

Malthus In America - 1939

By John Lawrence Monroe

Studies by the Council on Foreign Relations* purport to show that all of the United States and most of Canada, as well as all of Europe and most of the usable portions of Asia, are fully or oversettled. Only Inner Asia and South America, according to these studies, present opportunities today for settlement by the white race.

Yet so far as the United States is concerned, an analysis of the census will show that:†

54.3 per cent of the total population of the United States lives in 5.4 per cent of the total land area.

Nine per cent of the population is concentrated in four small areas having an average density of 20,143 people per square mile. This nine per cent lives in .02 per cent of the area of our country.

Twenty-five per cent of our population lives in counties of which the average density is more than 1,000 people per square mile, in an area

totaling .36 per cent of the United States total.

Thirty-four per cent of the country's population lives in counties having a density of more than 500 people per square mile, in slightly less than one per cent of the total area.

Forty per cent of the population lives in counties having a density of 250 or more people per square mile, in 1.75 per cent of the total area.

The whole western intermountain area, comprising 30 per cent of the total area of the United States, has an average density of less than five people per square mile.

The Mississippi Valley, store-house of undeveloped natural resources, has an average density of 33 people per square mile.

A map showing the distribution of population in each square mile would be revealing. In New York City, 20% of the land area that could be used for business or resi-

dence is entirely vacant. Cook County, Illinois (Chicago) has a population per square mile of 4,368.1. Yet in that county, 113,420 acres (174 out of 933 square miles) are unused "rural tracts" in addition to 563,196 vacant town and city lots (about half of the town and city area.)‡

Canada has an average population of 2.5 people per square mile against 40.4 for the United States.

What an analysis of the distribution of population in "over-populated" England, Italy, Germany and Japan would show is suggested by the known concentration of land ownership in these countries.

* Limits of Land Settlement, a Report on Present-Day Possibilities prepared under the direction of Isaiah Bowman, President of the John-Hopkins University. Published by Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1937.

† Reported by Frances H. Lewis in Ken Magazine, February 23, 1939.

‡ Manufacturers and Merchants Federal Tax League, Chicago, 1933.

