On the Teapot Dome Scandal

Date: May 1922; February 1924
Authors: Robert La Follette; US Congress; Calvin Coolidge
Genre: speech; law

Summary Overview

The Teapot Dome scandal was a case of political corruption within the administration of President Warren G. Harding. It erupted in 1922, when Harding's secretary of the interior, Albert B. Fall, was accused of setting up drilling leases on public lands for two top oil industry executives and receiving a payback in return. As a result, congressional hearings were initiated, an independent prosecutor assigned, and witnesses called beginning in late 1923, after Harding's death from heart failure. Although the scandal never directly implicated Harding, it occurred at a time when other, lesser administrative scandals were unfolding and ended up blackening Harding's reputation and his standing as a president. There is no one key document associated with the scandal, but only a series of statements and legal testimonies given over a period of several years. The selection of materials included here is made up of: 1) a short argument delivered in the Senate by the Progressive Wisconsin senator Robert La Follette in favor of prosecuting the case; 2) a congressional resolution canceling the oil leases at the center of the scandal, after it had been determined that they were questionable; and 3) two brief statements by President Calvin Coolidge regarding the removal of an administrative official implicated in the case.

Defining Moment

The Teapot Dome scandal took its name from an oil reserve in Wyoming that featured a rock outcropping resembling a teapot. The reserve was leased by Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall to the industrialist Harry F. Sinclair—head of Mammoth Oil Co. (later Sinclair Oil Co.)—in early 1922. It and another reserve in Elk Hills, California, which was leased to Edward L. Doheny, head of Pan-American Petroleum Co., were part of an effort by Fall to demonstrate the utility of allowing private oil companies to make use of oil reserves on public lands—to the benefit of both the government and private industry. Fall had recently won President Warren G. Harding to his cause, although some in the administration felt that these oil fields, which were dedicated to maintaining a supply of fuel for the US Navy, were best left untapped and overseen by the government. Fall and his business associates noted that private companies were already drilling in areas adjacent to the reserves, and it would be prudent to act before the oil at the site was depleted. They sweetened the deal by agreeing to erect fuel storage facilities at Navy shipyards in California and Hawaii. However, as an April 1922 article in the *Wall Street Journal* noted, the entire arrangement had been made without any open, competitive bidding. It thus appeared to be an instance of crony capitalism.

The practice of conservation of natural resources—of holding public goods in reserve—was relatively new at the time. Under the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson inroads were made into this arena. (Taft, in fact, had designated Elk Hills a naval reserve in 1912, and Wilson Teapot Dome in 1915.) In the case of oil, it was thought wise to leave some of that resource in natural reservoirs, or domes, for future use. Both Democrats and Republicans generally supported the policy and in 1920 passed a law mandating the maintenance of adequate reserves for such purposes. On the other hand, private oil interests, along with many politicians, opposed the policy, holding that the oil supply was plentiful enough to make reserves unnecessary, and that, in any case, private oil companies were capable of supplying the needs of the US government. Albert Fall, a former senator from New Mexico, represented the latter school of thought.

Adding to suspicions regarding the Teapot Dome

deal was an air of secrecy surrounding Fall and his associates. A perception of favoritism and bribery seemed to be confirmed when Fall started making improvements to his private ranch in New Mexico. Fall claimed that the secrecy was necessary to protect the storage facilities from attack during war. Despite the fact that the Harding administration enjoyed the benefit of having Congress politically aligned with it (under Republican control), the Senate voted to launch an investigation. The senator most responsible for pushing for the review was the Progressive Wisconsin politician Robert M. La Follette. The senator put in charge of the investigation, under the Committee on Public Lands, was Montana Democrat Thomas J. Walsh, respected for his legal skills and personal integrity. Thus, following months of information gathering and analysis, the hearings got underway—in late 1923, after President Harding's death and Secretary Fall's departure from the Cabinet.

Author Biography

Robert M. La Follette was born in Primrose, Wisconsin, in 1855. He served as a county district attorney and in the US House of Representatives before returning to Wisconsin to run for governor, which led to his serving in that office as a Progressive from 1901 to 1906. From there he moved to the US Senate (1906–24), sponsoring bills, among other legislation, to limit the power of the railroads. His *La Follete's Weekly* expanded his reach and helped build a wider reform movement, partly aligned with the Populist movement. As the Progressive Party's presidential candidate in 1924, he won 5 million votes, about one-sixth of the total. La Follette died in Washington, DC, the following year.

Calvin Coolidge was born in 1872 in Plymouth, Vermont. His mother and sister died early in his life; his father was a prominent public official. Coolidge graduated from Amherst College and pursued a career in law and government. While living in Northampton, Massachusetts, he won a seat on the city council in 1900, chairmanship of the Northampton Republican Committee in 1904, a position on the Massachusetts General Court in 1907, and, eventually, the office of governor in 1919. He left office to serve as vice president to Warren G. Harding. In August 1923, Harding died, leaving Coolidge as president. In 1924, Coolidge won reelection, holding office until 1929. He retired to Northampton and died in 1933.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

[Senator Robert La Follette, on the Senate floor, May 13, 1922, noting what he is opposed to in the leasing deal between Albert Fall and Harry Sinclair]

First. Against the policy of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of the Navy in opening the naval reserves at this time for exploitation.

Second. Against the method of leasing public lands without competitive bidding, as exemplified in the recent contract entered into between Secretary Fall of the Interior and Secretary Denby of the Navy and the Standard Oil-Sinclair-Doheny interest.

Third. Against the policy of any department of the Government of the United States entering into a contract of any character whatsoever, whether competitive or not, which would tend to continue or perpetuate a monopolistic control of the oil industry of the United States or create a monopoly on the sale of fuel oil or refined oil to the Navy or any other department of the Government.

For the following reasons:

There exists no emergency or necessity which would warrant the opening of the naval reserves at this time for exploitation in order that the Navy might be supplied with the various grades of oil required by it, there being already above ground and in storage in the United States the greatest amount of oil that has been in storage in the history of all times.

The prices of fuel oil at the seaboard are lower than they have been in years, and there is an abundant supply.

The oil industry of the United States is just now convalescing from the greatest depression it has ever suffered, the daily production now being the largest in its

history, and therefore, the turning over of Government lands to the large pipe-line interests for exploitation will have the direct result of depressing the price of crude oil without in any way relieving the people of the onerous and burdensome high prices of refined products.

* * *

[Joint Resolution of Congress Canceling Oil Leases, February 8, 1924]

Joint Resolution Directing the President to institute and prosecute suits to cancel certain leases of oil lands and incidental contracts, and for other purposes.

Whereas it appears from evidence taken by the Committee on Public Lands and Surveys of the United States Senate that certain lease of Naval Reserve Numbered 3, in the State of Wyoming, bearing date April 7, 1922, made in form by the Government of the United States, through Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior, and Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy, as lessor, to the Mammoth Oil Company, as lessee, and that certain contract between the Government of the United States and the Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company, dated April 25, 1922, signed by Edward C. Finney, Acting Secretary of the Interior, and Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy, relating among other things to the construction of oil tanks at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, and that certain lease of Naval Reserve Numbered 1, in the State of California, bearing date December 11, 1922, made in form by the Government of the United States through Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior, and Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy, as lessor, to the Pan American Petroleum Company, as lessee, were executed under circumstances indicating fraud and corruption; and

Whereas the said leases and contract were entered into without authority on the part of the officers purporting to act in the execution of the same for the United States and in violation of the laws of Congress; and

Whereas such leases and contract were made in defiance of the settled policy of the Government, adhered to through three successive administrations, to maintain in the ground a great reserve supply of oil adequate to the needs of the Navy in any emergency threatening the national security: Therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the said leases and contract are against the public interest and that the lands embraced therein should be recovered and held for the purpose to which they were dedicated; and

Resolved further, That the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, authorized and directed immediately to cause suit to be instituted and prosecuted for the annulment and cancellation of the said leases and contract and all contracts incidental or supplemental thereto, to enjoin the further extraction of oil from the said reserves under said leases or from the territory covered by the same, to secure any further appropriate incidental relief, and to prosecute such other actions of proceedings, civil and criminal, as may be warranted by the facts in relation to the making of the said leases and contract.

And the President is further authorized and directed to appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, special counsel who shall have charge and control of the prosecution of such litigation, anything in the statutes touching the powers of the Attorney General of the Department of Justice to the contrary notwithstanding.

* * *

[President Calvin Coolidge addressing the public]

The dismissal of an officer of the government [i.e., Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby], such as is involved in this case, other than by impeachment, is exclusively an executive function. The President is responsible to the people for his conduct relative to the retention or dismissal of public officials. I assume that responsibility, and the people may be assured that as soon as I can be advised so that I may act with entire justice to all parties concerned and fully protect the public interests, I shall act. I do not propose to sacrifice any innocent man for my own welfare, nor do I propose to retain in office any unfit man for my own welfare. I shall try to maintain the functions of the government unimpaired, to act upon the evidence and the law as I find it, and to deal thoroughly

and summarily with every kind of wrongdoing. [February 11, 1924]

It is my duty to extend to every individual the constitutional right of a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. But I have another duty equally constitutional, and even more important, of assuring the enforcement of the law. In that duty I do not intend to fail.

Character is the only secure foundation of the State. We know well that all plans of improving the machinery of government and all measures for social betterment fail, and the hopes of progress wither, when corruption touches administration. At the revelation of greed making its subtle approaches to public officers, of the prostitution of high place to private profit, we are filled with scorn and indignation. We have a deep sense of humiliation at such gross betrayal of trust, and we lament the undermining of public confidence in official integrity.

But we can not rest with righteous wrath; still less can we permit ourselves to give way to cynicism. The heart of the American people is sound. Their officials with rare exception are faithful and high minded. For us, we propose to follow the clear, open path of justice. There will be immediate, adequate, unshrinking prosecution, criminal and civil, to punish the guilty and to protect every national interest. In this effort there will be no politics and no partisanship. It will be speedy, it will be just.

I am a Republican but I can not on that account shield anyone because he is a Republican. I am a Republican, but I can not on that account prosecute anyone because he is a Democrat. I want no hue and cry, no mingling of innocent and guilty in unthinking condemnation, no confusion of mere questions of law with questions of fraud and corruption…I ask the support of our people, as chief magistrate, intent on the enforcement of our laws without fear or favor, no matter who is hurt or what the consequences.

[February 12, 1924]

GLOSSARY

competitive bidding: a process by which work or products needed by the government are presented to private businesses, who then make their best offers regarding costs, time, etc.

convalesce: to return to health and strength; recuperate

joint resolution: a formal statement passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives

lessor and lessee: the parties that lease property to another and make use of property owned by another, respectively

naval reserves: in this context, oil deposits designated for use by the US Navy

Document Analysis

The Teapot Dome scandal was one of the most captivating and damaging cases of political corruption in American history. Although not the sole force responsible for launching congressional hearings, Senator Robert La Follette was one of the main driving forces. In the course of investigating the matter, Congress discovered that Fall had worked to convince the secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby, to shift authority for the oil reserves from the military to the Interior Department, under Fall's leadership. Then came the leasing of Teapot Dome to Sinclair and of Elk Hills to Doheny. The investigation revealed, moreover, that Fall had received over $400,000 (or $5 million in today's currency) in interest-free loans and government bonds from the two businessmen in return for arranging the leases. Although in the early part of the proceedings Fall had his protectors in the administration and elsewhere in government, they began to withdraw their support as more disclosures came forth. One such supporter, Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty, faced his own problems in connection with his running of the Department of Justice; he was forced to resign his office in 1924. The Navy Department's Denby, under pressure to resign as well, eventually did so. It is pressure to fire Denby that Coolidge is responding to in the statements given above. Congress also asked President Calvin Coolidge to appoint a special prosecutor in order to uncover any

criminal wrongdoing in the case. Ultimately, Coolidge appointed two: one Republican and one Democrat. Ongoing press coverage of the scandal drew an ever wider public audience.

Various criminal and civil suits unfolded as time went by. In a ruling by the Supreme Court in 1927, well after the cancellation of the oil leases by Congress (in 1924), the leases were found to improper and return of the reserves to the government was deemed right and just. Fall, his reputation in tatters, was found guilty of bribery in 1929 and sentenced to one year in prison and a $100,000 fine. Sinclair and Doheny were acquitted of all charges—a somewhat surprising outcome. (Most observers expected to see convictions on conspiracy charges.) Sinclair, however, was subsequently charged in a second investigation with contempt because he refused to cooperate and was found to have tampered with the jury. He received a short sentence as a result.

The Teapot Dome scandal was used by political opponents of the Harding administration to paint a picture of graft and corruption, a picture that has colored popular opinion about the Harding presidency ever since. The Republican Party, too, was blasted at the time for its close ties to the business community and its alleged interest in fostering deals between politicians and business owners. While Harding's reputation has long suffered as a result of the scandal, his party benefitted from the efforts of his vice president and successor, Calvin Coolidge, toward restoring public trust in Republican leadership and confidence in government. Coolidge made a point of having zero tolerance for corruption in his administration and of appointing only men of the "highest character" to his Cabinet. And character, as Coolidge notes in the second of his two statements above, "is the only secure foundation of the State." Republicans may also have been helped by the fact that Edward Doheny was found to have had links to leading Democrats as well as Republicans; some of them were even on his payroll. Thus, when Democrats tried in 1924 and 1928 to win the presidency through claims of honest government, they failed to win over voters and were defeated—by Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, in turn.

Essential Themes

Besides the political dimension, Teapot Dome is remembered for having been one of the first successes of the budding conservation movement. The public came to realize that, although natural resource issues are complex and planning for the needs of future generations is difficult, such planning must take place, and having a government conservation policy makes good sense. After Teapot Dome, petroleum development came to be overseen by the Federal Oil Conservation Board (FOCB), which focused on the "wise use" of the resource and maintaining stability in the oil market. The program was short-lived, however. Business groups such as the American Petroleum Institute pressured the government to limit the FOCB's authority and allow big oil companies, together with the many smaller, independent refiners, to develop drilling sites and bring their product to market under less restrictive conditions.

Teapot Dome is also noted for having inspired the writer Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel *Oil!*, which features a self-made oil millionaire (modeled on Edward Doheny) and his more skeptically-minded son. That novel, in turn, inspired the filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson's award-winning 2007 movie *There Will Be Blood*, which highlights some of the ruthless business practices in the early oil industry and features a cast of odd and colorful characters. (The actor Daniel Day-Lewis, who plays the main character, won an Academy Award for best actor.)

—Michael Shally-Jensen, PhD

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The National Origins Act (Immigration Act of 1924)

Date: May 26, 1924
Authors: US Congress
Genre: law

Summary Overview

The last in a series of immigration restrictions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1924 National Origins Act, also called the Johnson-Reed Act, was a law that severely limited the immigration of eastern and southern Europeans and virtually ended the immigration of nonwhite peoples, especially Asians. Written at a time when the nation was replete with nationalist sentiment in the aftermath of World War I, the National Origins Act reflected the disdain many white Americans felt for those coming to the United States from countries other than those in Western Europe. Immigration from southern and eastern Europe had been particularly high after 1890, and there was a feeling among many that these immigrants, mostly Roman Catholic and Jewish, never quite fit into white, Protestant America. While public opinion changed gradually over the decades, the quota-based system the act established remained largely in place until it was abolished in 1965.

Defining Moment

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when the influx of immigrants coming from southern and eastern Europe flocked to the burgeoning cities of the industrial United States, nativist sentiments began to rise among Protestants of Western European heritage born in the United States. Before the arrival of European Catholics and Jews, immigrants from Asia had spurred a similar nativist reaction. Coming to the United States primarily to build the Western railroads during the mid-1800s, Chinese workers became unwelcome once work was completed and the railroad jobs dried up.

Beyond race, a wariness of political radicalism and religious difference, as well as the fear that a glut of inexpensive immigrant labor would deprive American citizens of jobs, all played into the rise of American nativism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Immigration restriction was one of a number of ways that this nativist impulse manifested. Laws mandating that public school classes be taught only in English and legislation restricting the sale of alcoholic beverages—which were an integral part of many of the newly arrived immigrants' cultures—were another way the legislature was used to entrench nativist ideals.

But restrictive immigration laws were the most direct way of dealing with the problem and had long-lasting ramifications. Beginning in the 1880s, the US Congress acted to bar those deemed likely to become public charges and prevented all further immigration from China. Additionally, any Chinese immigrants already in the United States were denied US citizenship. By 1908, Japanese immigration was effectively ended for all but the educated classes. In 1917, Congress passed legislation instituting a literacy requirement, stating that immigrants over sixteen years of age had to be able to read a number of words in ordinary use in English or some other language.

The basic outline for immigration policy for the first half of the twentieth century was established with the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which set an annual limit of about 350,000 immigrants and quotas for each nation that reflected the ethnic makeup of the United States at the time of the 1910 census. Thus, the quotas were heavily slanted to Western and northern European nations, where demand for immigration was low, rather than the southern and eastern European nations, where there were many who wanted to immigrate.

The quota system was tightened further and more specifically defined by the National Origins Act of 1924. Limiting total immigration to 150,000, the act

set the quotas to reflect the demographics of the American population in the 1920 census. Additionally, it replaced the various acts and policies that had limited immigration from Asia with a blanket restriction of all Asian immigration. Latin American immigrants were excluded from the act not because they were especially welcome, but because their work as agricultural laborers had proven essential during World War I.

Author Biography

Largely the work of Congressman Albert Johnson (R-Washington State) and Senator David A. Reed (R-Pennsylvania), the National Origins Act reflected the feeling among many white Americans that immigration by southern and eastern Europeans, Asians, and other nonwhite peoples was overwhelming the United States and constituted a threat to the purity of the white American population. A career newspaper editor who had settled in Washington State, Johnson had a long history of racist thought and was the driving force behind the act. As head of a group called the Eugenics Research Association and editor of the *Home Defender*—an anti-immigrant newspaper—Johnson had supported measures to purify the blood of Americans through both stopping immigration and interracial marriage and the forced sterilization of the mentally disabled. Johnson delivered numerous speeches defaming eastern and southern Europeans as lawless, barbaric radicals before crafting the National Origins Act.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Immigration Act of 1924."

IMMIGRATION VISAS. SEC. 2.

a. A consular officer upon the application of any immigrant (as defined in section 3) may (under the conditions hereinafter prescribed and subject to the limitations prescribed in this Act or regulations made thereunder as to the number of immigration visas which may be issued by such officer) issue to such immigrant an immigration visa which shall consist of one copy of the application provided for in section 7, visaed by such consular officer. Such visa shall specify (1) the nationality of the immigrant; (2) whether he is a quota immigrant (as defined in section 5) or a non-quota immigrant (as defined in section 4); (3) the date on which the validity of the immigration visa shall expire; and such additional information necessary to the proper enforcement of the immigration laws and the naturalization laws as may be by regulations prescribed.

b. The immigrant shall furnish two copies of his photograph to the consular officer. One copy shall be permanently attached by the consular officer to the immigration visa and the other copy shall be disposed of as may be by regulations prescribed.

c. The validity of an immigration visa shall expire at the end of such period, specified in the immigration visa, not exceeding four months, as shall be by regulations prescribed. In the case of a immigrant arriving in the United States by water, or arriving by water in foreign contiguous territory on a continuous voyage to the United States, if the vessel, before the expiration of the validity of his immigration visa, departed from the last port outside the United States and outside foreign contiguous territory at which the immigrant embarked, and if the immigrant proceeds on a continuous voyage to the United States, then, regardless of the time of his arrival in the United States, the validity of his immigration visa shall not be considered to have expired.

d. If an immigrant is required by any law, or regulations or orders made pursuant to law, to secure the visa of his passport by a consular officer before being permitted to enter the United States, such immigrant shall not be required to secure any other visa of his passport than the immigration visa issued under this Act, but a record of the number and date of his immigration visa shall be noted on his passport without charge therefor. This subdivision shall not apply to an immigrant who is relieved, under subdivision (b) of section 13, from obtaining an immigration visa.

e. The manifest or list of passengers required by the immigration laws shall contain a place for entering

thereon the date, place of issuance, and number of the immigration visa of each immigrant. The immigrant shall surrender his immigration visa to the immigration officer at the port of inspection, who shall at the time of inspection indorse on the immigration visa the date, the port of entry, and the name of the vessel, if any, on which the immigrant arrived. The immigration visa shall be transmitted forthwith by the immigration officer in charge at the port of inspection to the Department of Labor under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor.

f. No immigration visa shall be issued to an immigrant if it appears to the consular officer, from statements in the application, or in the papers submitted therewith, that the immigrant is inadmissible to the United States under the immigration laws, nor shall such immigration visa be issued if the application fails to comply with the provisions of this Act, nor shall such immigration visa be issued if the consular officer knows or has reason to believe that the immigrant is inadmissible to the United States under the immigration laws.

g. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to entitle an immigrant, to whom an immigration visa has been issued, to enter the United States, if, upon arrival in the United States, he is found to be inadmissible to the United States under the immigration laws. The substance of this subdivision shall be printed conspicuously upon every immigration visa.

h. A fee of $9 shall be charged for the issuance of each immigration visa, which shall be covered into the Treasury as miscellaneous receipts.

DEFINITION OF IMMIGRANT. SEC. 3.

When used in this Act the term "immigrant" means an alien departing from any place outside the United States destined for the United States, except (1) a government official, his family, attendants, servants, and employees, (2) an alien visiting the United States temporarily as a tourist or temporarily for business or pleasure, (3) an alien in continuous transit through the United States, (4) an alien lawfully admitted to the United States who later goes in transit from one part of the United States to another through foreign contiguous territory, (5) a bona fide alien seaman serving as such on a vessel arriving at a port of the United States and seeking to enter temporarily the United States solely in the pursuit of his calling as a seaman, and (6) an alien entitled to enter the United States solely to carry on trade under and in pursuance of the provisions of a present existing treaty of commerce and navigation.

NON-QUOTA IMMIGRANTS. SEC. 4.

When used in this Act the term "non-quota immigrant" means (a) An immigrant who is the unmarried child under 18 years of age, or the wife, of a citizen of the United States who resides therein at the time of the filing of a petition under section 9; (b) An immigrant previously lawfully admitted to the United States, who is returning from a temporary visit abroad; (c) An immigrant who was born in the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Mexico, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone, or an independent country of Central or South America, and his wife, and his unmarried children under 18 years of age, if accompanying or following to join him; (d) An immigrant who continuously for at least two years immediately preceding the time of his application for admission to the United States has been, and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of, carrying on the vocation of minister of any religious denomination, or professor of a college, academy, seminary, or university; and his wife, and his unmarried children under 18 years of age, if accompanying or following to join him; or (e) An immigrant who is a bona fide student at least 15 years of age and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of study at an accredited school, college, academy, seminary, or university, particularly designated by him and approved by, the Secretary of labor, which shall have agreed to report to the Secretary of Labor the termination of attendance of each immigrant student, and if any such institution of learning fails to make such reports promptly the approval shall be withdrawn….

EXCLUSION FROM UNITED STATES. SEC. 13.

a. No immigrant shall be admitted to the United States unless he (1) has an unexpired immigration visa or was born subsequent to the issuance of the immigration visa

of the accompanying parent, (2) is of the nationality specified in the visa in the immigration visa, (3) is a non-quota immigrant if specified in the visa in the immigration visa as such, and (4) is otherwise admissible under the immigration laws. (

b. In such classes of cases and under such conditions as may be by regulations prescribed immigrants who have been legally admitted to the United States and who depart therefrom temporarily may be admitted to the United States without being required to obtain an immigration visa.

c. No alien ineligible to citizenship shall be admitted to the United States unless such alien (1) is admissible as a non-quota immigrant under the provisions of subdivision (b), (d), or (e) of section 4, or (2) is the wife, or the unmarried child under 18 years of age, of an immigrant admissible under such subdivision (d), and is accompanying or following to join him, or (3) is not an immigrant as defined in section 3.

d. The Secretary of Labor may admit to the United States any otherwise admissible immigrant not admissible under clause (2) or (3) of subdivision (a) of this section, if satisfied that such inadmissibility was not known to, and could not have been ascertained by the exercise of reasonable diligence by, such immigrant prior to the departure of the vessel from the last port outside the United States and outside foreign contiguous territory or, in the case of an immigrant coming from foreign contiguous territory, prior to the application of the immigrant for admission.

e. No quota immigrant shall be admitted under subdivision (d) if the entire number of immigration visas which may be issued to quota immigrants of the same nationality for the fiscal year already been issued. If such entire number of immigration visas has not been issued, then the Secretary of State, upon the admission of a quota immigrant under subdivision (d), shall reduce by one the number of immigration visas which may be issued to quota immigrants of the same nationality during the fiscal year in which such immigrant is admitted; but if the Secretary of State finds that it will not be practicable to make such reduction before the end of such fiscal year, then such immigrant shall not be admitted.

f. Nothing in this section shall authorize the remission or refunding of a fine, liability to which has accrued under section 16.

DEPORTATION SEC. 14.

Any alien who at any time after entering the United States is found to have been at the time of entry not entitled under this Act to enter the United States, or to have remained therein for a longer time than permitted under this Act or regulations made thereunder, shall be taken into custody and deported in the same manner as provided for in sections 19 and 20 of the Immigration Act of 1917: Provided, That the Secretary of Labor may, under such conditions and restrictions as to support and care as he may deem necessary, permit permanently to remain in the United States, any alien child who, when under sixteen years of age was heretofore temporarily admitted to the United States and who is now within the United States and either of whose parents is a citizen of the United States.

MAINTENANCE OF EXEMPT STATUS. SEC. 15.

The admission to the United States of an alien excepted from the class of immigrants by clause (2), (3), (4), (5), or (6) of section 3, or declared to be a non-quota immigrant by subdivision (e) of section 4, shall be for such time as may be by regulations prescribed, and under such conditions as may be by regulations prescribed (including, when deemed necessary for the classes mentioned in clauses (2), (3), (4), or (6) of section 3, the giving of bond with sufficient surety, in such sum and containing such conditions as may be by regulations prescribed) to insure that, at the expiration of such time or upon failure to maintain the status under which he was admitted, he will depart from the United States….

GENERAL DEFINITIONS. SEC 28.

As used in this Act (a) The term "United States," when used in a geographical sense, means the States, the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii, the District of Columbia, Porto Rico, and the Virgin Islands; and the term "continental United States" means the States and the District of Columbia; (b) The term "alien" includes any individual not a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United

States, but this definition shall not be held to include Indians of the United States not taxed, nor citizens of the islands under the jurisdiction of the United States; (c) The term "ineligible to citizenship," when used in reference to any individual, includes an individual who is debarred from becoming a citizen of the United States under section 2169 of the Revised Statutes, or under section 14 of the Act entitled "An Act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese," approved May 6, 1882, or under section 1996, 1997, or 1998 of the Revised Statutes, as amended, or under section 2 of the Act entitled "An Act to authorize the President to increase temporarily the Military Establishment of the United States," approved May 18, 1917, as amended, or under law amendatory of, supplementary to, or in substitution for, any of such sections; (d) The term "immigration visa" means an immigration visa issued by a consular officer under the provisions of this Act; (e) The term "consular officer" means any consular or diplomatic officer of the United States designated, under regulations prescribed under this Act, for the purpose of issuing immigration visas under this Act. In case of the Canal Zone and the insular possessions of the United States the term "consular officer" (except as used in section 24) means an officer designated by the President, or by his authority, for the purpose of issuing immigration visas under this Act; (f) The term "Immigration Act of 1917" means the Act of February 5, 1917, entitled "An Act to regulate the immigration of aliens to, and the residence of aliens in, the United States"; (g) The term "immigration laws" includes such Act, this Act, and all laws, conventions, and treaties of the United States relating to the immigration, exclusion, or expulsion of aliens; (h) The term "person" includes individuals, partnerships, corporations, and associations; (i) The term "Commissioner General" means the Commissioner General of Immigration; (j)The term "application for admission" has reference to the application for admission to the United States and not to the application for the issuance of the immigration visa; (k) The term "permit" means a permit issued under section 10; (l) The term "unmarried," when used in reference to any as of any time, means an individual who at such time is not married, whether or not previously married; (m) The terms "child," "father," and "mother," do not include child or parent by adoption unless the adoption took place before January 1, 1924; (n) The terms "wife" and "husband" do not include a wife husband by reason of a proxy or picture marriage.

Document Analysis

The National Origins Act, also known as the Immigration Act of 1924, did more than just limit immigration to the United States. It set up a system that attempted to shape the immigrant communities that would be allowed to come. The idea was not new—the Immigration Act of 1921 had set up the first quota system—but the National Origins Act enshrined the quota system as the method of determining valid immigration to the United States. Essentially, it was an attempt at social engineering—admitting immigrants from acceptable nations and not admitting those deemed unacceptable in an attempt to keep the American population as homogenous as possible.

Overall, the aim of the act was to limit immigration on the whole. Whereas in the year before the act, some 350,000 persons immigrated, that number was cut almost in half in the year following its passage into law. Even for source countries considered desirable, such as Great Britain, immigration declined. But for those countries with exceptionally low quotas—especially those in southern and eastern Europe, immigration declined more than 90 percent.

The act created two classifications of immigrants: quota and nonquota. Taking its cue from the Monroe Doctrine, nonquota immigrants were those from the Western Hemisphere: "the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Mexico, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone, or an independent country of Central or South America." Quota immigrants were from any other nation in the world. Immigrants who were seminary or university students also received special exemption from the quotas. The impact of this was to exclude the main source of the growing industrial workforce—southern and eastern Europe—as once the very small quotas for these nations were reached, no further immigration visas would be issued.

Finally, the National Origins Act specified that no persons ineligible for citizenship would be admitted to the United States. This would seem a fairly straightforward way of keeping out undesirable immigrants, such

as criminals and other dangerous persons, as well as political radicals. However, given the fact that Japanese and Chinese immigrants had already been declared ineligible for citizenship, this clause made them ineligible for immigration as well, effectively cutting off all immigration from Asia until the act was superseded by the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and the quota system was abolished by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

Essential Themes

The National Origins Act of 1924 had two central themes that characterized immigration policy for most of the twentieth century. First, it privileged North and South American as well as northern and Western European immigrants over southern and eastern Europeans. Second, it completely eliminated immigration from Asian nations, such as Japan and China. The American mainstream considered southern and eastern Europeans and Asians too culturally, linguistically, and religiously different to successfully assimilate into American society.

In the years following the passage of the act, immigration figures remained stable and were guided by the principles of the act. However, with the onset of the Great Depression and World War II thereafter, immigration dropped sharply. By the depths of the Depression in 1933, fewer than twenty-five thousand immigrants were allowed into the United States. Public opinion, ever hostile toward immigrant workers, turned even more hostile during the 1930s, when jobs were scarce for all segments of the American population. Even Mexican immigrants, granted nonquota status by the act, were encouraged to return to Mexico, and many were deported against their will.

There is a certain irony to the fact that the act was superseded in 1952, at a time when the United States encouraged cultural homogeneity more strongly than ever. The Cold War had the effect of demonizing many Eastern European nations as well as mainland China, but people who left those nations for the United States were considered heroic refugees of the Communist regimes from which they had fled. At the same time, the postwar economic boom beginning to take hold in Japan caused the Japanese to be seen by many as "good" immigrants—immigrants who came highly educated and were perceived as contributing to the prosperity of the nation. During the Cold War, Mexican and other Latin American immigrants replaced southern and Eastern Europeans as the targets of nativist sentiments in the United States.

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