

IMMIGRATION DISTRIBUTION

David M. Bressler

The subject of immigrant distribution is rapidly coming to the forefront; numerous articles are appearing in responsible publications. Recently the Federal Commission on Industrial Relations examined into practical schemes for balancing the labor markets of this country by a better diffusion of our immigrants. The subject is important enough to warrant this recognition; for distribution of immigration implies vast social and economic benefits.

An interesting article, inspired primarily by the announced discontinuance of the Galveston Bureau, appears in the July number of the "Jewish Immigration Bulletin." Its author is Mr. Henry Berman, who, for four years, was the manager of the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau of Galveston. The article fringes the results achieved by the Galveston Bureau, refers to the causes for its discontinuance and proceeds to discuss plans for the future. Interspersed between these three sub-divisions are references to the general problem of distribution, from which the reader derives the impression that the Galveston Bureau was synonymous with the origination of distribution work and that the activities of the Bureau in the past seven years constituted the sole distributing agency in this country. Let us review *seriatim*.

Galveston, says Mr. Berman, meant for the immigrants "a new experiment in life." Illuminating as well as true! For Galveston was essentially an experiment in human dynamics, a shifting of environments to release the industrial and spiritual potencies of oppressed men and women. It meant industrially, to quote again, "the evolution from the harum-scarum vocations imposed by the limitations of Russia's industrial life to sturdy workmanship. Several thousand men became contributory to the West's wealth creation. Towns which had never known Jewish residents acquired groups of them, to which there are constant additions. Industries whose immigrant element had been entirely the non-Jewish Eastern and Southern European, were confronted with Jewish workmen who proved tenacious, sober and earnest. Schools which had never contained Jewish children found

them carrying off prizes for scholarship. The Jewish immigrant had at last pushed his way across the Mississippi River * * * The Galveston movement also created some farmers. "It was not on a scale to engender profound enthusiasm, but it was significant."

As to the reasons for discontinuing the Bureau, Mr. Berman cites the limited area west of the Mississippi for distribution and the remoteness of Galveston as a port of entry. The latter, no doubt, was a contributing factor; but we do not believe that the area of distribution for the Galveston Bureau in any way militated against its proper development. The territory west of the Mississippi is neither so limited nor circumscribed as to have inhibited the settlement of the thousands who came via Galveston, and its tremendous resources and persistent demand for labor could have been utilized by many more thousands had they journeyed via Galveston. Moreover, due to the experience which Mr. Berman derived as manager of the Galveston Bureau, he must be fully aware of the fact that the Pacific Coast States were only rarely utilized by the Bureau because the country almost contiguously west of the Mississippi was fully adequate for the needs of the Galveston immigration.

What kept the Galveston immigration far below the volume it should have assumed was a more fundamental obstacle: the high rate of deportations from Galveston. Five per cent as against 1.1 per cent for other ports of entry. This amazing percentage of exclusions discouraged large numbers of intending immigrants from utilizing the Galveston route. While they might have been willing to withstand the rigours of the long voyage, they were deterred by the greater fear of exclusion on arrival.

As to the future Mr. Berman has suggested, among other things, a national conference to discuss immigrant distribution and a subsidized Yiddish daily of worth to be issued from a point where it could quickly get to the newcomer. The purpose of such a daily would be educational.

The suggestion for a conference was made before the European conflagration broke out. The situation at this writing

indicates that we will not have to cope with a seriously large Jewish immigration until the termination of the war. Aside from this consideration we cannot see what practical purpose a conference would serve, unless it could lower the rate of deportations or decrease the duration of the voyage to Galveston.

A subsidized Yiddish daily is not only of doubtful value, but questionable in policy. There are an abundance of Yiddish dailies who have rendered voluntary service to every serious Jewish movement. Their columns have been constantly open to distribution propaganda. These publications have ample capital and adequate literary resources. Their support of any movement becomes all the weightier in view of the fact that they are not subsidized by any special interest.

II

We believe it proper to devote some space to general observations on immigrant distribution. It is evident that within the limitations of his article, Mr. Berman could not traverse the entire distribution issue; but even a partial survey must suffer if essentials are omitted. The missing essentials are lack of a historical point of view and the absence of any mention whatsoever as to the share of the Industrial Removal Office in the formation of the Galveston Bureau; nor is the fundamental relationship between that Bureau and the Removal Office touched upon or even indicated; nor has any credence been given to the efficient activities during the past thirteen years of the Industrial Removal Office which has been the central distributing agency of this country and whose organization throughout every section of this country has made it the primary source of distribution activities and the most noted exponent of the idea. It seems proper to state that if responsible publications and well-known organizations, including government departments, have accorded recognition to the Removal Office, that it is paradoxical that a Jewish journalist and social worker should entirely ignore it in an article devoted primarily to the problems of distribution. We are at a loss to understand what, if any, was his motive for this astounding oversight.

If it be his desire to see a new organization created because the machinery now existing is inadequate or the policies of those directing it ineffective, this should be clearly demonstrated before imposing a new philanthropic agency upon American Jewry already heavily burdened with philanthropies.

Mr. Berman states: "When the stream of Jewish immigration began to move Americawards, it should have been guided at its sources. Instead, twenty years were to pass until, through the medium of the Galveston movement, an effort was made to direct it." This is not wholly accurate. Distribution began in 1900. In that year, and as a result of the Roumanian persecutions, an effort was made to direct the large influx of Jewish immigration into interior sections of the country. This idea was not only a temporary makeshift, but became a permanent principle. In 1900 the Industrial Removal Office was the fact that a proper diffusion of immigration is the best means for realizing its social and economic value to this country. It called attention to the fact that, while certain sections of the country had an ample supply of labor, other and larger sections of the United States could not fill their legitimate labor demands. And it believed that distribution would solve this disproportion, on the one hand, relieving the congestion of Eastern seaports, and, on the other hand, promoting the industrial development of less settled regions of this country.

As a result of the experience acquired through the distribution activities of the Industrial Removal Office, and with its principles as a guide, in 1907 Mr. Schiff planned a corollary principle to the work of distribution. He proposed that the stream of immigration be deflected at the source and turned away from North Atlantic channels. The territory west of the Mississippi, part of the distribution area of the Industrial Removal Office, was turned over by it to the sister movement. The outstanding features of the organization effected were the formation of European committees by the I. T. O. which might be termed the "deflecting bureau"; and the establishment of a bureau to receive and distribute the newcomers, which might be termed the "distribution bureau." In working out the

details of this latter bureau, the administrative experience and office force of the Industrial Removal Office were utilized and became the facades of the structure. Mr. Morris D. Waldman, at the time assistant manager of the Industrial Removal Office, became the first manager of the Galveston Bureau. His administration, founded in the experience and policy of the Industrial Removal Office, gave a direction to the Bureau which, for all practical purposes, was maintained in the succeeding seven years. He worked hand in hand with the general manager of the Industrial Removal Office (who at the same time is honorary secretary of the Galveston Bureau), as did his successors at Galveston.

This is not the place to appraise the contribution of the Industrial Removal Office to distribution policy and practice, but that it was the pioneer and is now the dominating factor in matters of Jewish immigrant distribution is a fact which can rightfully have place in an article discussing immigrant distribution. Nearly 80,000 people have been distributed by the Industrial Removal Office into over 1,500 cities and towns in the United States. These have attracted friends and relatives, thus forming nuclei, as in the case of the Galveston settlers. In addition the Industrial Removal Office through propaganda has aroused every Jewish community to its task in sharing in the work of distribution; and agencies and committees have for many years been operating in every city and town possessed of industrial opportunities.

It is interesting to note that the Division of Information of the Bureau of Labor, which is committed to the principle of the distribution of immigration, patterned its activities after the organization of the Industrial Removal Office. Some years ago the late Commissioner General of Immigration Sargent said that the government would model its proposed distribution scheme on the operations of the Industrial Removal Office and the Galveston Bureau, and, furthermore, took occasion to say that the Jews were the only people who seemed to understand the significance and practice of the work of distribution. In addition, responsible journals have from time to time favorably commented on the dual distribu-

tion agencies—the Industrial Removal Office and the Galveston Bureau.

III

While fully cognizant of the merits of Mr. Berman's article in directing attention to the important work of the Galveston movement, his failure to refer to the work of the Industrial Removal Office (which distributed eighth-ninths of all those so removed) and its germinal relationship with the Galveston movement results, by such omission, in a veritable distortion of the history of immigrant distribution.

A final word as to the closing of Galveston. The Bureau succumbed to obstacles which could not be overcome. But it is in no sense a failure; 10,000 people will have arrived at Galveston by the closing date. The way is pointed; the route is open. The thousands have been rehabilitated; their physical and moral welfare has been conserved. The human contribution cannot be overestimated.

Perhaps in the not distant future there will be a growing social consciousness and a broader vision on the part of government officials and steamship companies. In the meantime the experience of the Bureau remains a luminous guide in the important work of deflecting the stream of immigration.

Address in Dayton

Dayton Federation Jewish Charities requests that all correspondence be sent to Jacob Margolis, secretary, or to the office in the Telephone Building.

New Member

Associated Jewish Charities, Fargo, N. D.
I. Papermaster, secretary.

Dr. Maurice H. Weiss has resigned as superintendent of the Richmond Y. M. H. A. in order to take up work in New York. He will be succeeded by Dr. George Benedict, formerly of the Philadelphia Y. M. H. A.

Mr. A. S. Newman is of Cleveland and not of Cincinnati, as was erroneously printed last month.

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Conducted by Bertram Benedict

For social workers as for every one else, the most important feelings of the present are concerned with the Titanic European war. In this country, business was convalescing after its illness of last year, but the news of the outbreak of the war brought on a relapse more serious than even that of last winter. Unemployment is general, and is general at a time when there are few funds stored up to tide over the period of unemployment. At the time of writing, it seems as if the garment industries, in which the Jews are employed as in no other, will be almost prostrated by the absence of the usual material and ideas from Europe. Many of the relief societies, especially those of the large cities, are pleading for special monetary assistance. Moreover, the business outlook is so disheartening that a decrease in the usual contributions must be unflinchingly faced. It is reported also that thousands of foreign-born men have flocked to the Eastern seaboard towns, expecting to be transported to their native countries, for which they desired to fight. Not only are these men a burden upon the relief societies of the Eastern cities, but their wives and children are also a burden upon the relief societies of the towns which they have left.

All those persons compelled to seek assistance, however, have not been those of the poorer classes. For Americans left stranded in European cities were in many cases forced to depend upon our consuls and ambassadors, not only for means to get back to this country, but also for shelter and food. Veritable bread-lines of wealthy persons might have been seen in front of many of our consular offices, and these offices were often organized into relief work according to the most recently approved charity organization society methods.

If assistance in this country has been sadly hampered, in Palestine it has been quite stopped. After all, the Palestinian charities are supported almost entirely from European funds, and these funds have naturally ceased to flow. The American Jewish Committee has pledged itself to raise

\$50,000 for immediate relief, and to cooperate with other Jewish organizations to raise funds to take over the support of the Palestinian welfare and charitable work. The Federation of American Zionists also has been compelled to take up almost the entire burden of keeping alive the work in Palestine formerly supported by the international organization. Mr. Louis Brandeis has been appointed chairman of the special committee to take over the work in this country, and with Dr. Schmarya Levin has been touring the country and making speeches at mass meetings in the attempt to raise funds for this work.

Even the war has its silver lining, and even for the Jews. For soon after the outbreak of hostilities, there came forth out of Russia the announcement that the Dark Country was going to remove all civic disabilities from the Jews. Some prominent Jews got into print with the assertion that this announcement was probably true, even if wrung unwillingly from the clique of nobles which rules Russia and its Czar. If this optimism be well-founded a new day is dawning for the Russian Jew, which surely among other things will see great changes in Russian Jewish immigration. Until there is more definite information forthcoming, however, most Jews will be inclined to take Russia's offer, not with a grain of salt, but with all of Salzburg. We should still beware of Greeks bearing gifts, even if they be only Greek Catholics.

A recent appointment by the President is of vital interest to all Jews and especially to all Jewish social workers. It is that of Mr. Frederic C. Howe to be Commissioner of Immigration at the port of New York. To his new work Mr. Howe brings unique qualifications. Long a student of municipal and social problems, his work as director of the People's Institute of New York has given him unusual insight into the heart of the immigrant. In his earlier years Mr. Howe belonged to that stimulating group of Ohio reformers, of which Tom L. Johnson was perhaps the chief inspiration. Later, he investigated municipal problems in Europe for the United States Government, and became for a time lecturer in the department of politics at