AMERICANIZATION IN TERMS OF GOOD WILL

THE CONFERENCE on immigration and Americanization held in Philadelphia during the week of January 17 took a stimulating turn. In place of platitudinous discussions of the dangers, real and imaginary, attendant upon the traditional open-door immigration policy; instead of a spirit of condescending hospitality toward the immigrant, coupled with a feeling of superiority and a zealous desire to stoop down and uplift the foreigner at our gates, the conference sent forth a message of sincere good will and respect to foreign-born Americans; it welcomed them not only for their sake but for ours; it emphasized Americanization not as a process to be enforced upon the newcomers but as one to be applied to native-born Americans as well.

There were few of the fifty or more speakers at the three general sessions of the conference who did not hark back to this doctrine that "Americanization, like charity, begins at home." But it stood forth most clearly in the words of those who had the closest touch with concrete problems.

There was refreshing candor in the protest of Grace Abbott, of the Immigrants' Protective League, Chicago, against the implied program of the conference to prepare the machinery which would automatically make over Europeans into Americans. The need, she suggested, was not so much for reconstruction of the immigrant as for finding a common level and meeting-place for native-born and foreign-born, where through personal association on terms of equality and mutual esteem, each could receive from the other the best that each had to offer out of a different heritage and experience. She asked, therefore, for a local and personal treatment of the problem, rather than a hard and fast national scheme.

This appeal for a view of the problem which would avoid emphasizing racial and national barriers and would prevent an effort to mold the immigrant upon lines of a fixed and unalterable Americanism, found frequent expression. It was the essence of the message of Mary Antin, whose irresistible appeal for "neighborliness" was a pleasing complement to Miss Abbott's address.

There were addresses, of course, devoted to more specific and concrete topics, such as those of W. H. Wheaton and P. P. Claxton of the federal Bureau of Education; Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post; Robert Bliss, of the Pennsylvania State Library; Jane E. Robbins, of the Jacob A. Riis Settlement, New York; the Rev. Sidney Gulick, of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America; and Chester S. McGowan, of the American International College, Springfield. All these and many more emphasized the need for more practical efforts to spread the use of the English language among immigrants and to provide a systematic and helpful education for them.

Through many addresses there was also a vein of earnest advice to foreign-born residents of the United States to enter fully into partnership with their adopted country by accepting the full rights and duties of citizenship. Occasionally there was a note of alarm against the danger of allowing 3,000,000 aliens, owing allegiance to foreign governments, to continue to live in, yet apart from, America. And once only, a warlike note intruded, when a passage-at-arms between Professor von Mach and Dr. Woods Hutchinson kept the gathering at strained attention for a few moments.

The most remote note of the whole meeting was sounded at the final rally, when Ex-President Theodore Roosevelt pleaded before a mammoth gathering for a vehement and militant nationalism as the end of genuine American policy. The address left in its wake a raging controversy over military preparedness, foreign policy and matters of domestic politics.

An exhibit of the work of foreign-born American artists, which had its formal opening on the first day of the conference, gave a visual demonstration of at least one field in which the influx of foreign ideas and ideals had brought with it no perils.

A feature not on the program of the meeting was the reading of a letter from Frank P. Walsh by Dante Barton, member of the Industrial Relations Committee. "The problem of the immigrant is the problem of the weage-earner," said Mr. Walsh. Yet he had found in the literature of the committee no plan for the correction of bad conditions of employment in the various industries in which E. T. Stotesbury, Samuel Rea, Jacob H. Schiff, Clarence H. Mackay, Howard Elliott, Frank Trumbull, C. H. Markham and E. H. Gary—all of whom he named as members of the Americanization Committee—are interested.

"I cannot agree," the letter went on "that the distribution of literature explaining the advantages of labor organizations . . . is outside of your sphere. . . . If you are determined wilfully to neglect the American trade and labor union as an Americanization influence of first importance, I cannot avoid the conclusion that docile subserviency, not Americanization, is what you desire."

Out of the deliberations of the committee, headed by Judge Clarence L. Goodwin of the Illinois Appellate Court, is expected to come a definite plan by which the work opened by this conference may be continued and extended. The committee's report of the conference and the conclusions of its own deliberations will be laid before President Wilson.

THE SOUTH CALLING A HALT ON TRAMPS

A WIDESPREAD and concerted effort to do away with the "passing on" of tramps and other non-resident poor persons was initiated at a convention of mayors held in Jacksonville, Fla. Of the 200 official delegates present more than half were mayors. In all, there were representatives of nearly 150 cities in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina. All are pledged to secure the enactment of a model passing-on ordinance, and a copy of the ordinance with the full proceedings of the convention will be sent to 500 other cities in the states mentioned.

The ordinance merely authorizes the mayor to sign the transportation rules drawn up by a committee of the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1903, and since signed by more than 600 municipalities, state boards of charity, other public officials and charitable organizations.

The rules provide chiefly that free or charity-rate transportation shall be issued only on satisfactory proof that the applicant has at the point of destination a legal residence, employment or other definite means of support, or friends or relatives who will agree to provide for him; that such transportation shall be clear through to the point of destination; and that each signer shall co-operate with each other to prevent the aimless sending of dependents about the country.

The mild climate has been a factor in drawing tramps to the South and the almost universal practice of passing on by the local poor authorities has made of the whole section a happy hunting-ground for willing idlers. At the same time it has imposed and perpetuated hardships for other poor people, shuttled back and forth between unfriendly communities with never a real destination. The expense of it all has been heavy, and it was brought out at the Jacksonville meeting that there was no net result as each town probably received as many unwelcome visitors from neighbor towns as it sent to them. Atlanta alone among the larger southern cities had signed the transportation rules.

Jacksonville had had a particularly troublesome time because of its situation as the gateway to Florida. Over a year ago, Barry C. Smith, of the New York Charity Organization Society, but at that time secretary of the Jacksonville Associated Charities, endeavored to have the transportation rules signed. The City Council failed to act, but Mayor J. E. T. Bowden became interested, and he it was who called the Jacksonville convention. The expectation is that much will come of it, especially as just before adjournment the convention was organized to meet annually for the discussion of civic matters.