

QUEENSLAND

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
INCREASE OF ALIENS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND.
REPORT

1925

NOT FOR LOAN

1925.

QUEENSLAND.

ALIEN IMMIGRATION COMMISSION.

REPORT

OF

THE ROYAL COMMISSION

APPOINTED TO

Inquire into and Report on the Social and Economic Effect of
Increase in Number of Aliens in North Queensland.

COMMISSIONER :

THOMAS ARTHUR FERRY, Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department.

SECRETARY :

W. H. SMITH.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

BRISBANE :

BY AUTHORITY : ANTHONY JAMES CUMMING, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, BRISBANE.

N.S.C.A.E.
C.R.C.

1925.

QUEENSLAND.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECT OF INCREASE IN NUMBER
OF ALIENS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable SIR MATTHEW NATHAN, Major on the Retired List of His Majesty's Corps of Royal Engineers, having the Brevet Rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in His Majesty's Army, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor of the State of Queensland and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

On the 3rd April last Your Excellency did me the honour of appointing me to be a Commissioner to "Inquire into and report on the social and economic effect of the increase in the number of aliens in the Petty Sessions Districts of Mackay, Proserpine, Bowen, Ayr, Townsville, Ingham, Innisfail, Douglas, and Cairns."

The official correspondence placed at my disposal subsequent to my appointment related to the large numbers of foreign immigrants arriving in North Queensland in recent months, and to the number of breaches of awards committed by aliens. In order to obtain necessary statistical information required in considering the question, before leaving Brisbane I forwarded to the manager of each sugar-mill in North Queensland a circular letter asking for information over a period of five years in regard to:—

- (a) Number and nationality of canegrowers;
- (b) Number and nationality of canecutters;
- (c) Number and nationality of employees on farms;
- (d) Number and nationality of employees engaged on tramway construction work;
- (e) Number of farms, improved and unimproved, that have changed hands from Britishers to aliens during the past five years;
- (f) Place of permanent residence of canecutters.

My request for this information was very courteously and readily complied with so far as it was available by the authorities to whom I applied, and I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Chas. Wickens, Commonwealth Statistician; Mr. J. McConachie, Deputy Postmaster-General; and to the managers of the various sugar-mills in North Queensland. But even with the valuable data furnished by these gentlemen, I have had great difficulty in arriving at figures upon which implicit reliance could be placed.

After giving the question considerable thought in Brisbane, I visited the districts of Townsville, Ingham, Innisfail, Tully, Mossman, Cairns, Gordonvale, Babinda, Ayr, and Mackay, and examined thirty-nine (39) witnesses, including Italians, Greeks, Maltese, Finns, and Albanians.

I also visited several clubs, residences, and business premises of aliens, and a number of schools in which alien children form a fair proportion of the scholars.

In any investigation dealing with foreign immigration in which it becomes necessary to refer to racial differences, it is difficult to avoid giving offence; especially is this so with the variety of races now arriving. It is unnecessary to add that I have no desire to give offence to anyone, but, nevertheless, I have considered it necessary to state exactly what has been conveyed to me in evidence and the opinion formed after careful inquiry and inspection in the districts mostly concerned.

I desire to place on record my appreciation of the valuable assistance given to me by Mr. John Campbell, District Secretary, Australian Workers' Union, Cairns.

With these preliminary remarks, I now beg to report:—

CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA.

The main reasons for the increase in the number of aliens arriving in Australia are:—

1. The action of the United States of America in restricting the migration of Southern Europeans to that country;
2. The propaganda conducted by steamship agents;
(This propaganda flourishes in every emigrant-furnishing country in Europe, and emigration is promoted by foreign steamship companies as a paying maritime enterprise.)
3. The present political situation in Italy, and the prevailing economic conditions in Europe;
4. The advice and assistance of friends and relatives in Australia;
5. The publicity obtained by Australia during the war, and particularly the better conditions and higher rates of pay enjoyed by members of the A.I.F., as compared to other soldiers in the Allied armies.

AMERICAN RESTRICTION.

The rapid increase in the number of aliens arriving in Queensland during the past few years coincides with the period of restriction of alien immigration by the United States. As the result of this action on the part of the United States has been to divert a flow of immigrants to these shores, the reasons which impelled that action are of particular interest to us. They are stated briefly by an American writer to be:— First, that there is a rate beyond which immigration cannot be assimilated; second, that in the last twenty or thirty years this rate has been enormously exceeded; third, that certain old-world races, particularly those from the east and south of Europe, are more alien to Americans and less assimilable generally than the races of north and west Europe.

NATIONALITY OF PEOPLE IN UNITED STATES.

In 1790, when the first national census was taken in the United States, more than nine-tenths of the whole white population, a little less than that of Australia to-day, was of British origin. This factor of unity in the population is referred to by James Bryce in "The American Commonwealth" thus:—

"All spoke the same language. All except a few descendants of Dutchmen and Swedes in New York and Delaware, some Germans in Pennsylvania, some children of French Huguenots in New England and the middle States, belonged to the same race. All were governed by the same English common law and prized it not only as the bulwark which had sheltered them from the oppressions of the Stuart Kings, but as the basis of their more recent claims of right against the encroachments of George III. and the Colonial Office."

There was little racial change in immigration to the United States till 1885, in which year Southern Europeans began to migrate in considerable numbers. In 1900 this form of migration, which previously had been negligible, represented three-quarters of all immigration, and for the year the number of Italians, Slavs, Jews, and Greeks was two-thirds as great as the total number of British, German, Scandinavian, and all other people received from the north and west of Europe in one hundred and thirty years.

According to the Census Bureau of 1920 the percentage of the British section of the population had decreased from over 90 per cent. to 49.9 per cent., while the representatives of the foreign white population had increased to 50.1 per cent.

In the year 1921 the 3 per cent. quota Act was introduced. This Act provided that the number of immigrants of any nationality should not exceed 3 per cent. of the number of foreign-born persons of that nationality residing within the United States according to the census of 1910. It was subsequently ascertained that this quota admitted too great a number of Southern Europeans, and in 1924 the Act was amended to provide that until 1st July, 1927, the quota shall not exceed 2 per cent. of any nationality residing in the United States in the year 1890, and that after 1st July, 1927, the total number of migrants from the old world to the United States shall not exceed 150,000 annually.

In the year 1907 the number of arrivals from Europe to the United States reached a total of 1,285,349. The first quota law reduced the number of possible arrivals to 357,803, and the 1924 Act made a further reduction to 169,083.

The figures in the following table are striking and show the great reduction effected by the new Act in the quotas of such countries as Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Greece, Russia, Roumania, and Jugo-Slavia :—

Country.	Quota on 3 per cent. basis.	Quota on 2 per cent. basis.	Reduction.
Austria	7,342	1,190	6,152
Czecho-Slovakia	14,357	2,073	12,284
Esthonia	1,348	302	1,046
Greece	3,063	235	2,828
Hungary	5,747	688	5,059
Italy	42,057	4,089	37,968
Latvia	1,540	317	1,223
Lithuania	2,629	502	2,127
Poland	30,977	9,072	21,905
Portugal	2,465	674	1,791
Roumania	7,419	831	6,588
Russia	24,405	1,992	22,413
Spain	912	324	588
Jugo-Slavia	6,426	935	5,491
	150,687	23,224	127,463
Belgium	1,563	709	854
Denmark	5,619	2,982	2,637
Finland	3,921	345	3,576
France	5,729	4,078	1,651
Germany	67,607	50,329	17,278
Great Britain	77,342	62,658	14,684
Netherlands	3,607	1,837	1,770
Norway	12,202	6,653	5,549
Sweden	20,042	9,761	10,281
Switzerland	3,752	2,281	1,471
New Zealand	80	167	(increase 87)
Australia	279	121	158
	201,743	141,921	59,822
Other countries	5,373	3,938	1,435
	357,803	169,083	188,720

The Congress Committee, in reporting on this matter, said :—

“ The most troublesome administrative difficulty encountered since the enactment of the 3 per cent. law has been the enforcement of the numerical limitation. The actual physical counting of human beings arriving by ship and train has been a task of magnitude. Mistakes have been made. Steamships have raced to port in efforts to land passengers within time limits.

“ Delays and disappointments have brought hardships. Distressing appeals for relief in individual cases have assailed the officers charged with enforcement of the law. Senators and representatives have been besought to aid in nullifying the statute or in mitigating its force.

“ All these troublesome obstacles are confidently expected to be eliminated in the event of the enactment of the new Bill. The Bill contains provisions for enforcement of the numerical limitations, not by counting immigrants upon their arrival but by counting immigration certificates issuable at American Consulates overseas. The plan, briefly, is to issue for each nationality a number of immigration certificates to be placed in the hands of

intending immigrants as they obtain American visas upon their passports. Each certificate has a validity of two months to the time of taking ship. Therefore, the intending immigrant, having obtained his passport, his immigration certificate, and his visas, is at liberty to proceed to the United States in the full knowledge that he will not be debarred solely by a quota limitation. He must, however, undergo further examination at the port of entry, and to be able to pass under the provisions of the 1917 Act. It is expected that the number of those who cannot pass will be greatly reduced by reason of the preliminary investigation. There should be no arrival of 'excess quota' cases, and there need be no racing of steamships. If this Bill reduces to the minimum the number of arriving aliens that must be turned back, it will have accomplished one of its important purposes."

The Commonwealth Government advises: "It seems to be impracticable for Australia, which has no foreign service, to enforce a quota law."

Another significant passage in the report of the United States Congressional Committee is the following:—

"Decisions by the Committee to limit admissions to quota immigrants to 2 per cent., based on census figures for 1890, instead of 3 per cent., based on census of 1910, was reached after long and careful consideration of every element of the entire immigration problem. An impelling reason for the change is that it is desired to slow down the stream of the types of immigrants which are not easily assimilated.

"Naturalisation does not necessarily mean assimilation. The naturalisation process cannot work well with the continued arrival in large numbers of the so-called new immigration. The new type crowds in the larger cities. It is exploited. It gains but a slight knowledge of America and American institutions. It has grown to be a great undigested mass of alien thought, alien sympathy, and alien purpose. It is a menace to the social, political, and economic life of the country. It creates alarm and apprehension. It breeds racial hatreds which should not exist in the United States, and which need not exist when the balance shall have been restored."

As was intended, the Act of 1924—known as the Johnson Bill—further restricted the flow of Southern Europeans, and there was in consequence an immediate further increase in the number of such migrants to Australia.

In the absence of regulation or some form of selection it is therefore reasonable to assume that the number of aliens arriving in Australia will rapidly increase, and that the majority of these new arrivals will be those who are regarded by the United States Government as not easily assimilated, and therefore undesirable as citizens.

At the same time it must be remembered that while the Johnson Bill aimed at a drastic reduction in the number of all foreign migrants, it also endeavoured to avoid discrimination between the nationals of any one country and thus exclude many people who, in this country, have proved themselves to be desirable settlers.

Sir George McWhae, formerly Agent-General for Victoria, recently stated that quite a fleet of Italian ships were now on the point of being finished for the purpose of bringing migrants to Australia. These people would have to pay £8 per head and would bring their own food and sleep on the decks of the vessels.

Fairchild in his book "Immigration a World Movement and its Significance," in referring to the methods adopted by shipping agents for encouraging emigration (p. 140), states:—

"Many, perhaps the majority, of the agents are themselves returned immigrants who give glittering accounts of their experience in America, while many make a practice of advancing money to the immigrants to pay their passage, taking a mortgage on their property for an amount far in advance of that actually furnished. These debts are met with a strange faithfulness by the immigrants even when they have been woefully deceived and cheated."

Immigration which is inspired by such stimulation as this is far from being as desirable as that which is natural and spontaneous. It follows no natural law and responds to no economic demand in this country.

These travelling agents or "runners" are often free lances as far as appearances go. It is very hard to establish any connection between them and any transportation company.

On this subject the Congressional Committee on Immigration says:—

"It does not appear that the steamship lines as a rule openly direct the operations of these agents, but the existence of the propaganda is a matter of common knowledge in the emigrant-furnishing countries, and, it is fair to assume is acquiesced in, if not stimulated by, the steamship lines as well."

In giving evidence at Ingham, an Italian farmer from North Italy, Guiseppe Cantamesso, said, "I know one chap who went home from Australia not very long ago. I do not know under what system he worked, but he made out a couple of hundred application forms for people to come here. He did it for nothing in several cases, and for about £1 each in other cases."

Another Italian witness in Cairns, who recently returned from a trip to Italy, stated: "There are in Italy people who have an interest in getting as many immigrants into Australia as possible, and these people have been spreading reports that there was plenty of work in Australia at very high wages, and that immigrants could make a lot of money in a short time."

ALIEN MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA.

The Commonwealth Publicity Department advises that the number of Italian and Greek migrants to Australia during the thirty years prior to 1901 averaged 150 per annum, and that at the 30th November last this rate had increased to 6,854 per annum. There has since been a still greater annual increase.

The figures show that, during the three and a-half years ended March, 1925, the migration to Australia of Italians and Greeks has been greater than at any period during the last forty years.

The census of April, 1921, showed that the number of persons in Australia not born here or in the British Isles or New Zealand, was 139,073—or slightly over 2½ per cent. of the total population. The number owing allegiance to foreign governments was 45,529—or .06 per cent.

During the three and a-half years ended September 30th, 1924, the excess of arrivals over departures of foreign-born immigrants numbered 16,148, a figure equal to about 11.6 per cent. of the total foreign-born persons who were in Australia when the 1921 census was taken.

The following table particularises the arrivals from April, 1921, to September, 1924 (three and a-half years):—

EXCESS OF ARRIVALS OVER DEPARTURES OF EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES—APRIL, 1921, TO SEPTEMBER, 1924.

Nationality.	Males.	Females.	Total (3½ years).
British	65,644	36,275	101,919
Italian	5,768	1,141	6,909
Greek	1,742	545	2,287
United States	1,242	935	2,177
Maltese	384	38	422
Swiss	361	135	496
Danish	203	76	279
Dutch	163	101	264
Russian	163	161	324
French	103	159	262
Norwegian	103	17	120
Swedish	102	30	132
Germans (minus)	7	63	56
Other white races	2,005	415	2,420
Total	77,976	40,091	118,067

The United States law came into effect on 1st July, 1924. In the light of this fact the following table, which is self-explanatory, is interesting:—

EXCESS OF ARRIVALS OVER DEPARTURES OF VARIOUS EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES—1st JULY, 1924, TO FEBRUARY, 1925.

Nationality.	July.	August.	Septem-ber.	October.	Novem-ber.	Decem-ber.	January.	February.	Total for 8 months.
Finns	74	68	43	39	6	39	1	31	301
Greeks	137	257	143	182	205	478	307	-74	1,635
Italians	194	259	599	418	462	856	366	343	3,497
Maltese	5	83	16	71	46	100	22	44	387
Jugo-Slavs	46	122	205	81	239	317	488	-45	1,453
Serbs .. .. .	..	27	3	43	34	..	..	..	107
Albanians (not separately re-corded)	..	..	..	28	78	..	42	-28	120
Total	456	816	1,009	862	1,070	1,790	1,226	271	7,500

The average number of arrivals per month from the countries mentioned during the eight-months' period indicated was, therefore, about 938, or at the rate of 11,256 per annum.

It has been pointed out that during the three and a-half years ended September, 1924, the excess of arrivals over departures of foreign persons was 16,148—at the rate of 4,614 per annum. The above table shows that they are now arriving at the rate of over 11,000 per annum.

NOMINATION OF ITALIANS.

The Commonwealth Government advises that there is an understanding with the Italian Government that passports to Australia shall not be granted to any Italian immigrant unless he is nominated by a resident of Australia who is prepared to look after him on arrival here, or unless he will have on arrival at least £40 capital.

Signor Renato Melano, Italian Consular Agent at Townsville, states that Italian immigrants, to be able to obtain a passport for Australia, must be nominated by a resident of the Commonwealth, who undertakes, and is bound by a statutory declaration, to find them work, to provide for their needs, to pay for medical attention when sick, and generally to see that the persons he has called will not be any burden whatever to any charitable or benevolent institution.

However, the evidence shows that this undertaking, called an "Atto di Chiamata," or "Act of Call" is quite useless in its present form. The declaration may be made, and has been made, by persons in Australia who are themselves not in employment and have little prospects of obtaining work. It is forwarded to the nominee in Italy, who must present it to the Italian authorities in order to obtain his passport. The document then remains in Italy.

If the only object of this "Act of Call" was to ensure that the nominee would not become a charge upon the State, the statement that it is useless and incapable of enforcement might be answered by the reply that as a matter of fact no recent Italian immigrant has been a charge upon the State, so there never has been any need to enforce these undertakings. However, the declaration reads:—

"I wish..... to come as soon as possible to join me in Australia and I declare that I am perfectly able to supply for his needs, etc."

An immigrant arriving in response to a genuine "Act of Call" would, in most cases, be coming to disinterested friends or relatives, but it is obvious that owing to lack of inquiry and responsibility in regard to the undertaking the form may be used for purely selfish interests. A person anxious to obtain his passport is willing to pay for this form, and apparently others are willing to trade in it. An Italian farmer stated in evidence that a number of applications had been filled in and sold in Italy for £1 each. Further, much of the sworn evidence of Italians shows that many of the new arrivals here are admitted to the Commonwealth without this "Act of Call."

On this question a successful Italian farmer at Ingham in his evidence states:—

"I think there is something wrong with the present system. Young men come here, and after they have been here two or three months, although they do not understand the conditions, they send home for friends although they themselves have no work to do. That should be stopped, and only men who understand exactly the conditions and can foresee whether there will be employment or not for the new arrivals, and who are prepared to foot the bill if there is no employment, should be allowed to nominate others. I do not think that immigration should be suspended altogether, because I think the country is going ahead, and there is always room for some more people."

In regard to the position in the Herbert River District he said:—

"I think there are a few too many without any more coming."

ARRIVAL OF FOREIGNERS.

During the past six months foreigners have been arriving in the sugar districts in North Queensland in such numbers that it is obvious that they cannot all be employed in the sugar industry, in which there is already an over-production, and a consequent limitation of the area to be cultivated and a limitation of necessary labour. While possibly sufficient labour has been waiting for months in the districts in the hope of obtaining work in the crushing season, the arrival of hundreds of Southern Europeans, unable to speak the English language, with very little money, and looking for employment, is creating an anti-foreign feeling which may lead to serious trouble in the near future.

Immediate trouble is averted by the fact that in most cases these new arrivals disappear into the country, and for the time being are living in the barracks on the farms. Where necessary they are supplied with food by their countrymen. Large numbers of them have relatives who have been in the country for some time.

There is no doubt that in return for food and shelter these men do odd jobs about the farm and hope to obtain more profitable employment in the district at a later date.

If aliens continue to flock into the sugar districts in search of employment, the practice of permitting them to work for food is likely to increase; the standard of living will be reduced, and the effect socially and economically will be unfavourable to the workers already there, be they British or foreign. It is obvious that the greater the numbers arriving the more aggravated will be the evil.

One witness gave evidence that he had visited twenty (20) farms in the Tully area a few days before the arrival of the Commission, and on these farms there were a hundred foreigners employed—a large proportion of whom were new chums—and eighteen British.

In the Herbert district the late wet season has prevented the usual planting, and this year a considerable number of additional workers will be required to carry on this work. It is anticipated that 500 or 600 men will be found employment in planting and preparing the land during the next six months.

It is contended by many unionists that the farmer gives preference to these late arrivals with the hope of exploiting their ignorance of the English language and the conditions of the Sugar Field and Sugar Mill Workers' and Cooks' (State) Award.

In many instances contracts have been entered into by foreigners for the clearing of scrub land for cultivation on a promise that payment for the work shall be made from the proceeds of the first crop, perhaps in the following year. While the work is being carried on the employees receive food and shelter only, and in the event of the crop being a failure would probably have to go without payment for the work performed.

In most cases these agreements are contrary to the provisions of the award mentioned. It is, however, difficult to succeed in a prosecution where the employer and employees are foreigners and connive at the evasion of the law.

On behalf of the farmer it is contended that this practice is not new and has resulted in much land being cleared and cultivated by men with little capital who otherwise would have been unable to take up farms.

The award provides that "The ordinary working hours, both for wages men and piece-workers, including cane-cutters, shall not exceed eight hours on any one day, and shall be worked, Mondays and Saturdays inclusive, between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Complaints are numerous, and ample evidence has been furnished to show that this provision of the award is often not observed, the principal offenders being foreigners. It is stated that foreigners frequently work on Sundays, and that they often commence before 6 a.m. and work till late at night.

The provision that the eight hours should be worked between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. was to enable the workers to cease work during the hottest part of the day, but it also enables the prescribed hours to be exceeded. In contract work there is an inclination on the part of both British and foreign workers to exceed the hours in order to increase the daily earnings.

The remedies suggested are a variation of the award to fixed hours, say from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.; or, in the alternative, to limit the hours of labour from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. or from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

EFFICIENCY OF BRITISH WORKERS.

It is generally admitted that the British workers are the most efficient, and that to obtain employment a foreigner will undertake to do the same amount of work in a day that a British worker can do, and that this is equivalent to an agreement to work longer hours, which he subsequently does without complaint.

The new Settlers' League of Australia, in an article in the "Edinburgh Review" dealing with the efficiency of the white worker in the sugar industry—which it points out presents a very complete physical test of endurance under tropical conditions—states that on the whole the British gangs in Queensland head the list against all others, and the next best would be men from the North of Italy. It is worth noting that these latter hailed originally from the cool mountains of Piedmont and Lombardy and are much superior to Southern Italians and the Mediterranean races generally.† There is sufficient evidence to show that many of the new arrivals are of the latter type here referred to. Their behaviour in the trains in crowding out the carriages and jostling women and children is adding to the objection to foreigners generally, and their standard of living obviously is very low. According to the evidence of one witness the principal offenders in this respect are Maltese, Sicilians, and Greeks.

MALTESE.

Maltese are permitted to enter Australia at the rate of 1,200 per annum, and many of them come to North Queensland. They are hard-working and honest, but mostly uneducated, and their standard of living is inferior to that of the British or Italian. One Maltese witness in Cairns mentioned a case where a countryman of his was induced to work for less than award rates because he could not read or write or speak the English language. He considered the Maltese should have a representative in the Union to see that Maltese are not cheated out of what was due to them for wages.

In a pamphlet issued by the Maltese Government entitled "The Maltese Emigrant and the Secret of His Success," the Maltese is described as a "docile and conscientious worker" and this description is fairly accurate.

The arrangement with the Commonwealth Government provides that illiterate Maltese will be allowed to enter Australia provided they obtain special permission, on the application of relatives and friends residing in Australia who are prepared to find work for them on arrival.

From the 1st July, 1924, to the 28th February last, 566 Maltese left Malta for Australia.

Emigration from Malta to Canada has practically ceased. The Canadian law provides that British subjects are permitted to land in Canada if they are born or naturalised in Great Britain, Ireland, New Foundland, New Zealand, Australia, or the Union of South Africa. Maltese are not included in this provision. However, Maltese may be admitted under certain conditions, one of which reads:—

(b) *Bona fide* farm hands with reasonable assurance of employment.

Commenting on this provision the Superintendent of Immigration in Malta states:—

“In theory this concession would appear to leave the door open for at least one class of Maltese, in considerable numbers, by which to enter Canada. In practice, as I took occasion to point out in my last report on the same question, its application is so difficult and complicated that it cannot be operated at all. Meantime the number of applicants who have come forward for migration to Canada is considerable, and many were compelled to deviate their steps to Australia or other destinations.”

The report issued by the Maltese Government contains the following under the heading “Appendix E, Conditions of Entry into various Countries” :—

AUSTRALIA.

“(11) Domiciled Persons ;

(c) Age is no bar to their re-entry into Australia ;

(d) They are admitted unconditionally even when suffering from some form of disease.”

So that migrants that Canada will not admit at all are accepted by Australia and on re-entry whether aged or diseased, and the fact is advertised by the Maltese Government.

At Mackay a witness stated that Habana in that district is often referred to as New Malta. He had visited several farms there recently, and with only one exception all the employees were newly arrived Maltese who had no previous experience as sugar-workers, and he was of the opinion that they connived with the employers to evade the provisions of the Sugar Award. There had recently been a number of prosecutions against foreigners for breaches of the industrial laws in that district, and fines to the amount of £150 had been imposed by the Court.

I inspected a Maltese lodging-house in Innisfail and found about twenty (20) men living in one room. Every room was crowded with bunks with just enough space between to enable the occupants to move about. The practice is to charge from 1s. to 2s. per night for a bed and the men obtain their food elsewhere. A number of places are occupied in a similar way by Greeks.

GREEKS.

The Greek residents of North Queensland are generally of an undesirable type, and do not make good settlers. They live in the towns and carry on business in cafés, fish shops, boarding-houses, and other less reputable ways. They are not agriculturists and add nothing to the wealth or security of the country. They engage in no useful work that could not be better performed without their assistance.

In company with an officer of the Police I visited a number of their boarding-houses and clubs, which were generally in a filthy condition. On the average their standard of living is lower than that of other foreigners. Socially and economically this type of immigrant is a menace to the community in which he settles, and it would be for the benefit of the State if his entrance were altogether prohibited.

During a visit to the State School at Babinda my attention was drawn to a boy of about thirteen years of age of Greek parentage. The same night, in company with Mr. Campbell, District Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union, I visited a number of Greek clubs. In one of these places, sitting at a table with a number of men playing cards—apparently gambling—I saw the same boy. During the day he associates with Australian children in the State School, and at night lives with his countrymen in one of these so-called clubs, which are really a very dirty class of boarding-house. Such is the environment of some of these alien children.

Since January, 1924, seven convictions for sly grog selling have been recorded against Greeks in that area, being 50 per cent of the total number of convictions recorded for this offence.

It is stated that in the modern economic struggle the displacement of one race by another takes place at the bottom, and that the effective weapon of displacement is a lower standard of living. The Greeks have given a further illustration of this theory by displacing the Chinaman from the part of Innisfail known as "China Town."

Whether as an employer or employee the Greek as seen in North Queensland is equally unsatisfactory. Evidence was furnished that constant complaints were being received from girls employed in Greek restaurants of improper suggestions having been made to them by their employers, and that this was frequently the cause of their having to leave their employment.

Where they enter the sugar industry it is stated that Greeks organising cane-cutting gangs have accepted as much as £10 from each individual member of the gang as a fee for employment.

Recently a Greek firm, Hastas and Co., engaged about forty men (Albanians, Greeks, and Italians) to cut firewood for the mill at Babinda. They have been cutting since February last and have not yet received any payment. Hastas has now disappeared and neither the employees nor the union representative was, at the time of my inquiry, able to locate him. The employees believe that it is his intention to remain away until the time has elapsed within which it would be possible for them to sue for their wages under the Industrial Arbitration Act. In regard to this case, evidence was given by an Albanian and a Greek who had both previously been in America, and after visiting their own country had endeavoured to return, but were rejected. They were both of a particularly poor type,

and it was certainly to the advantage of America to get rid of such aliens and to the disadvantage of Australia to receive them. The Albanian stated that in his own country he received a wage of 10s. per week, with which he kept a family of five.

I visited one of the camps of these wood-cutters at Merriwinni. It consisted of a hut made of bags. Inside were beds of saplings with grass thrown over them, and the place was no better than a black's camp.

During the inquiry of the Commission several instances of rejects from America arriving in Queensland came under my notice. Their residence in America was usually in some industrial centre where they were engaged in some menial occupation which only added to their unfitness to become useful citizens of the Commonwealth. Their admission to Queensland can be of no possible benefit to the country.

ITALIANS.

Numerically the question of alien immigration to North Queensland is largely a question of Italian immigration, and some reference to the early settlers of this nationality is therefore of interest.

On the 7th April, 1881, about 200 Italian immigrants—the survivors of the unfortunate Marquis de Ray expedition to New Ireland—arrived in Sydney. They were practically destitute and were unable to speak English. Contrary to the wishes of the immigrants it was decided to disperse them throughout the State and to absorb them into the existing population. In the following year one of them, named Rocco Comminitti, took up a conditional purchase farm of 40 acres near Woodburn, at what was subsequently known as "New Italy." He was joined by a countryman named Antonio Pezzutti, and then by other members of the expedition as quickly as they could save the necessary money to get there. At the end of 1888 a total of 46 holdings of an aggregate area of 3,030 acres were under occupation and the population had increased to 250. The land was very poor and heavily timbered and had been passed over by local settlers. However, the Italians set to work and by great industry and thrift succeeded in clearing some of the land and making it productive.

In the early stages good returns were obtained by cutting sleepers and supplying timber for various purposes, the residue being used by the settlers to erect buildings for themselves. Within three years their houses had been built and a school erected, and by the end of seven years the holdings had all been securely fenced and small areas put under grapes and other fruits, as well as vegetables. A noticeable feature was the thorough tillage given by the settlers, small areas well worked being preferred to larger blocks on which they could not bestow the same amount of care.

As time rolled on a barren forest gave way to a comfortable looking settlement with clean and tidy dwellings, good and substantial fences and out-buildings, some of them being of an especially good and durable character, while splendidly tilled and well-cared for gardens, orchards, and vineyards met the eye on every side.

From inquiries it is clear that at no stage have the separate properties maintained the holders. Besides working in the sugar industry, the settlers and their families engaged in timber-squaring and grass seed gathering, and in any other work available.

To-day there are only about a dozen Italian settlers living within the area, and less than half a dozen are known to be earning a living from their property.

The school is still being carried on and there are thirty-four pupils on the roll—twenty-two are English children, and of the remaining twelve some are Anglo-Italians.

It is stated by those who have been closely associated with New Italy life that while the industry and thrift of the original settlers was very marked, some of the full-blooded members of the present generation are most indolent.

As opportunity offered many of the settlers and their descendants removed to better favoured localities, and they are now scattered throughout the North Coast. Most of them have done well and many to-day are comfortably off and able to retire.

In his report for the year 1898 the Queensland Agent-General states:—

“It will be remembered that in 1890 a number of families of the peasant class from Piedmont and Lombardy were taken to the colony by Signor Fraire of Townsville and located in the Wide Bay district and on the Herbert River. These people have done so well that they have sent for their families and friends and there are some forty nominations now in this office waiting for the nominees to get passages from Italy without the expense of coming to London to embark.”

At this time a Mr. William Finucane was Commercial Agent for Queensland in Southern Europe, and he reported that since his stay in Italy he had given much attention to the question of Italian immigration and found that he could obtain many very desirable peasant farmers who were willing to emigrate provided some inducements other than cheap land could be offered to them. He also stated that he could get any number of splendid girls from North Italy for domestic servants. Expert cultivators of grape vines and experienced wine makers could be procured if good wages were guaranteed. Mr. Finucane also informed the Agent-General that the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in Italy desired to know what facilities the Queensland Government would offer if a colonisation scheme were put on foot.

In December, 1891, the first shipload of Italian agricultural labourers arrived in Queensland, numbering in all 335. Of these, 266 landed in Townsville—153 being for Ayr and 113 for the Herbert River.

With the exception of twenty-six married couples and six single women all were classed as single men. The ages of the men mostly ranged from twenty-two years to forty-five years.

The majority of these immigrants entered the sugar industry as cane-cutters and subsequently became cane farmers. They have made their homes and reared families in North Queensland, and have no desire to return to Italy, except perhaps to visit the place as the land of their birth. I met one of these early settlers in Townsville. He arrived at Ingham as a boy over twenty-five years ago, was educated at the State School, and has been very successful as a cane farmer. Since his arrival he has never been further south than Townsville, and was only then making his first trip to Italy, where he expected to remain for six months before returning to Queensland. At Innisfail a witness stated that he had arrived with Signor Fraire's party in 1890, and had since worked as a cane-cutter and farmer at Mourilyan, Mulgrave, and again at Mourilyan, opening up new country in each case, and has now fifty-two relatives in the district, and all are doing well.

These early arrivals were from Northern Italy and were of a selected peasant class, and generally were life-long cultivators of the soil. For some years many of the Italian immigrants to Northern Queensland were relatives of those brought out by Signor Fraire. They knew exactly where to go and what to expect on arrival. They quickly conformed to the laws of the State and the British standard of living, and were without friction absorbed in the social and economic life of the country.

The general opinion is that the Northern Italian is a very desirable class of immigrant. He is thrifty and industrious, law abiding, and honest in his business transactions. Those arriving in the past have generally been trained agriculturists, many of whom have become successful farmers. It is said that the Italian is not a pioneer and prefers to take up farms already made. This view is no doubt due to the fact that in recent years the majority of the Italians buying farms have, of necessity, bought farms already improved. However, it is not disputed that in the early days in the Herbert River, and in the Mulgrave and Mourilyan areas, the Italians did clear dense scrub and cultivate the land. In the latest area opened—the Tully—the following is the record of improved and unimproved farms bought by Italians:—

Improved	..	..	..	..	7
Unimproved	..	..	..	..	29

As regards the Italian as a unionist, the following testimonies were given by three experienced members of the Australian Workers' Union, and similar references were given by others:—

- (1) In my opinion the Italian is a man who will stick up for his rights. He does his work well. I should say the Italian is as good a unionist as any other class of worker.
- (2) The Italian members of the union are loyal to the union. They are anxious to carry out the awards and laws of the country. The Italian does not wish to work more than eight hours a day. Every member of the union demands the full rate laid down by the award.
- (3) As far as I know the Italians do not undercut the rates of the Sugar Award.

The following evidence in regard to the Italian's standard of living is from representatives of the Australian Workers' Union:—

- (1) I have had many a meal with the Italian cutters, and although his class of food is not the same as ours, the Italian worker lives well. There is plenty of food on his table. I take it his standard of living is as high as the British. Some of the houses of the Italians are very nice. Of course some of the houses of the new settlers are pretty rough. Some Britishers have to rough it till they get on their feet.
- (2) There is no doubt that the Italian lives well.
- (3) I would say that the standard of living of the Italian after he has been out any length of time will compare favourably with that of the British, but the standard of living of recent arrivals is very low.
- (4) The Northern Italian conformed to the industrial and also to the social standards of the British.

The evidence also shows that the Italian's children are well cared for and sent regularly to the primary schools, and later, when his means permit, to the secondary schools.

However, as pointed out by Fairchild in his book "Immigration a World Movement and Its Significance," the population of Italy is divided into two distinct groups—the Northern and the Southern Italians. The latter are shorter in stature and more swarthy. The distinction between the two groups has, for years, been recognised by immigration authorities in the United States and they have been listed separately in the statistics. In Southern Italy the wages of all classes are very low and living conditions harder than in the North, and, consequently, there is a greater desire to emigrate.

The illiteracy test of immigrants taken in the United States over a number of years in regard to these two groups is as follows:—

Northern	..	..	..	11.4 per cent. illiterate.
Southern	..	..	..	54.2 per cent. illiterate.

Unfortunately the majority of the new arrivals in Queensland appear to be from the South, many of them being Sicilians. It is true that Signor Melano in his evidence stated that for the period July, 1924, to March, 1925, 1,040 Italians came from the North and 945 from the South. He estimated these numbers from the "Acts of Call" produced to him, which give the birthplace of the nominees. However, another Italian witness considered that for every one that comes from Northern Italy two come from Sicily, and judging by the appearance of the new arrivals this estimate is fairly correct. It must be remembered that many come without the "Act of Call" referred to by Signor Melano.

The Southern Italian is more inclined to form groups and less likely to be assimilated into the population of the State. The increasing number of Southern Italians arriving in the United States was one of the factors that led to immigration restriction in that country.

Already a number of foreign clubs have been formed in the North. A prominent Italian who has been many years in Queensland stated that in the early days it was very seldom one found a camp of Italians only, but that to-day his countrymen were forced to seek the company of each other owing to the treatment meted out to them by the British. These are regrettable facts, but the blame does not lie altogether with the British worker, whose main fault is that he is not sufficiently discriminating, and to-day frequently refers to all Southern Europeans as "Dagos." This, naturally, is bitterly resented by Italians and Spaniards who have resided in this country for years, and who, for good reasons, have always been respected by their British neighbours.

The remedy lies in a better selection and a better distribution of immigrants.

During recent years, particularly since the year 1921, different types and more various races have arrived in ever-increasing numbers—Sicilians, Greeks, Maltese, Jugo-Slavs, Albanians, Russians—who have mostly congregated in the sugar districts of North Queensland. Italian emigration to other countries has always been very large, and in 1913 reached a total of 872,528.

It is certain that the growing animosity against all foreigners is due to the different and inferior types arriving as well as to the fact that more are entering the sugar industry than can be readily absorbed. The

following extract from a letter from the Secretary of Labour, James J. Davis, addressed to President Harding, favouring the selection of immigrants to the United States, might be applied with equal force to Australia and is applicable to the present position in North Queensland:—

“No one will dispute the high character and important service to America of the great majority of immigrants who have come to us in the past. Their record is written clearly in our political and economic history. But I, for one, am confident that the foreign-born citizen, or native-born citizen of the foreign stock, will be quick to join with me in protecting our present and future population from evil—mental, moral, or physical—influences, whether these influences come to us from abroad or develop among us at home. The undesirable individual who comes to us from other countries of the world lessens the opportunity of the worthy immigrant as well as the opportunity of the native-born. The mental, moral, or physical demoralisation which he may represent is as great a menace to the worthy immigrant and his children as it is to the citizen whose progenitors have been in this country for generations.”

Mr. Davis further says:—

“It is a short-sighted policy to seek cheap labour through immigration. It has been my experience since the days I worked in the mills that cheap labour is expensive labour, both for the industry which employs it and for the community which houses it.”

Comparatively, with but few exceptions, the immigrant of to-day is essentially a seller of labour seeking a more favourable market. In dealing with this aspect of the question, in an article in the “Century Magazine,” Glen Frank states:—

“The economic motive is perhaps the poorest credential for an immigrant.

“In earlier days when men came to carve a permanent home out of this unsubdued land the economic motive gave us adventurous immigrants, men of valour and vision. But to-day the economic motive gives us largely unskilled labour in search of quick returns in high wages. The ease of immigration to-day means a lower type of immigrant.”

Workers who for years have sacrificed much to obtain favourable industrial conditions naturally resent the intrusion into their midst of large numbers of immigrants, many of whom are of a hopelessly inferior type, easily exploited, and who are as great a menace to the better class foreign immigrant as they are to the British. The admission of races that can never make good Australian citizens only widens the breach between the Australian and better type of foreigner. It doubles the difficulties of assimilation, and results in the creation of racial organisations and breeds racial hatreds which should not exist.

When more foreigners than can be absorbed crowd into any one industry in any district and remain there the result is bound to be a lower standard of living generally for the worker, and to bring about industrial conditions to which the Australian would strongly object. Such conditions would probably be better than the immigrant enjoyed in his native country, and he therefore gladly accepts them, and the British

worker moves out in disgust. This has occurred in all basic industries in the United States, and will surely follow here if indiscriminate admission of foreigners to the Commonwealth is continued. The likeliest to survive in an unregulated economic competition of races is the one least advanced in culture; the one whose demands in respect to comforts and decencies are lowest. The most desirable types of immigrants would be unwilling to enter the competition of races industrially inferior to them, and if the more tractable—more docile and less educated—of the European races continue to arrive we must expect a diminution in the numbers of others more desirable. In that event, if, as stated by the writer of the article on behalf of the New Settlers' League previously referred to, the possibility of our race permanently establishing itself within these regions depends ultimately on the vigor of the native-born stock, the outlook would not be very bright.

Another aspect of foreign settlement is the inflation of land values in the sugar districts, mainly due to the high prices offered for farms by Italians. The full Bench of the Court of Industrial Arbitration of Queensland, in referring to the prosperity of the industry in its judgment in August last, stated:—

“It is true that farms are changing hands at ‘fabulous’ prices in certain districts. The ‘fabulous’ prices seem to be confined to the Herbert River, Innisfail, Babinda, and Cairns districts, and to be further confined to purchases by the foreign element which has come into the industry during recent years. They are not ordinary dealings in land. In practically every instance a merely nominal deposit is paid and the balance of the purchase price is payable over an extended period. Really they are dealing in crops, and sometimes the same property is resold several times over before the original vendor is paid. Most of these transactions cannot be regarded as a means of determining the true value of the land, and in the opinion of those competent to judge they are calculated to lead to disaster before very long.”

In this connection, the following table is of interest:—

LIST OF TRANSFERS OF FREEHOLD LAND IN SUGAR DISTRICTS TO THE VARIOUS NATIONALITIES INDICATED DURING THE YEARS 1915-1925.

British	..	..	..	..	..	..	695
Italian	..	..	..	..	..	..	114
German	..	..	..	..	..	..	59
Greek	..	..	..	..	..	..	32
Chinese	..	..	..	..	..	..	40
Indian	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
Assyrian	..	..	..	..	..	..	7
Russian	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Scandinavian	..	..	..	..	..	..	25

In the meantime additional farms are passing into the hands of Italians. In the Mossman area for many years there were not more than five or six Italian farms, and the cutters were mostly British. During the present year, however, the number of Italian farms has increased to fourteen. In this district the farms carry shares in the mill, and in time it is probable that the Italians will have complete control of the mill and will also control the employment of the cutters required.

The Italians in the sugar districts certainly work together better than the members of any other race. This may be the result of previous experience, as there are three forms of combined cultivation of the soil

followed in Italy. The only form approximating that adopted here is called the "Unitary Type." The "International Labour Review," Vol. X., No. 5 (November, 1924), states:—

"Cultivation of the soil by a number of persons acting together to plough, sow, reap, divide the crops, and share the risks in common is notoriously an old experiment and notoriously a difficult one. So great are the difficulties that doubts are often thrown on its being feasible as a practical proposition. Yet it has recently been done in Italy by a number of co-operative societies of land workers, who, pressed by the unsatisfactory conditions under which they were earning their living, preferred to associate themselves together and run the risk of becoming farmers—for a risk it is—rather than continue to be at the mercy of economic conditions which reduced them to practical poverty."

MIGRATION TO FRANCE.

During the first half of 1924 over 124,000 Italians, mostly farm hands, settled in France. The French attitude towards the Italian labourers is one of satisfaction. The Italians have proved by far the most efficient of all foreigners recently arriving in France. They brought with them new ideas which in many cases were decided improvements on some of the methods which the French farmers had followed for generations.

FINNS.

Among the Northern Europeans a number of Finns have recently arrived in the Cairns district. A few of these are farmers, others are field workers, carpenters, and mechanics. Generally they are a well educated, clean living, and industrious people.

Nestor Karhula, speaking on behalf of the Finns in the Cairns district, stated that he left the university when he was twenty years of age and joined the army as a Lieutenant. On the advice of the Finnish Consul in Sydney he subsequently left for Australia, and is now managing a sugar farm at Redlynch. He said:—

"Most of the Finns came to Australia with the intention of taking up land and settling here. Many of my countrymen already have their families here, and a few more are on their way out. All we desire is to get from the Government a few thousand acres of wild scrub land somewhere in the North of Queensland or elsewhere. If this is granted the Finns will never become a burden on the Government, and they will never increase the unemployed, but, on the contrary, will do their small part to get this wide and fertile country opened up and developed."

SOUTH OF TOWNSVILLE.

There are not yet many alien farmers or workers in the sugar districts south of Townsville. In these districts the sugar farms are smaller in area. The tonnage of cane produced, per farmer, is generally much smaller. In the Mackay district the average is about 400 tons. The gangs of cane-cutters are also smaller, the average being two or three men to the gang as against seven to nine further North.

ATTITUDE OF A. W. U.

The representatives of the Australian Workers' Union stated emphatically that they did not object to the aliens on racial grounds. Their objection was solely to the crowding of workers into the sugar

districts where employment was definitely limited, and the necessary labour required for the season already over-supplied. They would raise the same objection if hundreds of unemployed Queenslanders were dumped down in these districts. The objection is a perfectly reasonable one, and is supported by many Italians, both farmers and workers.

GENERAL.

Great difficulty was experienced in obtaining accurate statistics in regard to the nationalities of the farmers and workers in the districts visited. There is no record even of the number of aliens in the State other than that obtained at the census taken perhaps every ten years. The Commonwealth Government is able to furnish the figures regarding the number of arrivals in Queensland direct from overseas, but there is no record of those arriving in Queensland by rail after landing in the other States.

The Railway Department has kindly furnished the following particulars in regard to aliens leaving Brisbane for the North from January to April of the present year, which are approximate only. They include only those who have gone in considerable numbers at the one time:—

January	..	..	..	..	..	341
February	..	..	..	..	..	161
March	..	..	..	..	..	802
April	..	..	..	..	..	328
						1,632 second-class passengers
						22 first-class passengers
Total	..	..	..	..	..	<u>1,654</u>

The official figures supplied by the Commonwealth Government showing excess of foreign races arrivals over departures for January, February, and March were:—

January	..	..	..	..	..	23
February	..	..	..	..	..	140
March	..	..	..	..	..	505
						<u>668</u>

Yet during this period over 1,300 aliens left Brisbane for North Queensland.

The following records of canegrowers during the past five years in the districts mentioned have been supplied by the various mill managers:—

CANE GROWERS.

HERBERT RIVER DISTRICT (VICTORIA AND MACKNADE MILLS).

Nationality.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
British	174	189	210	198	192
Italians	114	122	135	171	179
Spanish	7	7	10	9	11
Maltese	..	..	..	3	4
Japanese	2	2	2	2	2
Kanaka	1	1	1	1	1
Other nationalities	..	..	1	1	2

These figures show that in 1924 for the first time the foreign cane-growers were in a majority in this district.

INNISFAIL DISTRICT (GOONDI, MOURILYAN, SOUTH JOHNSTONE, AND TULLY MILLS).

Nationality.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
British	251	249	284	314	362
Other nationalities (chiefly Italians)	143	154	169	216	254

(Particulars of separate nationalities were not available.)

CAIRNS DISTRICT (HAMBLEDON, MULGRAVE, AND BABINDA MILLS).

Nationality.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
British	265	292	353	398	436
Italian	29	26	31	46	69
Other nationalities ..	40	43	46	44	58

In many cases farms have been subdivided into smaller areas, thus increasing the number of cane-growers. In cases where the full amount of purchase money has not been paid the farm will appear in the mill's books as British owned, whereas it may be partly paid for and occupied and worked by Italians or other foreigners.

The number of farms, improved and unimproved, that have changed hands from British to alien occupiers during the past five years is as follows:—

	Improved.	Unimproved.	Total.
Herbert River District	26	..	26
Innisfail District	34	29	63
Cairns District	70	6	76
			165
Less farms that have changed from alien to British occupiers (improved) .. .. .	..	..	18
			147

CANE-CUTTERS EMPLOYED.

Nationality.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.	1925.
Herbert River District—						
British	61	78	64	15	13	13
Italian	153	229	410	485	562	575
Other nationalities ..	95	138	15	..	8	16
Innisfail District—						
British .. .. .	..	..	..	..	151	162
Aliens (chiefly Italians)	..	..	..	..	626	539

(Complete figures for previous years not available. Mourilyan cutters for 1925 have not yet been selected, but have been estimated on the same basis as last year's engagements.)

Nationality.	1923.	1924.	1925.
Cairns District—			
British	401	371	301
Aliens (chiefly Italians)	453	447	395

(About eighty more cutters are yet to be selected for this district, and it is expected that the majority of them will be British.)

For years past British cutters have come into the sugar districts for the cutting season, and at the end of the season have left the district again for their homes in other parts of the State or Commonwealth. On the other hand the foreigner who goes into the sugar areas remains there if he can possibly obtain work, as he has no interest in any other part of the Commonwealth. With the increase in the number of foreign farmers the foreign cutter or field worker has been able to make his position more secure, and has gradually displaced the British worker. This position has been accentuated as the alien population increased. The practice of forming gangs according to nationality developed, and even the British cutter residing in the district finds it more difficult each year to obtain a place in the gangs; while those who leave the district generally find aliens installed in their former positions on their return. A number of the more successful British cutters have taken up farms during recent years. In the past it appears to have been the invariable practice to hold cutting contracts open for competition the following year. Now, owing to competition, in some cases payments are made to obtain contracts which are let for the following year.

MILL EMPLOYEES.

Very few foreigners are at present employed in the mills, though recently the numbers have slightly increased. For one reason, it would not be safe to employ about machinery men who do not understand the English language. Many of the British residents in the district prefer to obtain regular employment at the mill rather than to compete annually for a place in a cane-cutting gang.

Twenty Japanese are employed on tramway construction work in connection with the Mourilyan Mill; thirty-six for the Pioneer Mill, and thirteen for the Inkerman Mill.

The following were the registrations by foreigners for work at the Ingham Labour Agency from 24th April to 12th May last:—

Italians	..	..	..	..	..	..	89
Other foreigners	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	99

Applications for sustenance received at Ingham during the same period were:—

Italians	..	..	..	..	..	..	8
Other foreigners	..	..	..	..	..	..	9
Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	17

At Cairns, from 1st January, 1925, to 8th May, 1925, the following foreigners were drawing sustenance allowance:—

Italians	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
Greeks	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
Russians	..	..	..	..	..	..	5

BIRTHS OF ALIENS.

BIRTHS OF ALIENS REGISTERED IN DISTRICTS OF CAIRNS AND CARDWELL DURING THE YEARS 1922-1924:—

	1922.	1923.	1924.
Italians	83	108	144
All other Aliens	53	68	96
	136	176	240

The total number of births registered was 2,714, showing that about 20 per cent. of children born in these districts are of foreign parentage.

During this period seventy-five marriages of Italians to other foreigners were recorded, and only five marriages of Italians to British.

At Macknade the Cane Inspector stated that it was only during the last two or three years that Italian women were coming into the district, and that there had been more marriages during the past twelve months than there had been during the previous seven or eight years. In other districts similar evidence was given in regard to the number of Italian women arriving during recent years.

Persons who took the oath of allegiance for naturalisation purposes during the three years mentioned included eighty-two Italians, thirty-six Spaniards, and twenty-seven Greeks.

SCHOOLS.

The following table shows the number of children of British and foreign parentage attending the State schools at the places mentioned:—

District.	Enrolment.	Italian.	Other Foreign.	Total Foreign.
Babinda	254	17	27	44
Innisfail	312	15	39	54
South Johnstone	149	5	20	25
Ingham	186	3	..	3

The number of children of Italian origin in all the State schools in the district of Ingham is about 190. As the majority of Italian families live on their farms their children would attend the schools away from the main centres of population.

On the average about 85 per cent. of the Italian children in our State schools are Australian born, and there is every reason to believe that they will make good Australian citizens.

The other foreign nationalities attending the schools include Greeks, Spaniards, Maltese, Jugo-Slavs, Poles, Russians, Syrians, Chinese, Malays, Japanese, and Cingalese.

I am advised that on the whole the alien school children are intelligent, regular in attendance, and anxious to learn. They are clean and well dressed, and mingle amicably with the Australian children.

REMITTANCES TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Much has been said in regard to the amount of money sent home by the immigrants. However, it must be remembered that the majority of the new arrivals are single men, or married men who have left their families behind, and much of the money sent out of the country is for the support of families and relatives, and also for the purpose of bringing relatives to this country. There is no evidence that money is sent regularly out of the country for any other purpose. I am advised that it is seldom that other than small sums are remitted through the banks.

Information has been obtained from the Deputy Postmaster-General in regard to the value of money orders issued on foreign countries by the Post Offices at Ayr, Babinda, Bowen, Cairns, Ingham, Innisfail, Mackay, Mossman, Proserpine, and Townsville for the year 1924. By far the largest sum was sent by Italians, which for the year amounted to £19,979.

EFFECT OF IMMIGRATION.

The early migrants from Italy and Spain rendered valuable assistance in opening up the country in the sugar areas. They were of a suitable type and came only in sufficient numbers to be easily absorbed in the social and economic life of the community. They quickly conformed to the laws of the country and to the British standard of living. Their children attended the schools in their districts and to-day many are not distinguishable from the Australians with whom they associate. The apparent prosperity of the people, and the substantial improvements noticeable in the business premises and businesses, which are mostly owned by British residents, in such towns as Ingham, Innisfail, and Cairns, must be credited in some degree to the work of the foreign immigrant, who, by his labour, contributes to the wealth of the country.

While these remarks apply to past immigration, the immediate effect of the present rapid increase in the number of aliens in North Queensland is the creation of an anti-foreign feeling, which is likely to increase in intensity if such migration is not controlled or regulated.

Although many of the immigrants now arriving will make desirable settlers if their labour can be diverted to other forms of agriculture in the North, or to other districts, others are undesirable from every point of view.

Among the industries suggested for the occupation of the new arrivals are the cultivation of bananas, pineapples, citrus fruits, dairying, pig-raising, and cotton-growing.

A few of the Italians who recently arrived in this State have already started mixed farming on land in the vicinity of the Townsville-Ingham Railway. Others are now employed at wine making in the Roma district.

In Innisfail one Italian farmer of great experience stated that the lemon industry in Italy was one of the wealthiest in the world, and he thought that with the right class of people the lemon industry could be made a very profitable one in North Queensland.

In regard to cotton-growing, an interesting test was made recently in America. Stone, A Mississippi planter (Records for 1908, p. 183), experimented on his estate in the Yazoo to test the relative efficiency of Negroes as against Italians who were new to cotton and unused to the local conditions. Nevertheless, the Italian proved more successful than the Negro to the extent of 115.8 per cent. per head and 69.8 per cent. per acre cultivated.

The necessity for restricting immigration to European races that can be assimilated has already been mentioned in this report. Fairchild says that the most efficient test of entire assimilation is that of full inter-marriage. If marriage might take place between any man and woman in the country without suggesting difference of race or ethnic origin to either contracting party or their families it is safe evidence of complete assimilation. However, it is the proportion of foreign-born to native-born which determines the assimilating power of the nation.

SUGGESTIONS.

I suggest that the Commonwealth and State Governments might give consideration to the matters referred to hereunder:—

- (1) The regulation and control of migration from country of origin to distribution in Australia, with particular regard to the nationality and fitness of the immigrant, the number arriving at any one time and for any locality.

The arrival of large numbers of aliens, unable to speak the English language, and unacquainted with our laws and industrial conditions, in districts where there is already a surplus of labour, can only lead to industrial trouble and to a number of individuals being thrown upon the State for support. It is desirable that aliens be not permitted to arrive in any one district in such numbers as to become a majority of the workers in such district. When this happens the first step in the direction of assimilation—some knowledge of the English language—becomes unnecessary. Further, it invites strife and racial disturbances, and leads to the formation of alien groups, each one organised for purposes of its own, and all anti-British in sympathy and outlook.

(2) The System of Nomination.

The Commonwealth Government advises that there is an understanding with the Italian Government that passports for Australia shall not be granted to any Italian immigrant unless he is nominated by a resident of Australia who is prepared to look after him on arrival here, or unless he has at least £40 capital.

Experience has shown that the first condition is nullified by misuse of the present form of nomination, and that the monetary requirement is of little value. The declaration to be responsible for the nominee should be made before some official whose duty it would be to satisfy himself that the declarant is in a position to carry out his undertaking. The original declaration should be filed in the Immigration Office, and a certified copy handed to the applicant. The sums of £10 and £40 required as landing money for the admission of immigrants may, in a few cases, add to the probability of the alien being able to support himself for a time. However, it is generally borrowed for production to the authorities and returned by the immigrant immediately upon his arrival in the Commonwealth. This condition might be abolished and the declaration with safeguards as above referred to insisted upon in each case.

(3) The Selection of Migrants.

Consideration should be given immediately to the racial stock of the immigrant. The number of many of those now arriving should be reduced and in other cases altogether prohibited. There should be a selection of the type of immigrant that will assist rather than hinder the building up of superior social and economic conditions in this State.

(4) Deportation of Convicted Aliens.

Action should be taken in all cases to deport from Australia, after service of sentence, every alien convicted of any serious offence. If possible such deportation should be at the cost of the nominee and the shipping company bringing such alien to the country.

(5) The necessity of keeping a Record of all Aliens in the Commonwealth and in each State.

(6) Stricter Medical Examination of Migrants.

In regard to the medical examination of migrants on arrival, some further action appears to be necessary. On the 23rd March last an Italian, unable to speak English, was removed from the train at Bundaberg and committed to the Asylum for the Insane at Goodna. The evidence disclosed that the patient was a recent arrival from Italy, and that between Fremantle and Brisbane he tried to jump overboard and had been placed under restraint for several days on the boat. Yet, apparently, he was allowed to land without objection.

(7) The Transfer of Surplus Migrants.

The unemployed migrants in any district, if possible, should be diverted to other districts and given an opportunity of engaging in some productive enterprise other than the growing of sugar-cane.

(8) Foreign Clubs.

The encouragement of foreign clubs in a British community is not desirable. Such organisations assist in promoting what has been described by the United States Congressional Committee as an undigested mass of alien thought, alien sympathy, and alien purpose. They encourage the migrants to retain the customs, speech, and traditions of a foreign land. Leading Italians have expressed the opinion that these clubs are not beneficial. In Cairns one witness said, "I never go near the club. I think they would be better off without it. The Italian Club hinders them from speaking the English language. For myself I want to be Australian as much as I can, and when I got married (and my wife was an Italian) I told her we must always speak the English language in the home, and I speak it to my men as much as I can. I have two children and I speak English to them all the time. I want them to have an English education and to grow up to be Australians, and I know plenty of Italians who say the same."

At the present time our foreign immigration appears to be largely induced and controlled by selfish and unscrupulous interests entirely outside Australia, and the question for consideration is whether it shall continue to be controlled by such interests or by a responsible Government in Australia.

I have, &c.,

T. A. FERRY,

Commissioner.

Price, 9d.]

By Authority: ANTHONY JAMES CUMMING, Government Printer, Brisbane.