman and secured his job. . . . It may be said in answer that the American should work for as low wages as the immigrant, that half a loaf is better than no bread. But there is a standard of ethics among American workingmen which deters them from working for less than the established rate; they would rather tramp than reduce the wage scale or lower the standard of living.¹

—John Mitchell

¹John Mitchell, "Immigration and the American Laboring Classes," in *Selected Articles on Immigration*, compiled by Mary Katherine Reely (White Plains, NY: H. W. Wilson, 1915), 94, 96.



Put Them Out and Keep Them Out²

Figure 4.2
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Document E

Can we not already see certain effects of the newer immigration upon our social life? In many places the Continental Sunday, with its games and sports, its theatrical and musical performances, and its open bars, is taking the place of the Puritan Sabbath. . . .

We have to contend not only with alien habits and ideals, and with the fact that these differences cannot be effaced by education in one or even two generations, but also with the fact that we are getting a great many immigrants who are below the mental, moral, and physical average of both our country and their own. A recent writer in a leading German review has said: "The immigration of the last decade has increased the number of hands,

²John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), opposite p. 213.

but not the number of heads, in the United States. While this may be an extreme statement, there is the unanimous testimony of the Commissioner-General of Immigration, the Commissioner at the Port of New York and the Immigration Commission, which has recently spent several years studying the matter, to the fact that for one immigrant whose defects are so marked as to put him in the classes excluded by law there are hundreds, if not thousands, who are below the average of our people, and who, as George William Curtis put it, are "watering the nation's life blood."³

—Prescott F. Hall

Document F

... as one glances at random over the reports of various charitable organizations he is impressed with the fact that the number of foreign-born paupers (poor) is out of all proportion to the total number of foreign-born inhabitants. ...

The police and court records of our great cities show an amazing proportion of crimes chargeable to the foreign population.⁴

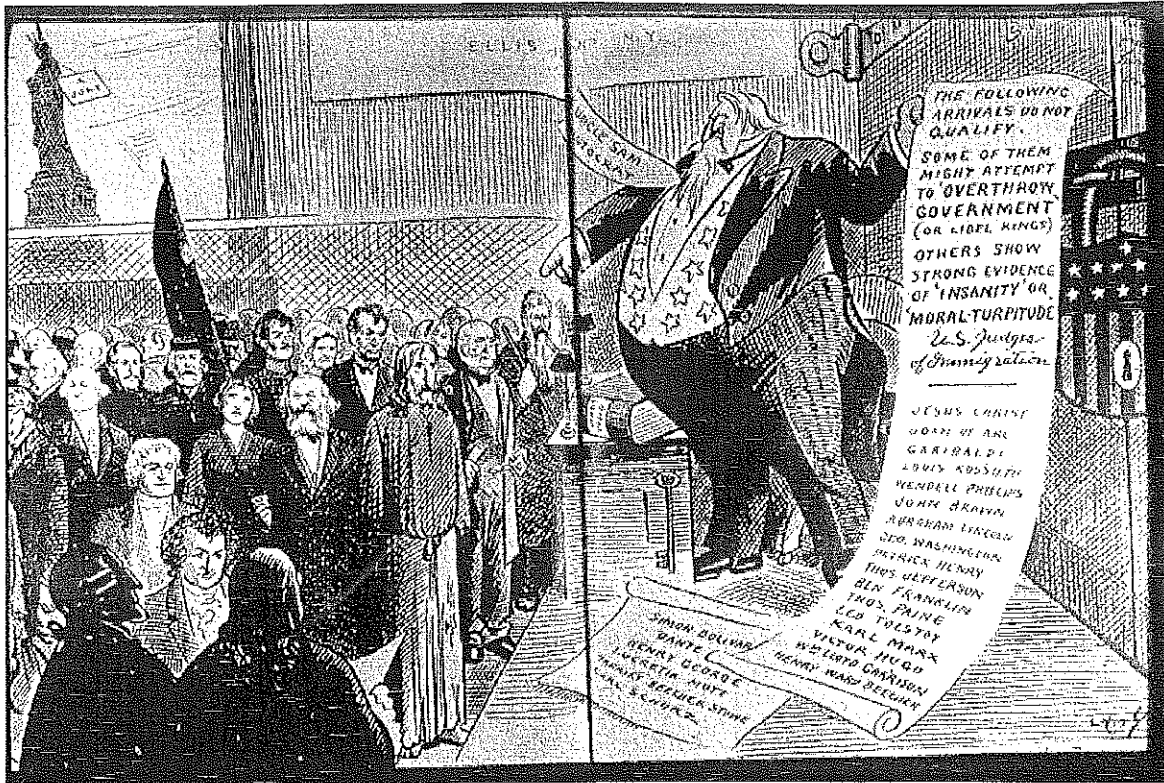
—Henry Pratt Fairchild

Document G

This difference in standards (of living) is undoubtedly due in part to a difference in natural instincts and aptitudes for decency and cleanliness between the common classes of northern and southern Europe, but probably more to the customary standards to which they have become habituated in their native land. The effect is the same, whatever the cause. ... As long as we continue to draw our immigrants from more and more backward and undeveloped nations and races, we may expect to see a progressive degradation in the customary standard of the working people.⁵

—Henry Pratt Fairchild

³Prescott F. Hall, "Future of American Ideals," in *Selected Articles on Immigration*, compiled by Reely, 71–72.
⁴Henry Pratt Fairchild, *Immigration* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 312, 329.
⁵*Ibid.*, 250, 307.



THE FOLLOWING ARRIVALS DO NOT QUALIFY. SOME OF THEM MIGHT ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT (OR LIBEL KING) OTHERS SHOW STRONG EVIDENCE OF 'INSANITY' OR 'MORAL TURPITUDE'

U.S. Judges of Immigration
JESUS CHRIST
GEORGE WASHINGTON
GABRIELI
LOUIS ARNO
WENDELL PHILLIPS
JOHN ADAMS
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
DICKENS HENRY
BEN FRANKLIN
THOS. PAINE
LEO TOLSTOY
KARL MARX
VICTOR HUGO
HENRY WARD BEECHER

SIMON BOLIVAR
DANTE
HENRY GEORGE
LORETTA HOLT
FRANCIS BACON
MARTIN LUTHER KING

WELCOME TO THE U.S.A.

ELLIS

L. B. NICHOLS