11-21-1909

Letter From Roland P. Falkner to Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson, November 21, 1909

Roland P. Falkner
Nov. 21, 1909

Mr. Huntington Wilson

I was some ago that you handed me a paper on the restriction of immigration and my constant request to me to express my views upon the main propositions of the paper. By mistake the paper was mislaid, and did not remind me of an obligation which should long before this have been fulfilled. Your request for a return of the paper seems to all back to me and plunges me into an objectionable frame of mind.
No reasonable excuse to allege for my
long silence I can only plead for your
indulgence.

So far as the subject matter is con-
cerned I am not one of those who con-
der the desirability of further restriction of
immigration as a matter no longer open to
debate. I am not yet convinced myself
that it is necessary to put up the tars.
While I recognize that modern conditions
are putting a more strain upon our
force to assimilate I am not certain
that the strain is greater than the strength.

Your paper seems to take for
granted that restriction—probably considered restriction—is much to be desired and seeks to find the most effective method of restriction. So far as the proper method of restriction is concerned, I have long held the opinion that when it becomes necessary an economic test must be preparatory to a literacy test. This State is in the under-lying idea of your own thought. Your position as I understand it is, that if the man who seeks admission is a wage earner he must have of sound capacity. But you do not fill in the details and hence I am as a lose to know how far you must go. That
percentage which is left black is the key note of the situation. As you push it higher or lower, you exclude all wage earners, or you go little beyond existing laws.

If you push the percentage high the scheme is much more unsteady as an administrative measure, than if you push it low. In the latter case the number of applicants would be very large and the work of the American Consuls or acting agents in verifying alleged proofs would be very enervating if it were done properly. The mass of labor would be so great as to incur the danger of a mere perfunctory performance.
I subscribe my opinion that the plan is practicable only in case it can be
confirmed practicable whole in restriction,
such as restriction as would confine
immigration to the highest paid artisans
and wage workers of northern Europe.
Assuming then that you want to
confine immigration to my narrow
limits, the plan suggested seems to
meet the case perfectly.

In writing the foregoing I have
endeavored to give you what you
asked, namely, my exact impressions.
of the plan. I do not flatter myself
that they have any value, but as you
are good enough to ask them, I can
do no less than state them.

Thanking you for the privilege
of reading the manuscript which is
returned herewith, I am

respectfully

Roland P. Falkner