

Immigration: Freedom Or Control?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. J. Carter

THIS INQUIRY was begun by a consideration of freedom of movement. It was seen that although there was a right to freedom of movement, the right was qualified in many respects, some of them justifiable, and it could not be proved that control of immigration was not a legitimate qualification. The currently accepted idea that there should be freedom of movement and residence within the frontiers of each state but not between states was found to be inconsistent, but it was not possible to determine whether control of migration could be applied between areas within states (such as the counties of England) or whether there should be no control of migration at all.

It was accordingly necessary to make a fresh approach, and this was done by putting the case for freedom in nine propositions, which will be repeated later.

An examination was then made of the major problems associated with immigration to try to ascertain whether control of immigration was an essential means of solving them. The problems looked at were those of overcrowding, health, welfare, education, housing and integration. They fell into three categories: those that were not problems at all, those that existed without immigration, and those that arose only with immigration. Some of these problems demanded vigorous action, but in no case could it be said that control of immigration was necessary.

An important general principle that has not emerged explicitly in the discussion so far is that society, when faced with any problem, should always try to act positively, not negatively. For example, in the so-called problem of overpopulation, the positive response, which is to increase the supply of food, should be given preference over the negative response, which is to restrict the growth of population. Similarly, to argue that because problems accompany immigration therefore immigration should be cut off or controlled is a negative response. The positive response is to tackle the problems. No one would have much respect for a doctor who suggested to one of his patients that the best way to get rid of his cough was to stop breathing.

Nevertheless, to many people the conclusion that there should be complete freedom of immigration will seem absurd. They may feel that the arguments in this inquiry are slick or theoretical, plausible on the surface, but unacceptable to common sense. In these days advocacy of free immigration is an extreme view, and one can have every sympathy with those who reject it, including those living in areas of high immigrant concentration who

have to suffer the consequences of what others preach. Emotions about immigration are often unconscious as well as conscious and so deeply ingrained that even those who call for complete freedom (if there be any apart from the present writer) may do so almost reluctantly, with a feeling of unease. Yet the more one considers the subject, the more the arguments seem to point one way, and it is by reason, not by emotion, that the issue should be decided. Difficult as it is, we should try to follow where the arguments lead whether we like it or not.

It is clear that free immigration would be much easier to accept if there were not such a great disparity between the developed and the underdeveloped countries, and if the sucking away of population from the underdeveloped countries could be checked. There may be various ways in which a developed nation, such as Britain, can help underdeveloped nations such as Britain's ex-colonies, but the most significant step must come from the underdeveloped nations themselves. This is to destroy the strongest barrier to production by making the land available to the people. When that is done, the development of a soundly-based economy, attractive to owners of skill and capital, will soon follow.

This leads to an objection. It is all very well, it may be said, for there to be free immigration when land monopoly is broken in underdeveloped countries, when the housing shortage in Britain is ended, and so on. Do not all the arguments put forward for free immigration suggest free immigration in a different kind of society rather than free immigration now? This is a question partly comparable to that of whether there should be free trade only in a different kind of society, and the answer is perhaps the same. Freedom derives from the fundamental right of a man to the product of his own labour, so that the freedom to migrate derives from the fundamental rights of all men to land. The nine propositions proving this are as follows:

1. All men have equal rights to life.
2. Man cannot live without the use of land.
3. Therefore all men have equal rights to land.
4. Areas of land differ in quality.
5. If only the inhabitants of richer areas enjoy rights to land there, and the inhabitants of poorer areas enjoy rights to land only in those poorer areas, the rights of all men to land are not equal.
6. Therefore all men have equal rights to all land.
7. It follows from proposition six that all men,

whether natives or foreigners, have equal rights to the land in any country.

8. Restriction of immigration by the government of any country denies the rights of some men (the foreigners) to land in that country.
9. Therefore immigration should not be restricted.

This case for complete freedom of immigration makes no distinction between Commonwealth and alien immigrants, between skilled and unskilled workers, or between people of different races and colours.

Britain has had many waves of immigration in her history. Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans came to these shores to conquer. More recently, west Europeans, east European Jews, and the Irish have come here to

work or to flee from persecution. Now many Commonwealth citizens want to come to escape from the poverty for which all too often imperial Britain did nothing. We are afraid, apparently, of coloured skins, but let us remember that beneath the skins there are human beings. All men must be accepted as immigrants, even if there is anxiety about the consequences. They must be accepted because they have as much right to be here as ourselves.

Mankind is one family, divided among itself, longing for reconciliation. The barriers that keep men apart from one another must be broken down, whether they take the form of apartheid between races in South Africa, apartheid between Germans in Berlin, or that respectable but equally blunt kind of apartheid called immigration control.

SOME QUOTATIONS ON IMMIGRATION

... there is a limit to the number of immigrants this small and overcrowded country can absorb.

—Mr. Herbert Bowden, when Leader of the House of Commons.

* * *

I, for one, stand for stricter immigration control yet. I know the world too well to wish to introduce a colour problem, with all its heartbreak, into our land.

—Mr. Tom Stacey, parliamentary candidate for North Hammersmith in the 1964 general election.

* * *

It is not a question now of seeking a justification for keeping them out, but of finding a reason for letting them in.

—Mr. Peter Thorneycroft, when shadow Home Secretary.

* * *

Why should England be a dumping ground for millions of poor, illiterate, and unemployed people from all over the world?

—Sir Cyril Osborne, Member of Parliament for Louth.

* * *

Britain, like any other country, has a sovereign right to decide who may or may not enter her territory.

—Mr. Robert Gardiner, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

* * *

It is sadly ironical that India, with her vast areas of undeveloped land and masses of people needing work, should suffer so acutely from famine . . . If she is ever to avert the constant threat of famine all her vast neglected countryside must be developed . . . We invite you . . . through that countryside to bring new prosperity to all India's people.

—Advertisement by War on Want.

The general feeling against immigration is not derived from anxiety about the numbers of immigrants, but from the fact that a significant proportion of them are coloured.

—Mr. H. L. Lindo, High Commissioner for Jamaica in London

* * *

The integration policy will succeed when we persuade the public to accept Britain as a multi-racial society.

—Alderman Ernest Wistrich, Chairman of the Camden Committee for Community Relations.

* * *

It cannot be emphasised too often that the majority of immigrants are of great economic and social benefit to the country and that without them many of our essential services would come to a stop.

—a leading article in *The Guardian*

* * *

It is absolutely mad at a time when our labour force is largely over-used and our new labour force is going to rise very little to talk about limiting the number of people who can be used.

—Mr. George Brown, when Minister for Economic Affairs.

* * *

. . . the obsolete premise that the permanent basis of the international structure is the sovereign nation-state . . .

—Lord Chalfont, when Minister of State for Disarmament.