

"CREED OF A WANDERER" *

So long as the world is divided like patchwork into a collection of odd shapes and colours, with pygmies on each patch engaged in squabbling and cheating each other in the sacred name of patriotism, the cause of liberty and freedom and the general happiness of the individual is unlikely to progress.

During the last twenty-five years the retrogression of individual freedom has, curiously enough, paralleled the vanquishing of time and space by the aeroplane and other forms of speed transport. The easier it has become to reach a country, the higher the wall that country has erected to keep the traveller out. Horizons broadened magically in the air—and narrowed on the troubled ground.

Before the last war, passports were not required except by Russia, Turkey and in certain parts of the Orient. The only restriction on immigration was a minimum amount of money one had to be possessed of on landing. Without a passport, a man could wander the continents and the seven seas—and, what is more important, work where he pleased.

To-day, restrictions on immigration and entry by practically all "civilised" nations have made vagabondage the privilege of the wealthy. The result has helped to bring on world-wide depression and been an ominous check on the development of the countries which need population.

The United States, with vast stretches of fertile empty land still awaiting settlement, started the ball rolling with what it called "selective immigration." The theory, which no doubt has its points, was, to put it bluntly, that undesirable and often criminal elements from South-East Europe were to be kept out, and the door held gingerly ajar for a selected few from England, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Persons of colour, whether brown, yellow or black, were excluded altogether. At the same time, the United States slapped a ten-dollar visa fee on everyone wishing to enter its portals for a period longer than sixty days. Thus, the freest country in the world took the lead in restraining liberty of movement about the world.

The next offenders were the British dominions. Canada and Australia went to ludicrous lengths to keep out the settlers, who were vital to their development. . . . We have only to consider the astonishingly slow progress of Canada and Australia to see where we stand. When England originally accepted the responsibility for the development of Canada and Australia, it was a responsibility owed to the world, not merely to the City of London, and I believe that our refusal to recognise this fact is one of the causes of present world unrest.

That part of Canada which is susceptible of agricultural development and

settlement is nearly as large as the entire United States, and its history is as old as that of the United States. Yet compare their populations!

The greatness of the United States was founded on its settlement, over the miles and the years, by refugees from oppression in the Old World, and by that daring and hardy number of world adventurers and pioneers whose movements modern restrictive regulations would prevent. In those days, America did not ask: "What is your bank balance?" but "Will you work?"

In exchange for this policy we have "America for the Americans," "Canada for the Canadians," "Australia for the Australians," "South Africa for the South Africans," and "South America for the South Americans." The lands which most need population are united to keep it out. You may visit these countries if you have money, as a tourist, but if you try to *work* in them, you are thrown into prison or deported.

Yet the prairie states of Canada, and the American state of Texas, alone, could comfortably accommodate all the refugees from Europe. "Ah," say the nationalists, "but they would take work from our own people." Rot. Thrusting aside all consideration of the spectacle presented by harried thousands, rejected by the world they live in; leaving apart any feeling of man for man, one hard fact remains: The wealth of a nation lies, not in its gold, but in its population, the creative force of its labour. . . .

Always, I have hated zoos. I recognise their uses, but detest their symbolism. I have read that some wild animals, notably lions, are happier in captivity than they would be if free. The idea to me is horrible. Why should a lion be happier in a cage than in his native jungle? Because he is fed and kept clean and warm? How do the zoologists know these things count with a lion for more than freedom? I would sooner starve and freeze than spend my days in prison, and so, I am sure, would a lion.

Exaggerated nationalism is now busily caging the human race, making travel next to impossible for those who would be citizens, not just of the country in which by accident they were born, but of the world. To-day I know of no country where a foreigner may work without overcoming a myriad of restrictions imposed by an army of bureaucrats. In totalitarian countries this restriction of movement is applied even to workers within the nation's own boundaries.

As restrictions on labour and movement multiply, one by one the so-called "economic systems" of the nations crash, and war results. After war will come chaos, unless it is recognised that world economics must be substituted for national economics, and that world economics can be based only on a proper distribution of the whole

resources, not only of material but of labour, of the world.

Frontiers were created by the ignorance and rapacity of man and maintained by appeal to the animal instincts of fear and patriotism. We keep a falacious system because our dullard politicians prefer government by expedient to government by imagination.

I have crossed and recrossed innumerable frontiers, have passports with visas of all shapes and sizes, from that of the United States, which inconsiderately takes up an entire page, to the two hand-written lines of a grinning official in Haiti. With every year the visa nuisance has grown, and the multitude of bureaucrats with it. Stamps on my passport inform me that I may not work in France, Spain, Switzerland, the United States, Mexico, Panama, Cuba, Hungary. Another stamp gave me permission to work in Italy, but only because I was paid in sterling. Now that barbed wire has replaced red tape along many of these frontiers it is a question in my mind which is worse. . . .

Call me an amateur economist or a headstrong idealist if you want to, but for me the frontiers of the world impede movement, restrict distribution, promote insularity, necessitate armies, complicate life in its every phase, and are the very genesis of all war. There can be no permanent peace so long as a single frontier exists, for the frontier is the symbol of distrust and hatred in the human family. . . . Let the English-speaking nations and others who will join them make a start towards a system based on a new conception of freedom. Let us, in the years before us, join hands with the West, tear down the frontiers and throw wide the gates to all who would live sanely; let us abandon interecine "patriotism" and—give the world back to the world.

At an arbitration case (*Estates Gazette*, 23rd October) concerned with 28 acres of land at Mamhilad (Mon.), compulsorily acquired by the Ministry of Supply from the Pontypool Park Estate, the official arbitrator awarded £1,441, plus £104 payable by the Ministry towards the costs of the claimants. The claimants, whose evidence is interesting, had demanded £2,860. On expert advice they had assessed the value of the site as "potential building land" at £300 an acre for the front portion (abutting the highway) and about £120 an acre for the back portion. The district valuer had considered the land to be worth £1,175. Whoever may be right in this conflict of opinion, how does the public interest stand? So curious is the law of rating that the land was treated as of no value at all; it allows owners to hold such valuable land without paying a penny piece for the privilege. As the rent or value of land is not taken for public revenue, the land *price* becomes the ransom the people have to pay to the owners for permission to live.

* From *Eyes West*, by Basil Woon; Peter Davies, London, 10s. 6d. Reprinted with acknowledgments to Author and Publisher.