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RACIAL AND NATIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE POPULATION OF CALIFORNIA

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The geographic situation of California, the wide range of environments and economic opportunities which it affords, and the unique processes of its settlement have given this state a more varied population than that of any other. Lord Bryce, in his famous "American Commonwealth," written during the 1880's, observed that:

> "Most of the western states have been peopled by a steady influx of settlers from two or three older states. Minnesota, for instance, and Iowa have grown by the overflow of Illinois and Ohio, as well as by immigration direct from Europe. But California was settled by a sudden rush of adventurers from all parts of the world . . . This mixed multitude, bringing with it a variety of manners, customs and ideas, formed a society more mobile and unstable, less governed by fixed beliefs and principles than one finds in such Northwestern communities as I have just mentioned."

The Northern and Eastern States and the South, as well, have drawn their populations from Europe and Africa. The Southwest, in addition to European stocks and Negroes, has an important element of Latin-Americans. California has all of these stocks, mingled with migrants from every American state, and in addition, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, and peoples from the Islands of the Pacific. Californians have always been people who came from somewhere else. Persons born in California have never, since the Gold Rush, made up as much as half of the total population. In 1930, only one person in every three in California had been born in the state and the natives are even more outnumbered today.

At one time, most of the people in California, not born in the state, were born abroad. Although the number of foreign-born grew to over a million in 1930, the rising flood of native Americans migrating from other states made the foreign-born group a diminishing proportion of the total population. With the restriction of foreign immigration during recent years, the foreign-born population has declined in actual number.

The composition of the foreign-born population has altered greatly in the course of time. Certain nationalities have held the forefront for a period,

then yielded place to new arrivals from other parts of the world. Disregarding the colored racial groups for the moment, the leading foreign-born nationalities in California during the first half century after the Gold Rush were North Europeans: English, Irish, Germans, French, and Scandinavians. These groups represented close to three-quarters of the foreign-born population in 1880, exclusive of the Orientals and Mexicans. About 1880, and to a greater extent after 1900, the Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, Spaniards, and Azores Islanders increased rapidly in number and in proportion to the whole. By 1910, Italians were the third largest foreign group; in 1920 and 1940, they were the largest if we exclude the Mexicans who held the top position in those years. The Russians also increased from approximately 3,500 in 1900 to over 50,000 in 1940. Other Central and Eastern European nationalities increased in like proportion.

As the nationality composition of California has shifted, so has the racial complexion of the state changed color. The Chinese were the first non-white group to arrive in large number. They came during the Gold Rush and continued to come until they numbered more than 75,000 in 1880. That was their high point. For forty years thereafter they declined continuously. After 1920, the number of Chinese began to increase again and by 1940, they numbered about 39,000 but were still little more than half as numerous as they had been eighty years before.

At the peak of Chinese immigration, there were fewer than 100 Japanese in the state. The Japanese did not begin to arrive in large numbers until after 1890. They reached their numerical peak of 97,000 in 1930. Thereafter, they also declined in number and by 1940, there were nearly 4,000 fewer Japanese in California than ten years earlier.

Filipinos did not come in any volume until after 1920. By 1930, there were somewhat more than 30,000 Filipinos in the state, more than 90 percent of whom had arrived during the preceding ten years. Their number remained virtually stationary after 1930.

Approximately 2,000 Hindus immigrated to California during the first decade of this century but less than 1,500 remained in 1940. A few hundred Koreans came about the same time and others followed, bringing their number to approximately 1,100 in 1930 at which level it has remained.

Mexicans have figured prominently in the California population at two widely separated periods. They were the most numerous foreign group during the Gold Rush. Their immigration did not continue, however, and there were not many more foreign-born Mexicans in California in 1890 than there had been forty years before. The second period of Mexican immigration began after 1900, and was tremendously accelerated between 1920 and 1930. In the latter year the Census enumerated a Mexican population in California of 368,000, almost two-thirds of whom were foreign-born. Mexicans were not separately enumerated in 1940. Although a considerable volume of repatriation took place during the depression years, the Mexican birth-rate is relatively high and it is likely that the Mexican

population as a whole declined little, if at all, between 1930 and 1940. The 1940 Census did estimate, from a sample enumeration, a Spanish-speaking population in California in 1940 of 416,000, most of whom are Mexican.

All of the colored racial groups of foreign origin, except the Mexicans, were outnumbered by the Negroes in 1940. Negroes have been present in California from the earliest times. Historians tell us that the first settlers of Los Angeles in 1789 were a mixture of Negroes, Indians, and a few Spanish. However, only a few thousand Negroes came to California in all the years before 1900. They began coming in larger numbers after that time and by 1940, there were more than 124,000 Negroes in the state. Their greatest migration, however, has occurred during the present war. There are probably close to a quarter of a million Negroes in California at the present time.

Through all of this fluctuating, changing pattern of nationalities and races, the only stable element, numerically, has been the Indians. The Census counted a few less than 18,000 Indians in 1860; in 1940, their number was only a few hundred more than 18,000.

The nationalities and races have distributed themselves through the state in very different ways. The foreign-born whites, as a whole, are highly urbanized and concentrated in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Particular nationalities, however, are predominantly rural. More than half of the Portuguese and more than three-quarters of the Azores Islanders have settled in rural areas. The Swiss, Spanish, Dutch, and Danes are all more rural than the general population. At the other extreme are the Poles, Russians, English, and Irish, all of which are more than 80 percent urban.

Among the races, the Chinese, almost wholly rural in the early days of their settlement in California, have become the most urban group in the state. Only a tenth of them have remained in rural areas. Negroes are almost as highly urbanized as the Chinese. At the opposite extreme, as one might expect, are the Indians, nearly four-fifths of whom lived in rural territory in 1940. Filipinos and Hindus are about equally divided between urban and rural. In contrast to the highly urbanized Chinese, nearly half of the Japanese were to be found in rural areas and on farms. The Mexicans, most of whom came to California as rural laborers, had by 1940 shifted predominantly to southern California cities, although a larger proportion of them have remained rural residents than is true of the general population.

From the standpoint of population composition, the rural-farm population contains a considerably larger admixture of foreign-born and minority racial groups than does either the rural nonfarm or the urban population. More than nine percent of California's rural farm people in 1940 were members of minority races, not counting Mexicans. This was more than twice the proportion of those minority groups in the urban population. An additional 14 percent of the rural farm population consisted of whites born in foreign countries, including foreign-born Mexicans.

The many distinct groups which have formed the population of California have brought with them, from their homelands, their particular cultures, they have settled in groups, with their own kind, and have attempted to perpetuate a way of life. Their differing languages, ideals, values, and customary ways of living set them apart and give the different groups an individuality. Only gradually, and in the course of generations do the differences disappear and the distinct groups become indistinguishable from the mass of Americans.

Where only a cultural difference is involved, most people expect it to be dimmed out in the course of time by the processes of assimilation. But in the minds of most white people, the process of assimilation only works its magic within the boundaries of the white race. The non-white groups are regarded as unassimilable. Their differences, in the view of white society, are permanent and unchangeable. "Once a Jap, always a Jap," to quote one distinguished authority. Furthermore, white society does penalize people who are not white. It penalizes them by restricting their competitive opportunities in many directions—in competition for choice jobs, competition for places to live, opportunities for leisure time recreation and in many other ways. The non-white groups are, therefore, involved in a very different problem from that of the nationality and other cultural groups. The latter may look forward to eventual acceptance in the American community on an equal basis. The former are assigned to a fixed position, in the nature of a caste, based on their physical difference, and which no degree of acceptance of American ways of life can alter.

The war has had a terrific impact on the minority racial populations of California and elsewhere. The principle of non-assimilability of colored races was dramatically demonstrated in the case of the Japanese who were identified with the enemy nation and regarded as at least potential enemies of the state. The enemy identification was applied to the racial group and to all persons attached to the racial group, in the military phrase, "All persons of Japanese ancestry." All such were, by military order, removed from California.

The Chinese and the Filipinos have been equally identified and have identified themselves, with their racial homelands, fortunately for these groups, fighting on our side. China's war and the fighting on Bataan have reflected a quite unprecedented prestige on the Chinese and Filipinos in California. Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts testifies to the change in American attitudes. The Filipinos, being almost wholly a male population and concentrated in the military ages, have been inducted into the armed forces to a very large extent. As a result there are today probably not more than half as many civilian Filipinos in California as in 1940.

The loss of Japanese and Filipinos has been more than made up by the migration of Negroes from other states. Barriers to Negro employment have been considerably relaxed in some directions under the pressure of wartime labor shortage. In this war, as in the last, they have been streaming out of

the South to seek new opportunity and new freedom in the North and West.

The status of all the racial minorities is changing; the rigid barriers which have confined them within a corner of the economy, are weakening. Even the Japanese, according to reports from the War Relocation Authority, are finding in the Middlewest and East, opportunities to which they could never aspire in California. But as the minorities find new freedom in some directions, they also find new restrictions and new frustrations. They enjoy a wider range of economic opportunity but many jobs are still closed to them. Among the thousands of Negroes now working in California war industries, for example, one finds very few foremen and supervisors, and very few in the "white-collar" departments. Although Negro workers are now admitted into trade unions once closed to them, they find themselves in many cases, not full members but "auxiliaries," subject to dismissal at pleasure of the white membership. Although they are earning wages never before dreamed of, they cannot use this money to purchase housing except within the overcrowded and sub-standard districts allotted to Negroes.

These are merely a few of the areas in which unrest and tension are developing. The recurrent "zoot-suit" disturbances involving Mexican youth and the excited clamor which is set off whenever the subject of Japanese returning to California is officially mentioned, are sufficient evidence that the current racial tensions are not limited to Negroes.

A pending court action to expel a property-owning Chinese family from San Francisco's racially covenanted Nob Hill, testifies that the Chinese, however beloved, are still expected to stay in their "place;" whether they like it or not.

It is not within the scope of this brief paper to discuss the direction of possible adjustment. There is no question, however, that the relations among our California people of different racial origins are disturbed as they have not been in a long time. They seem likely to acquire an even greater urgency in the period of general readjustment which must follow the end of the war. The necessity for a settlement of these problems which will be reasonably acceptable to all groups, is on the agenda of California's unfinished business as never before.