

# Second International and Immigration

InDefenseOfToucans

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## 1 Introduction

I see people today claim that caring about issues such as immigration is some distortion by the modern left that has abandoned class issues. This position I think comes from general historical illiteracy, the left has always considered immigration an important issue. Even among the chauvinistic Second International it was considered important and very pro-immigration views were the norm. This is going to be a bit different from my other videos, I am going to give a breakdown of some of the people involved in this debate in the second international, but the main body of this is going to be an exchange between delegates at a Congress in 1907 discussing the issue.

## 2 The Delegates

Diving in lets take a look at some of the delegates. Apologies ahead of time for my inability to pronounce things.

Manuel Ugarte was a representative from the Argentinian Socialist Party, when WW1 broke out he took an anti-imperialist position against the war for this he was removed from the party and drifted away from Socialism.

Morris Hillquit who would be a delegate from the American Socialist Party. He was born in Riga, Latvia to a family of German speaking Jews. He went to a Russian school due to the limitations on Jews in the Russian Empire meant he was not able to attend a German school. In 1886 he would emigrate to New York. In 1887 the following year he would join the Socialist labor Party, and become active in its Jewish section, helped setup Newspapers appealing to Jewish immigrants and publishing things in Yiddish. Though he expressed he would have preferred to organize amongst "americans" and disliked the ethnic separation with the SLP. Eventually Hillquit would fight with Daniel De Leon and formed an anti-deleon faction and eventually split and that split would join with Victor Berger and Eugene V Debs to form the Socialist Party of America, while in the Socialist Party he ran for Mayor of New York and for congress several times unsuccessfully, and was generally considered part of the parties right wing.<sup>1</sup>

Hillquit I find an actually very interesting person, don't agree with him, but if people want it I might do a longer video on him, let me know in the comments.

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<sup>1</sup>N.F. Pratt. *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist*. Contributions in political science. Greenwood Press, 1979. ISBN: 9780313205262, pp. 1-93.

Charles Rappaport Was born to a Jewish Family in Tsarist Russia. He was active in the Russian revolutionary movement before being forced into exile, he would become naturalized in France and contribute to many socialist journals. He was active in the Second International and was an opponent of WW1, while initially critical of the Bolsheviks he would join the French Communist Party and the Third International he eventually would resign in 1938 in response to the trial of Bukharin.

*József Diner – Diner would be the representative from Hungary, was a prominent Hungarian Social Democrat.*

Wilhelm Ellenbogen Founding member and delegate from the Austrian Social Democratic Party, pacifist during WW1, joined the Social Democratic government in Austria after the war, eventually was forced to flee Austria during the rise of fascism.

Tojiro Kato A representative of the short lived Japan Socialist Party which existed for a brief period between 1906-1908, it fell apart and shortly after Japanese Socialism would be pretty much destroyed following the High Treason Incident which was an plot to the assassinate the Japanese Emperor, this caused a brutal crackdown on leftists in Japan. After that occurred he went onto run a clinic for the poor.

Julius Hammer a representative from the Socialist Labor Party, I actually had a hard time finding out a ton on him, most information comes from short descriptions in articles and things about his son who is a very interesting person. Julius Hammer was a Russian Jew who lived in Odessa before immigrating to the USA and living in the Bronx where he ran a medical practice. He would later go on to help found the Communist Party USA, in 1921 he would be arrested for performing an abortion.

### 3 Background of the Debate

Now you know a bit about the delegates who's speeches we will be reading a portion of, but I feel we need to cover a bit of backstory of exactly why this occurred and it starts within American Socialism.

At this time in American Socialism there was two main parties the Socialist Labor Party with Daniel De Leon as its leader, and what started as a dissident faction from the SLP led by Morris Hillquit and merged with Victor Berger's and Eugene V. Deb's Social Democratic Party to form the Socialist Party. Also remember at this time Social Democrat meant Marxist, Lenin regarded himself as a Social Democrat, so don't attach our modern understandings of Social Democracy. Now Victor Berger is someone we will talk about later specifically his response to this congress, and I would hope most of you know who Debs is.

During the oughts of the 1900s there was growing desire to get the American Federation of Labour on the side of the Socialist Party and voting for them, but the American Trade Union movement was extremely racist and a major issue for them was specifically Asian immigration. To win the support of the leaders of the AFL would mean promoting a restriction of immigration from Asia, but this was an issue for the Socialist Party as the Second International broadly was pro-immigration and against restrictions on it. There was to be a congress in 1904 and both Morris Hillquit and Daniel De Leon acted as representatives at the congress. Hillquit along side delegates from Holland and Australia submitted a resolution saying they would support their governments attempt to exclude

people of "backwards races"<sup>2</sup>

Now Wikipedia claims to have the text on this resolution as you can see here, you may pause to read it. However it lacks a citation for it, and it seems to imply Daniel De Leon was the author of sorts. Every source I have says he was pro-immigration and there is evidence he was, not to say he was not racist, he opposed combating lynching as that was "petite bourgeois issue", but he did not support this resolution. The Socialist Labour Party under De Leon was actually attacked by the Socialist Party as being an immigrant party so I don't think he had a part in drafting this and Wikipedia is misrepresenting his views. My best guess is someone got it from a book that has it that is quoting De Leon reporting on the resolution and it is him quoting it but I don't know for sure.

I actually can't confirm the language of the resolution, the books I have that cover it while mentioning a few lines from it all the citations result in a dead end at just another summary.

The 1904 congress decided to shelve the issue until it could be brought up more fully at the next congress. In the intervening years the Japanese Socialist Party became aware of the attacks on Japanese and Chinese in America and then sent a letter calling on them to take a stronger position on this.

Even though I would hope most of you are aware to some extent to horrible conditions that Asian immigrants were under at this time I want to provide a brief overview of the laws and things and the conditions of Asian immigrants at this time, first in 1875 Congress trying to bypass a treaty banned people where were coming to work in the US and women who were migrating to become prostitutes, of course the way this was implemented it ended being really a ban on women all together, and later law would fully ban women. The goal of banning women was so this population would die out, this was not the only time the US did this Women from Philippines were also banned. It was also at this time impossible for a Chinese person to become a naturalized in the US. There was also lynchings of Chinese and other Asian migrants. For example one of the worst mass lynchings was in 1871 in Los Angeles. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act bared most Chinese immigrants. Initially supposed to be temporary it was renewed in 1892 and 1902, it would be partly repealed in 1943, but it was just replaced with a system that restricted Chinese immigration to essentially nothing and that would not be abolished until 1965. I am providing a brief overview and not really getting into the depth of this horrible racist policy, you should do some further reading on this.

All of this was just a start to a broad opposition and targeting of Asian immigrants in general, in the period following the Chinese Exclusion Act organizations like Asiatic Exclusion League would be formed, the Knights of Labor also ramped up with anti-Asian sentiments. They directly participated in violent acts on immigrants. Like the 1885 expulsion of Chinese people from Tacoma Washington, as well as the Rock Spring's Massacre which resulted in the death of 28-50 Chinese Miners carried out by White miners who were mostly involved with the Knights of Labor. The excursionist movements argued that Japanese immigrants as being untrustworthy without morals as well as scare about "race mixing". After 1905 the Russo-Japanese War much of this racist propaganda started to focus on the idea of invading "Asian Hordes" as part of aid of an eventual Japanese invasion of the west coast. This sort of dual loyalty thing has

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

been applied to many groups in many countries, one modern example of this sort of rhetoric can be seen today with Chinese students being seen as agents of China and there being calls to ban them.

So It is important to know the American Labour movement was very racist and either in the case of some groups directly led the massacres and lynchings, or simply ignored it and kept their unions white only.

This was the background that caused the Japanese Socialist Party to write a letter to American Socialists basically asking them to quit being so racist and do something about this and come to the aid of the Japanese and Chinese Workers. This was published in The Socialist Party Official Bulletin Volume 3 January 1907. I am not going to read the whole thing to keep this thing short, but a key party.

"The Socialist papers of America have not been quite clear in their general attitude toward the Japanese expulsion question, and comrades of Japan are asking whether or not American Socialists are going to be true to the exhortation of Marx "Workingmen of all countries unite!" or whether they are encouraged contention and division on the ground of race prejudice

...

We believe that the expulsion question of the Japanese laborers in California is much due to racial prejudice. The Japanese Socialist Party, therefore hopes that the American Socialist Party with endeavor to bring the question to a satisfactory issue, according to the spirit of international unity among workingmen. We also ask the American Socialist Party to acquaint us with its opinions as to this question"

This would go unanswered. In this same issue I think I might have found a translated reprint of the amendment proposed at the 1904, the issue is the proceeding paragraphs explaining what it is in full is damaged on the scan. It is part of a call from Hillquit for the party to draft a resolution for the 1907 Congress as issues of immigration will be talked about there.<sup>3</sup> In March the National Executive Committee adopted it and following that in April the National Committee of the Socialist Party adopted it with 46 voting yes and only 3 voting no and 11 abstained.

I am going to read the demands portion of their resolution they were to submit to the Stuttgart Congress This can be found in The April 1907 edition of The Socialist Party Official Bulletin.

"Fully recognizing the above consideration, the Congress, therefor declares it to be the duty of the Socialists and organized workingmen of all countries: 1. To advise and assist bonafide workingmen immigrants in their first struggles on the new soil: to educate them to the principles of Socialism and trade unionism: to receive them in their respective organizations and to collect them in the labor movement of the country of their adoption as speedily as possible. 2. To counteract the efforts of misleading representations of capitalist promoters by publication and wide circulation of truthful reports of the labor conditions of their respective counties especially through the medium of the international bureau. 3. To combat with all means at their command the willful importation of cheap foreign labor calculated to destroy labour organizations, to lower the standard of living of the working class, and to retard the ultimate realization of

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<sup>3</sup>I. Kipnis and Columbia University. *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912*. Modern reader. Columbia University Press, 1952, pp. 276-277.

Socialism.

The Congress class upon the Socialist representatives in the Parliaments of the various countries to introduce legislation along the general lines laid down in the resolution, as well as legislation tending to secure immigrated workingmen full civil and political rights in the countries of their adoption as speedily as possible. The Congress leaves it to the various national organizations to apply the principles herein announced to the specific needs and conditions of their respective countries”

Gone was the language of ”backwards races”, now don’t think this is because the American Socialists had a change of heart, I think it is obvious that this was very well thought out to be as palatable to the international congress after the very negative reaction they got to the 1904 proposal. But this was the resolution unaltered to my knowledge they submitted to the 1907 Stuttgart Congress. Now let us go look at some of the debate on this at the 1907 congress. I am pulling the bits from John Riddell’s Lenin’s Struggle for a Revolutionary International.

## 4 The Debate

Manuel Ugarte a representative from Argentina

”We Argentine comrades raised the question of immigration and emigration at this congress for the following reasons. We want to combat only artificial immigration: that is, immigration carried out by the capitalist government agencies to obtain cheap labor to compete with organized workers. Our comrades also demand measures against the shipping companies’ exploitation of emigrants. This is not a racial question, and the resolution is not anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese. Argentina should be open to all workers. But workers should be advised of the working and living conditions of any countries which they wish to emigrate. The Argentina comrades are proposing two resolutions to this end. One demands that emigrating workers be informed about the conditions of work, the other demands that the progress of naturalization in the different countries be made easier so that workers can immediately acquire political rights in their new place of residence....”

Morris Hillquit a representative for the United States

”Immigration and emigration pose a very difficult, serious problem. Our resolution in no way infringes on the principle of internationalism, which has always been our guide in the United States. there are several kinds of immigration; the first is natural immigration, which arises from the very nature of the capitalist economy. For these immigrants we demand full freedom, and we consider it the workers’ duty to assist the poor among them. Another kind of immigration must be sharply distinguished from the first. Basically it amounts to capitalism’s importation of foreign labor cheaper than that of native-born workers. This threatens the native-born with dangerous competition and usually provides a pool of unconscious strikebreakers. Chinese and Japanese workers play that role today, as does the yellow race in general. While we have absolutely no racial prejudices against the Chinese we must frankly tell you that they can not be organized. Only a people well advanced in its historical development, such as the Belgians and Italian in France, can be organized for the class struggle. The Chinese have lagged too far behind to be organized. Socialism is by

no means sentimentalism. A fierce struggle rages between capital and labor, and those who stand against organized labor are our enemies. Do we want to grant privileges to foreign strikebreakers, when they are locked in a struggle with native-born workers? If we fail to take measures against the importation of Chinese strikebreakers, we will thrust the Socialist workers' movement backwards. While the French resolution undermines the principle of class struggle, ours holds it high. WE do not insist on its every word, but we hope you will adopt a resolution with its general approach."

József Diner-Dénes representative for Hungary

"Those countries that cannot be organized today will be organized tomorrow. Moreover in backward countries this evolution proceeds more rapidly than it did in countries that developed earlier, such as England and Germany. Only ten years ago our Hungarian workers emigrating to America were considered unorganizable. Today, only a few years later, they are being organized and are inspired with the spirit of socialism. You want to erect protective barrier around the workers. This will land you in the same fiasco as have tariff-building efforts of capitalists. If the wage question were merely one of supply of demand, we would have to oppose the importation of agricultural machinery, since it had replaced more workers than the Japanese and Chinese, especially in the Eastern European countries. We must permit completely free immigration and emigration. A great many American workers are wage conscious and but not yet imbued with a proletariat class consciousness. Of course we must fight against the abuses that stem from the mass importation of workers for the capitalist' benefit, but through explanation and organization. A good method would be the press the establishment of a minimum wage where possible through political means, otherwise through trade union struggle."

Charles Rappaport a representative from France

"We cannot accept Hillquit's talk of predestined strikebreakers. So long as a worker has not acted as a strikebreaker, we treat him as a comrade. We too want to take a stand against immigration organized by the capitalists to break contracts, but not by fighting against the workers involved."

Wilhelm Ellenbogen a representative from Austria

"The discussion is moving in two opposed directions. Some speak for the interests of the country of immigration and others for those of the emigrants. No reconciliation appears possible between the two points of view.... But we must combine them and make provisions for both sides. This is best done by excluding from the outset measures unacceptable to Socialists, such as guild like and discriminatory laws. I hope Comrade Hillquit will not be offended, but I can not accept his resolution because it is not clearly formulated. We should avoid distinction such as those between "natural and "unnatural" immigration which are slippery and hard to define. However, we do have a number of positive measures, in which the main tasks fall to the trade unions. The unions should reach out to the countries of emigration and educate the emigrants there, as the German trade unions have done in such exemplary fashion. They must also try to prevent the export of strikebreakers. Most important, the trade unions of the country of immigration must make special efforts to attract the immigrant workers. Here I find it most regrettable that many American trade unions make it difficult for immigrants to join. Social legislation poses a second set of tasks. The proposal of Diner-Dénes to demand a minimum wage should be supplemented with one for a limit on the hours of work. WE must also

demand supervision of recruitment, and above all, regulation of conditions on the emigration ships. A requirement of certain air space per person in the cabins would make Chinese immigration in its worst for impossible, since their transportation would no longer produce a profit....”

Tokijiro Kato a representative from Japan

”As the representative of the Japanese Socialists, I must take the floor on this very important question. When the Americans exclude us from California they gave us two reason: first, that Japanese workers were depressing the wages and living standards of the indigenous workers, and second, that we were taking away their opportunity to work. I disagree with this. Not only the Japanese but also the Italians, Slovaks, Jews, and so forth do this. So why is it only the Japanese are being excluded? The race question obviously plays a role here, and the Americans are clearly being influenced by the so-called yellow peril. The history of the United States confirms this opinion. Another factor is that the American capitalists want to flatter their workers. The Japanese are under the heel of capitalism just as much as are other peoples. It is only dire need that drives them from their homeland to earn their livelihood in a foreign land. It is the duty of Socialists to welcome these poor brothers, to defend them, and together with them to fight capitalism. The founders of socialism, above all Karl Marx, did not address themselves to individual countries but to all humanity. International is inscribed on our banner. It would be a slap in the face to socialism if you were to exclude the poor, exploited Japanese.”

Julius Hammer representative from the United States Socialist Labor party ”There is no middle course in this question of immigration and emigration. Either you support restriction of immigration, or energetically combat it. Hillquit’s resolution is an attempt at compromise that misses the mark. I especially oppose its third point that envisages possible restrictions on the immigration of Chinese and Japanese workers. This is completely anti-socialist. Legal restriction of immigration must be rejected. Nothing can be gained for socialism thorough legislative action, or through collaboration with the bourgeois parties.(The speaker cites several examples of how racial hatred in American blinds the workers and drives them to acts of violence) The Japanese and Chinese could be very effectively organized. They are not as unskilled as you might suppose. They are becoming quite well acquainted with capitalism and are learning how to fight it. I ask that you not approve any legal restrictions on immigration and emigration. We must create a great nation of the exploited.”

## 5 Outcome

The Congress would not adopt Hillquit/Socialist Party’s resolution, though they would not fully endorse the Socialist Labor Party’s position of 0 legal restrictions on immigration which is about the same as the modern slogan of open borders. The bits in the resolution on minimum wage would be removed by Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg.

Now I was able to find the resolution in German, but after some searching I found The Weekly Worker of the Communist Party of Great Britain actually published an English translation of it online. I will include a link to this in the description if you want to read it and see their article on it.

But here is what the Congress adopted on this question, and I am going to

read it in full because I haven't given up on the idea of making short videos.

"The congress declares:

The immigration and emigration of workers are phenomena that are just as inseparable from the essence of capitalism as unemployment, overproduction and workers' underconsumption. They are often a way of reducing the workers' participation in the production process and on occasion assume abnormal proportions as a result of political, religious and national persecution.

The congress does not seek a remedy to the potentially impending consequences for the workers from immigration and emigration in any economic or political exclusionary rules, because these are fruitless and reactionary by nature. This is particularly true of a restriction on the movement and the exclusion of foreign nationalities or races.

Instead, the congress declares it to be the duty of organised labour to resist the depression of its living standards that often occurs in the wake of the mass import of unorganised labour. In addition the congress declares it to be the duty of organised labour to prevent the import and export of strike-breakers. The congress recognises the difficulties which in many cases fall upon the proletariat in a country that is at a higher stage of capitalist development, as a result of the mass immigration of unorganised workers accustomed to lower living standards and from countries with a predominantly agrarian and agricultural culture, as well as the dangers that arise for it as a result of a specific form of immigration. However, congress does not believe that preventing particular nations or races from immigrating - something that is also reprehensible from the point of view of proletarian solidarity - is a suitable means of fighting these problems. It therefore recommends the following measures: I. For the country of immigration

1. A ban on the export and import of those workers who have agreed on a contract that deprives them of the free disposal over their labour-power and wages.

2. Statutory protection of workers by shortening the working day, introducing a minimum wage rate, abolishing the sweat system and regulating home working

3. Abolition of all restrictions which prevent certain nationalities or races from staying in a country or which exclude them from the social, political and economic rights of the natives or impede them in exercising those rights. Extensive measures to facilitate naturalisation.

4. In so doing, the following principles should generally apply in the trade unions of all countries:

- (a) unrestricted access of immigrant workers to the trade unions of all countries

- (b) facilitating access by setting reasonable admission fees

- (c) the ability to change from the trade union of one country to another for free, upon the fulfilment of all liabilities in the previous union

- (d) striving to establish an international trade union cartel, which will make it possible to implement these principles and needs internationally.

5. Support for trade union organisations in those countries from which immigration primarily stems. II. For the country of origin

1. The liveliest trade union agitation.

2. Education of the workers and the public on the true state of the working conditions in the country of origin.



3. An active agreement of the trade unions with the unions in the country of immigration for the purpose of a common approach towards the matter of immigration and emigration.

4. Since the emigration of labour is often artificially stimulated by railway and steamship companies, by land speculators and other bogus outfits, and by issuing false and scurrilous promises to the workers, the congress demands:

1 The monitoring of the shipping agencies, the emigration bureaus, and potentially legal or administrative measures against them to prevent emigration being abused in the interests of such capitalist enterprises.

### III

Reorganisation of the transport sector, especially ships; the appointment of inspectors with disciplinary powers, recruited from the ranks of unionised workers in the country of origin and the country of immigration, to oversee regulations; welfare for newly arrived immigrants, so that they do not fall prey to exploitation by the parasites of capital from the outset.

Since the transport of migrants can only be statutorily regulated on an international level, the congress commissions the International Socialist Bureau<sup>2</sup> to develop proposals to reorganise these matters, in which the furnishings and the equipment of ships must be standardised, as well as the minimum amount of airspace for every migrant. Particular emphasis should be placed on individual migrants arranging their passage directly with the company, without the intervention of any intermediate contractor.

These proposals shall be passed on to the party leaderships for the purposes of legislative application and for propaganda.

Now as far as international reactions Lenin and the Bolsheviks as well as Karl Liebknecht would release statements in support of it. Lenin characterized the struggle as between opportunists and revolutionaries. Most parties were fully in support of the actions of the congress. The future communist party of America in a report at a Comintern congress would make explicit the need to organize and stand with immigrant workers, this was considered a key part of the national question.

## 6 Reaction in America

However the reaction in America would not be so positive, the parties right wing represented by Victor Berger who I mentioned earlier, he denounced Hillquit as being intellectuals who had betrayed the American proletariat that would permit Japanese and Chinese into the country, though he used less nice language, and declared that Socialism in the US and Canada that they must remain a White mans country. Ernest Untermann of the center faction said that after the class struggle had ended it would become a global race struggle and it would determine what race would rule the world. The parties left wing as well said that racial incompatibility was a fact.

At a National Executive Committee meeting Victor Berger warned there would be 5 million "yellow men" invading per year, and that the US already had one race question and if something was not done the US would become a "black and yellow country". The meeting also declared the international had no power over the American Socialists, and that at the time the party must stand in opposition to Asiatic immigration.

In 1908 at a party convention a full scale debate would occur and the convention would adopt a middle ground declaration and say the race question should be saved for the next convention. In 1910 Hillquit at this congress too would be attacked as being too progressive, because he fought against a resolution explicitly codifying race into it. Victor Berger continued to be racist, and declare he would fight to defend civilization from Asian immigrants. The congress also moved to call for bans for anyone of a "mongoloid" race<sup>4</sup>

Also I want to point out Victor Berger's Wikipedia page makes no mention of how racist he was in the slightest.

Anyway, I am sure you are wondering where is Eugene Debs during all this, well he was not a delegate tot he congress but he condemned all proposals to limit immigration. He declared the positions on immigration that came from these congresses to be unsocialist and reactionary, and said if any discrimination towards immigrants should happen it should restrict from the most privileged countries, and fully encourage it from the most exploited.<sup>5</sup>

However Debs generally thought party unity was more important and never really mounted a fighting against the anti-asian and anti-black sentiments in the party.

Now the Socialist Labor Party on the other hand was much more pro-immigrant, however that does not mean they were not racist. They thought opposing lynching was not a task for Socialists and that it was a petite bourgeois concern.

## 7 Conclusion

Well, thank you for watching, hope you find this useful at least with showing the left has always considered issues of immigration important, even though many reactionary socialists thought it was not an issue. The Second International despite how chauvinistic it is still wouldn't endorse anti-immigrant resolutions.

Anyway I kind of enjoyed taking a break talking about American Socialism a bit, always something I hoped to cover too with this channel. Bit more frustrating because somehow accessing documents and stuff can be more difficult unless I am willing to drive around to country to look at microfilms. Sorry this took so long to get out, I have been talking about it a lot on my Twitter and just a mixture of getting sources together and a bit of that lockdown depression have kept me from getting it out as quickly.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 277–287.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

## References

- Kipnis, I. and Columbia University. *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912*. Modern reader. Columbia University Press, 1952.
- Pratt, N.F. *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist*. Contributions in political science. Greenwood Press, 1979. ISBN: 9780313205262.