

IMMIGRATION LIMIT IS NOT RECENT MOVE

Even American Colonies Erected Barriers Against Aliens Interesting Facts

A great many people think that the move to restrict immigration to the United States is of recent origin. As a matter of fact the sentiment for such measures is as old as the government itself, and in fact older. For the colonists, while still under the sway of the mother country, had barriers to immigration, and some of the regulations were decidedly strict. In an interesting article in the current issue of the National Republic under the title "Early Barriers to Aliens," G. L. Waddell says:

"Contrary to popular belief, there is nothing new about immigration restrictions. Seventeenth century America, with the exception of Pennsylvania, definitely repudiated the 'open door' policy.

Not Question of Numbers

"It was not a question of numbers or quotas. This side of the Atlantic was so thinly settled that our forefathers saw no danger from congestion. They simply took the position that the original settlers had the right to say who should and who should not follow them. As there was no centralized government, restrictions differed in the various colonies, but all of them made exclusions more arbitrary than do our much-abused modern national immigration laws.

"Followers of unpopular religions were the victims of harsh legislation in nearly all of the colonies. Catholics could be sure of a welcome only in Maryland and Quakers were received cordially only in William Penn's province. Jews also were widely discriminated against.

Hard to Get In

"Getting into New England was as difficult as crashing the gates of an exclusive club. Connecticut passed a law in 1644 providing that no person should be allowed to take up residence there unless he had obtained a 'license' from a local magistrate. An act of 1660 put the power of blackball into the hands of private citizens by decreeing that no one be accepted as an inhabitant who was not 'acceptable to the majority of the townsmen.' In 1667 a formal complaint was registered 'that divers persons had thrust themselves into several towns much to the disturbance and distrust of the better portion of the citizens.' These persons were warned to leave and each should forfeit 20 shillings every week until he took his departure. Inhabitants could not entertain 'strangers,' that is, out-of-town guests, for more than three weeks at a time. Quakers were forbidden entrance to the province.

"Massachusetts in 1641 excluded negro slaves. Those already within the colony were to be returned to their place or origin. There was to be 'no bond slavery unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us.' This last referred to white servants bound over to masters for a period of years after

which they were to have their freedom. In 1647 Massachusetts excluded Catholics, giving as a reason a then current belief that Jesuits had stirred up political unrest in Europe and were plotting 'the engaging of the Indians to subdue New England.'

"Rhode Island, in 1700, exacted a 50 pound bond of all immigrants coming from any countries other than 'Great Britain, Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey.' This bond was held as a guarantee that the immigrant would not become a public charge."

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