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January 2, 1919.

Mr. Felix Frankfurter, Chairman  
War Labor Policies Board,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Frankfurter:

I have not been sufficiently in touch with the work of the Board in the last two or three weeks to know the scope of the study of international labor standards, but I hope that it may include some fundamental and intelligent work on the subject of wages of women. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance in this whole matter.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Van Kleeck, Director  
Woman in Industry Service.

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Washington,

CONFIDENTIAL

Jan. 2, 1919

SUBJECT: Prospective Emigration of Immigrants from the U. S.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Having established the fact of a widespread movement among alien immigrants to return to their old homes, we must now decide whether we should ignore this movement or take steps to check it.

2. Under what conditions would we be justified in ignoring the movement and assuming the attitude maintained by the government prior to the commencement of hostilities in 1914? Tens of thousands of soldiers are now returning from Europe and from the camps in this country. Tens of thousands of workers are being discharged from war industries made obsolete with the cessation of hostilities. When these thousands of workers return to their previous occupations they might find it impossible to turn out the men or women now holding their former positions, or they might find that the business establishments had been so reduced during the war that it will be long before they will find employment at their former tasks. With the war worker it will not be so bad as with the soldier. The high wages paid in the war industries have afforded to them an opportunity of saving up some funds for a "rainy day." But the soldier returns home penniless. I had been stopped several times by soldiers begging for a few cents to buy a meal on the streets of St. Louis, Mo., and New York City. Assuming that there will be no industrial depression, we must, nevertheless, admit that it will take some time before our peace time industries will resume operations on a large scale; it will take some time before they will receive orders from domestic and foreign firms; in a word, it will take some time before they will adjust their machinery of production and distribution which has been interrupted and interfered with by war conditions. But there is also a good deal of



talk about an industrial crisis. Some leading economists in this country seem to entertain such opinion, while some of our leading bankers are optimistic about the future. Should the former happen, there will be unemployment. Should the latter occur, there will surely be unemployment. In the first instance it will be on a small scale and in the second on a larger. But it looks as if there is to be unemployment in some form. In either case the returning soldier and sailor will suffer most.

3. Under such conditions, therefore, it might be found to be good policy to ignore the emigration of alien immigrants from the United States. It is true that tens of thousands of these prospective emigrants will come from the mines, foundries, construction works, and other tasks of a hard nature, and that the work which was agreeable to the immigrant laborer will not be necessarily satisfactory to the soldier or munition worker. It might be argued that once the aliens leave the hard working positions in our mines and factories it will be difficult to secure suitable men for the work. This should not disturb us in the least, for the following two, among other, reasons: First, between hunger and labor even if it be of disagreeable character no sane workingman will choose to starve. He will accept any work offered at a time when unemployment is known to prevail. Second, even if all Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Croats, Lithuanians, Czechs, Bohemians, etc., who are contemplating to leave should depart, there will still be left sufficient immigrant aliens willing and even anxious to do the hard work in the mines and factories (when run under reduced force), especially during "hard times." And with these elements at the harder work the workers fitted to do lighter and more skilled work will be able to secure as much work as there will be available. Consequently, it is clear that by paying no attention to the emigration of alien immigrants during a period of depression and unemployment the hard work which will have to be taken care of even under those conditions will not suffer from a lack of labor willing to do such work, while at the same time it will reduce the number of unemployed and discontented elements. This will hold true in case of unemployment as a result of the demobilization and the shutting down of war industries, as well as in case of an industrial depression.

4. But what if the contrary be true? What shall the policy of the government be in case the industries do absorb the tens of thousands of soldiers and war workers without serious loss of time? What if there will not be industrial depression and we shall continue to need the services of all immigrant aliens who now contemplate leaving? Then our problem is this: What shall we do in order to prevent the emigration of hundreds of thousands of immigrants working in our industries?

In my humble opinion there are two alternatives:

(1) To pass legislation restricting emigration; (2) To remove the causes responsible for the widespread desire on the part of the immigrants to return to their native lands.



5. Our first alternative might prove disastrous for two or more reasons. First, it might be contrary to international law (I am not a lawyer, I am not sure about it) and produce international complications. Second, now that most of the European countries are aflame with revolutions, the professional propagandists will be furnished an "excellent opportunity of sowing hatred among the people against the government and people of the United States by telling them that we are holding here their brothers and friends in order to exploit them in the interests of industrial barons, etc. Third, it might produce a rebellious spirit among the immigrant workers in this country which spirit will be fanned by those elements that thrive on discontent. In a word, I am of the opinion that such policy would produce no good results but plenty of trouble. It therefore must be discarded.

6. Our second alternative is to remove the causes responsible for the widespread desire to return. From the reports submitted by me since the beginning of this investigation it is clear that the causes are numerous and that many of them are well-founded, they are natural. For instance, a Hungarian is informed that land will be given away free to those who had previously tilled the soil. My investigation reveals the fact that 80 per cent of the Hungarians in this country were peasants -- agriculturists -- at home. Now that land is to be given away free, they want to return and receive their share. But the fact of the matter is that no land will be given away free. The information they received about this question was either spread by steamship ticket agents or through some other false source. The Russian, for instance, hears of the Red Guards being paid fabulous sums for serving in the army, or he hears of tremendous wages being paid to industrial workers and even to common laborers. It looks very attractive to him who had received under the old regime the sum of 50 kopek (25 cents under normal exchange) per month in the army, or from 30 to 50 kopek per day in the factory. But all this is not true. The Czech who has not heard from his relatives for a long time imagines that his wife and children, or his parents, or his brothers and sisters have been either killed or died of starvation. He is therefore anxious to return to take charge of some inheritance, whether it be in land, a store, or simply a house. The same is true of all other nationalities. "The wish is father to the thought," we say. This is very true of the immigrants in this country. They had left their countries for political and economical causes. They would like to see their countries free and orderly, prosperous and thriving, and not receiving direct information from home they imagine that they will find things much better there than they do here in the United States. Whatever reports appear in the daily newspapers in this country are looked upon by our immigrants as blank lies. On the other hand there are tens of thousands who cannot read English papers. They say that they have been so misinformed of conditions and happenings in their home countries that they will not pay any attention to whatever is published in such papers. Their own newspapers under present conditions cannot secure reliable information from the other side. The average immigrant has not heard from home for four or more years.



7. There are a great many who will return because of love for the mother country, no matter in what condition she might be now and no matter what privations will be heaped upon the emigrant when he gets there. In many cases there will really be chances for taking charge of estates left by former owners who had been killed during the war or died from other causes. There are many who would rather work for less in their own country than for more in a foreign land. Such people cannot and should not be made to stay here. Let them return home. But those Hungarians, those Croatians, those Russians, those Italians, those Ukrainians who are preparing to return because they have fallen under illusions as a result of being ignorant of the true state of affairs in their respective countries; those who would have remained here had they known that their relatives whose estates they thought they would inherit upon arrival were not dead but living and needing badly financial assistance and that this assistance was being looked for from the relative in America; those Hungarians who would have remained in this country had they known beforehand that no land would be given away free of charge; or that the millennium had not yet come to their country; those Italians who would have postponed their departure had they known that they could be of more assistance to their folks in the old country by remaining here and sending financial assistance abroad; those Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Croatians, etc., etc., who would have remained here had they had TRUE INFORMATION about conditions in their mother lands, these we can make to stay here. And if it should be desirable to have them with us, a policy must be adopted that would be productive of good results. WHAT SHALL THE POLICY BE?

8. Immediately after the Russian revolution in March, 1917, thousands of Russians and Jews and Ukrainians wanted to move immediately to Russia. The problem of transportation was a very difficult one, for they had to move across the American continent to Seattle, Washington, or to San Francisco, Cal., thence to Japan, Siberia and then to Central or south Russia. Despite this difficulty a couple of thousand people moved away. But soon commenced to reach this country letters from the emigrants upon their arrival at Siberian points advising their friends in this country of the true conditions and suggesting that the movement homeward be suspended for the time being. I am mentioning this fact as typical of what might happen with the other immigrant nationals in this country. Consequently, what has saved thousands of immigrant workers for our industries and unnecessary suffering to these very workers? TRUE INFORMATION! Where did this TRUE INFORMATION come from? From newspaper reports? No. If it did it would have been taken as mischievous propaganda in the interests of "capitalists," "exploiters," etc., etc. It came from their brethren with whom they worked in the mines and factories in this country; with whom they affiliated in the same organizations or went to the same church. Advice given by such people they took as the absolute truth and acted accordingly. Is it, then, not logical to assume that what was true of the Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish immigrants might also be true of immigrants of other nationalities? The causes of the prospective emigration with a few exceptions, are the same among all nationalities, therefore the remedy to check it must be the same.



Recommendation.

9. I therefore recommend that, instead of waiting until the first stream of emigration has reached its destination and has written to those remaining here of the true conditions in those countries; and, further, instead of waiting until peace is formally concluded and letters from relatives abroad commence to come to our immigrant workers. I RECOMMEND THAT ALL THE AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION BE IMMEDIATELY OPENED AND FACILITATED. THAT IT BE MADE KNOWN TO THE IMMIGRANTS IN EVERY CITY, TOWN OR HAMLET WHERE THEY LIVE, AND EVERY MINE OR FACTORY WHERE THEY WORK THAT LETTERS MAY NOW BE SENT AND MONEY FORWARDED TO THEIR RELATIVES ABROAD, AND THAT THE DELIVERY OF SUCH LETTERS OR MONEY IN SO FAR AS THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED, WILL BE HANDLED WITH DESPATCH. It is true that because of the unsettled conditions in the countries to which money might be sent difficulty will be encountered in this connection. But I am sure that the governments concerned will do their utmost to facilitate and guarantee the proper delivery of letters and money, in view of the fact that any financial assistance sent by husbands or relatives in this country would relieve the burdens now resting upon the shoulders of the governments which are compelled to render some assistance to the distressed. As a result of this exchange of letters our immigrant workers will think twice before departing for their home countries. And they will do so because they will NOT DOUBT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE INFORMATION. Any commission that might be sent to those countries for the purpose of investigating and reporting on conditions there or any newspaper agitation conducted in this connection would produce no results whatever. The individual immigrant pays little or no attention at all to general reports. What he wants to know is about his narrow circle, his immediate family. And such information he will secure then, and then only, when ALL THE AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION WILL BE OPENED TO HIM. If this policy should be adopted now, it is very likely that, before peace is finally concluded and before there is an opportunity of getting sufficient steamers to take care of the first rush, tens of thousands of the immigrant workers will rather remain here than return to the old country. Because they will know the truth. When said letters reach this country, I am sure that the foreign language press will enthusiastically invite their readers to send such letters as contain important information to the editors who will give them prominent space. The effect will be a thousand-fold more productive of good results than if the editors had undertaken a campaign in their editorial columns.



Ticket agents.

10. I believe that there are sufficient natural stimulants to induce immigrants to emigrate from the United States, as revealed by my reports, most of which cannot be removed by our government. But in addition to this there is an artificial stimulant arising, and this, in my opinion, can and should be eradicated. I have reference to the steamship ticket agencies and sub-agencies. The large steamship offices in St. Louis and New York advised me that they have innumerable requests for new agencies. These applicants and the agents who had been engaged in this business before the war look out for one thing, and one thing only, namely, to get as many passengers as possible, regardless of the harm it will do to the country at large. His personal welfare is paramount to him. They will not shrink from any methods as long as it will insure to them a large income. False reports about an economic crisis in this country will be spread -- and perhaps are already being spread -- in order to make it appear to the immigrant to leave this country than to stay and eat up his savings. We might well expect that the same methods which were employed by steamship companies and their agents in getting passengers in Europe to bring them to this country will be employed in recruiting passengers for Europe. On the whole I think this agent problem worthy of some attention.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Marcus,

Examiner, U. S. Emp. Service.

Rough approximate estimate of figures on probable immediate emigration of foreign born residents from the United States January 2, 1919.

200,000	to	300,000	- Croatians and Jugo Slavs.
300,000	to	400,000	- Italians
100,000	to	150,000	- Greeks
400,000	to	700,000	- Russians, Poles, Jews and Czecho-Slavaks
300,000	to	400,000	- Scandinavian, particularly Finns.
200,000	to	300,000	- French, English and Irish
50,000	to	75,000	- Mexicans
150,000	to	200,000	- Hungarians and Austrian Germans
<u>200,000</u>	to	<u>300,000</u>	- Miscellaneous, such as Armenians.
1900,000		2825,000	

The above report was prepared by Mr. Marcus in cooperation with the Executive Secretary of the War Labor Policies Board, and was submitted to the Board on January 3, 1919.

The recommendations were approved by the Board and the chairman was directed to take up the recommendations with the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of State, and the Postmaster General and to urge that they be carried out so far as possible.

George L. Bell,  
Executive Secretary,  
War Labor Policies Board.