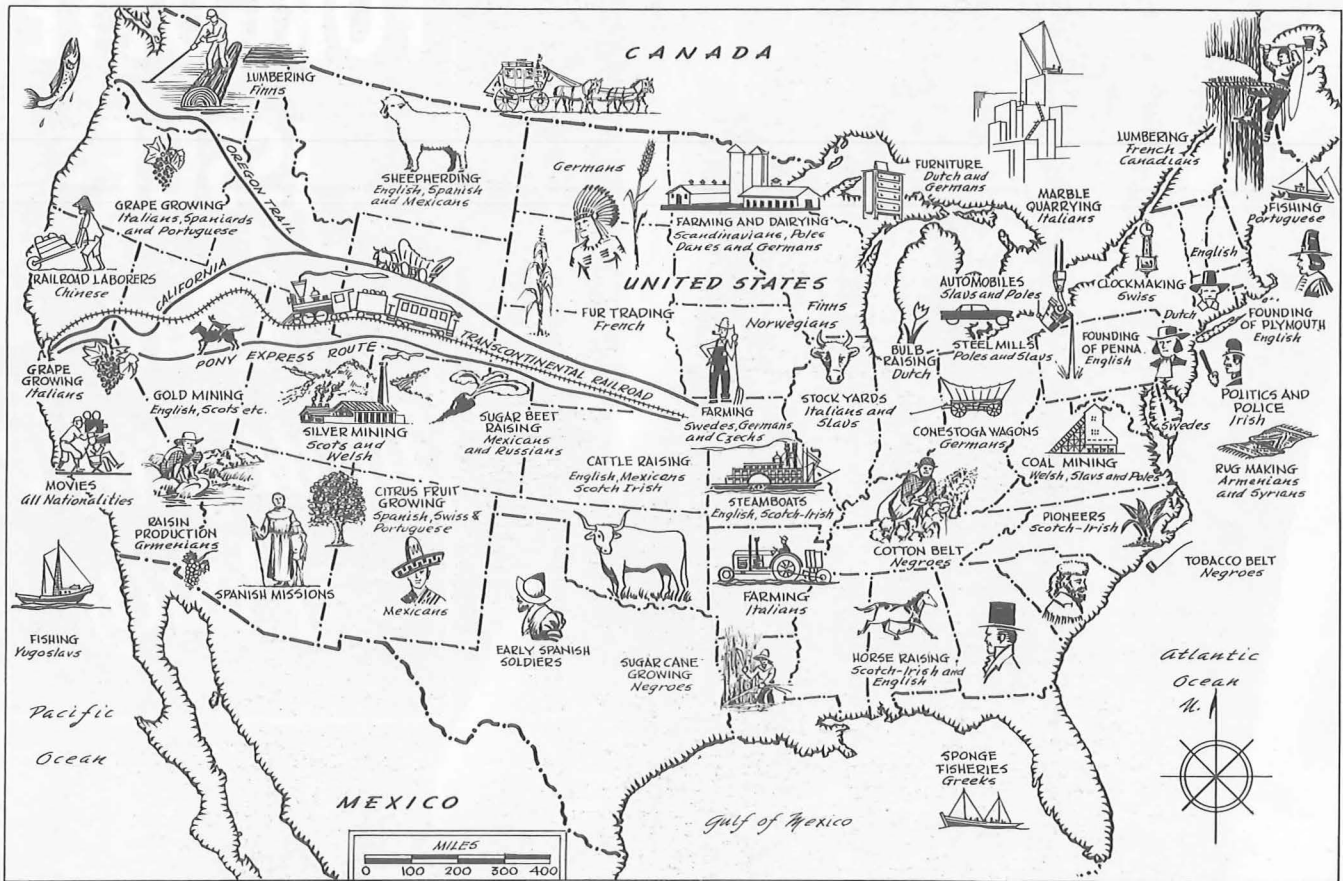




FORGOTTEN
ISSUE-

*Our
Immigration
Policy*



Courtesy of Philadelphia Inquirer
William Struckhaus - Staff Artist

"Over the years the ancestors of all of us -- some 42 million human beings -- have migrated to these shores. The fundamental, longtime American attitude has been to ask not where a person comes from but what are his personal qualities. On this basis men and women migrated from every quarter of the globe. By their hard work and their enormously varied talents they hewed a great nation out of a wilderness. By their dedication to liberty and equality, they created a society reflecting man's most cherished ideals."

President Lyndon B. Johnson's special immigration message to Congress, January 13, 1965.

FORGOTTEN ISSUE - "OUR IMMIGRATION POLICY"

For the first time in over a decade, Congress and the Administration are seriously considering the revision of some of the key provisions in our immigration law. The Immigration and Nationality Act (The McCarran-Walter Act) was passed in 1952, over a Presidential veto. It continued with some modification, a method of selection that was established in 1924, known as the National Origins Quota System.

This method is now being challenged by the Administration and many members of Congress as racially and ethnically discriminatory. It is considered not only out of date, but harmful to the United States.

The proponents of revision of our basic law feel that our immigration policy must reflect what is best for the United States both domestically and internationally. This country has benefited immeasurably from the talents, training, education and skills of its immigrants. Reasonable numbers should continue to be allowed to enter the United States on the basis of what they can contribute to this country, not on their ethnic or racial background.

A realistic immigration policy should support not detract from our leadership in the free world. Presently, many of the nations most friendly to the United States receive only token quotas. The international reaction is that our standards of judgment are not based on individual merit, but on bias and prejudice. The world regards our immigration policy as the basis of our evaluation of others. This policy would seem to indicate we reject over two-thirds of the world population as being inherently undesirable. Consequently, our selection process has been and is continuing to be a serious obstacle in our relations with other nations throughout most of the world.

In the summer of 1964 the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Nationality held extensive hearings on an Administration bill which would establish a non-discriminatory selection process in place of the National Origins Quota System.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL ORIGINS QUOTA SYSTEM?

This system is used to select immigrants by assigning nearly 157,000 annual quota numbers to all countries outside the Western Hemisphere (except Jamaica, Tobago and Trinidad) in proportion to the persons of that nationality or descent in our white population in 1920. This formula results in wide discrepancies; countries in northwestern Europe are assigned nearly 82 percent of the total quota, countries in southeastern Europe 16 percent and the rest of the world only 2 percent.

Use of the quota numbers available varies widely. In general, smaller quotas are often oversubscribed with a waiting list backlogged from five to ninety years. The British quota of 65,000, on the other hand, has never been fully used, often 60 to 70 percent going to waste. Unused quota numbers cannot be reissued in a subsequent year, or transferred from undersubscribed countries to others with a long waiting list. In the forty-four years since the national origins principle went into effect, 56 percent of the quota numbers have gone unused each year.

It is on the basis of this disparity in quota allocations that critics of the law called it discriminatory, favoring some nationalities over others, and indicating a belief in superior and inferior peoples. In addition, the law practically excludes Asians through its Asia-Pacific Triangle provisions.

WHAT IS THE ASIA-PACIFIC TRIANGLE?

This provision requires persons of at least one-half Asian ancestry born outside the Asia-Pacific Triangle (Pakistan to Japan to Polynesia) to be attributed to the quota of the country of their ancestry or to the special quota of 100 for the Asia-Pacific Triangle, rather than to the quota of their birth place. For example, a British subject born in London with one Filipino parent is chargeable to the Philippines' quota of 100 which is backlogged 90 years. Thus while for all other purposes nationality is determined by birth, in the case of persons from the Triangle, ancestry is the determining factor.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE McCARRAN-WALTER ACT

This law in spite of the controversial features mentioned above has made several contributions. It codified and brought together vast numbers of previous laws that had been confusing and even contradictory. It eliminated the discrimination between the sexes that existed in earlier laws where wives derived benefits from husband's status but not vice versa. It eliminated certain aspects of racial discrimination by repealing the so-called Oriental Exclusion Act and providing token immigration quotas for all countries, including those in the previously barred Asian zone and making all resident aliens eligible for naturalization including those from the Far East.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S IMMIGRATION PROPOSAL

In an attempt to correct the inequities in the method of selection of immigrants, Senator Philip A. Hart (D., Mich.) and Representative Emmanuel Celler (D., N.Y.) have introduced an immigration bill supported by the Administration the highlights of which are that it would:

- 1 - Abolish the National Origins Quota System over a five year period by pooling all quota numbers and allocating them on a first-come-first-served basis within preference categories.
- 2 - Eliminate the Asia-Pacific Triangle provisions.
- 3 - Increase the total quota from its present 157,000 to 166,000.
- 4 - Limit to 16,600 the annual number of quota immigrants from any one country.
- 5 - Establish an Immigration Board, composed of four members of Congress and three persons designated by the President. The Board is to have advisory, study and investigative powers.
- 6 - Extend non-quota status to parents of American citizens.
- 7 - Extend non-quota status to newly independent Western Hemisphere countries -- Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago.
- 8 - Continue the present security and health requirements for applicants. Continue to request sponsorship for newcomers to prevent them from becoming public charges.
- 9 - Make permanent provisions for the entry of refugees by using up to 10 percent of the pooled quota numbers.

Some of the criticisms of this bill result from misunderstanding of the facts. In the paragraphs below are listed some of the major criticisms, as well as answers to them.

CRITICISM:

Repeal of the National Origins Quota System would threaten the cultural Anglo-Saxon identity of our nation.

ANSWER:

Actually less than one-third of present day Americans are of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. Of the four million people who inherited the U.S. in 1781, three million were of predominantly British descent, and one million were Negroes. Throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries successive waves of immigrants poured into this country from many lands. (See Appendix, Chart A)

There has never been any evidence that Americans of British or Irish or German birth are better citizens than Americans of Italian, Greek, or Polish ancestry. The process of assimilation of all these peoples into our democratic institutions is a heritage in which we can all take pride. There is no reason to fear it will end with the lifting of discriminatory barriers.

CRITICISM:

The new bill will flood the country with 1,000,000 immigrants a year.

ANSWER:

Under the new bill an estimate of the increase in immigrants is as follows: Full use of quota numbers, 69,782; non-quota admittance of parents of U.S. citizens, 3,299; non-quota admissions from newly independent countries of the Western Hemisphere, 17,000. This would make a gross increase of 90,000. The proposed bill would do away with the need of special legislation and the entry under quota of parents of citizens. Currently 32,000 immigrants are entering under these categories. Subtraction of this number from the 90,000 would give a net increase of 58,000 per year.

Critics of the new bill forget that only 35 percent of our present annual total of immigrants come in under the quota system. The rest are non-quota immigrants from countries of the Western Hemisphere, wives of U.S. citizens, or refugees in special categories. Through a labyrinth of private bills and acts, Congress has actually exercised a far less restrictive immigration policy than the present law provides. (See Appendix, Chart B)

Both numerically and relatively, the trend of the number of foreign born in the United States has been downward. In 1960 that part of our population stood at about 9,700,000, the lowest level since 1890. Percentagewise the 5.4 percent of foreign born in the total population of 1960 was the lowest ever recorded in the 110 years for which the census has provided this information.

In all, an average of 277,000 immigrants have entered this country in the past five years. Since an estimated 26,000 alien immigrants also leave the United States each year, this results in a net immigration of 252,000. The proposed legislation would probably result in a net annual immigration of 310,000, not 1,000,000.

CRITICISM:

It would discriminate in favor of those who are most aggressive in trying to enter the United States, and those best able to have political pressure applied inside to gain favored place in the waiting line.

ANSWER:

Admission would be on a first-come-first-served basis according to the date of registration for an American visa. There is no evidence that this principle would be abused at home or abroad.

CRITICISM:

It would discriminate in favor of immigrants from the most populated and socially and economically deprived areas such as Africa, India, and China.

ANSWER:

The limit of 16,478 (10 percent) from any one country in any one year would prohibit any nation or group of nations usurping more than a proportionate share of the yearly quota. Since the quota system has in fact been circumvented through a series of acts of Congress, the actual number of immigrants brought in from any one country will not change as sharply as the critics seem to assume.

CRITICISM:

It would inundate the United States labor market with 500,000 to 600,000 job seekers.

ANSWER:

It is estimated that an additional 23,150 immigrants would be added each year to the labor market.* Moreover, it has been observed that immigrants from the quota coun-

*This would add only three one hundredths of one percent per year.

tries fall increasingly into the professional, technical and skilled craftsmen categories (See Appendix, Chart C). During the 1959-1963 period 37 percent of immigrants entering the United States from the quota areas were from these categories as opposed to the national average of 23 percent.

CRITICISM:

It would create problems of overcrowding in our mental institutions and load our relief rolls.

ANSWER:

Under the proposed immigration bill there will be a continued selectivity of immigrants. Those to be admitted would still have to pass the rigid selective admission requirements as to mental and physical health, good moral character, and literacy. They would have to prove that they would not become a public charge or pose a security risk.

Under the proposal "epilepsy" is eliminated as a cause of exclusion. The treatment of this affliction and the growing medical knowledge regarding epileptic conditions have convinced many people that this condition no longer warrants exclusion. In addition, at the discretion of the Attorney General, a few immigrants with mental disabilities will be allowed to join close relatives in this country.

Studies have indicated that foreign born commit proportionally fewer crimes than native Americans and proportionally more foreign born people own homes than native whites.

CONCLUSIONS:

Congressman Harrison Gray Otis once declared: "When this country was new it might have been a good policy to admit all. But it is so no longer."

Mr. Otis was speaking in 1797. He was wide of his mark as immigrants are consumers and taxpayers as well as workers and producers. The more consumers, the more capital investment and the more employment. During the great period of immigration, from 1870 to 1930, the population increased about three times, but the number of jobs -- despite the adoption of labor saving machinery and techniques -- increased about four times. The states and regions of our country that received the most immigrants have become the most prosperous.

Many immigrants have played outstanding roles in promoting progress in various stages of the country's development. We are in fact, a nation of immigrants. It is generally conceded that the strength of America today comes from the diversity of its population.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in testifying before a House Subcommittee said: "We deprive ourselves of a powerful weapon in our fight against misinformation if we do not reconcile . . . the letter of the law with the facts of immigration and thus erase the unfavorable impression made by our old quota limitation."

The Administration's proposal does not radically alter our immigration laws. The one basic change is that people will ultimately be admitted not according to where they were born, or their ancestry, but to whether their skills and abilities are needed in the United States of today.

Public Apathy and misunderstanding seem to be the chief hindrances to the passing of any legislation that would repeal our National Origins Quota System. It is up to interested citizens to discuss this issue and bring this matter to the attention of the general public.

APPENDIX CHART A

PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES
DURING 144 YEARS BEGINNING 1820 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 1963

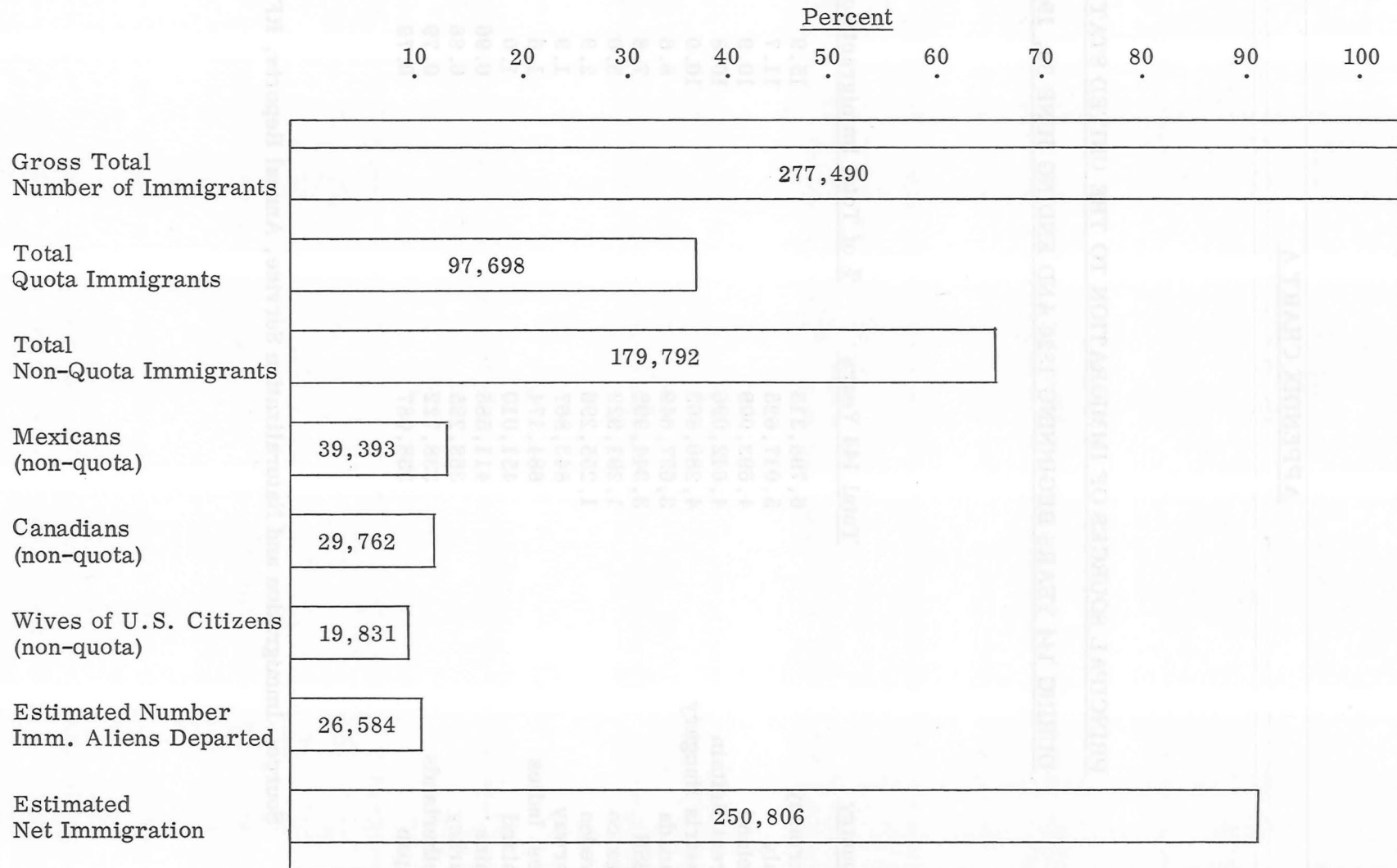
<u>Country</u>	<u>Total 144 Years</u>	<u>% of Total Immigrants of 42,702,328</u>
Germany	6,798,313	15.9
Italy	5,017,625	11.7
Ireland	4,693,009	10.9
Great Britain	4,642,096	10.8
Austria Hungary	4,280,863	10.0
Canada	3,697,649	8.6
USSR	3,344,998	7.8
Mexico	1,291,922	3.0
Sweden	1,255,296	2.9
Norway	843,867	1.9
West Indies	684,174	1.6
Poland	451,010	1.0
China	411,585	0.96
Turkey	368,285	0.86
Netherlands	338,722	0.79
Japan	338,087	0.79

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Annual Reports, RFS Est.

APPENDIX CHART B

IMMIGRANT ALIENS ADMITTED, QUOTA AND NON-QUOTA AND OTHER CATEGORIES

AVERAGE FOR YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 1959-1963



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Annual Reports, RFS Est.

APPENDIX CHART C

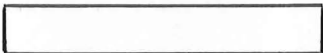
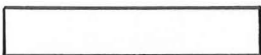
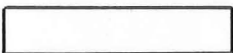
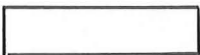

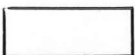



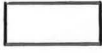
NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES
WITH SPECIAL TRAINING IN CRITICAL OCCUPATIONS

Years 1952-61

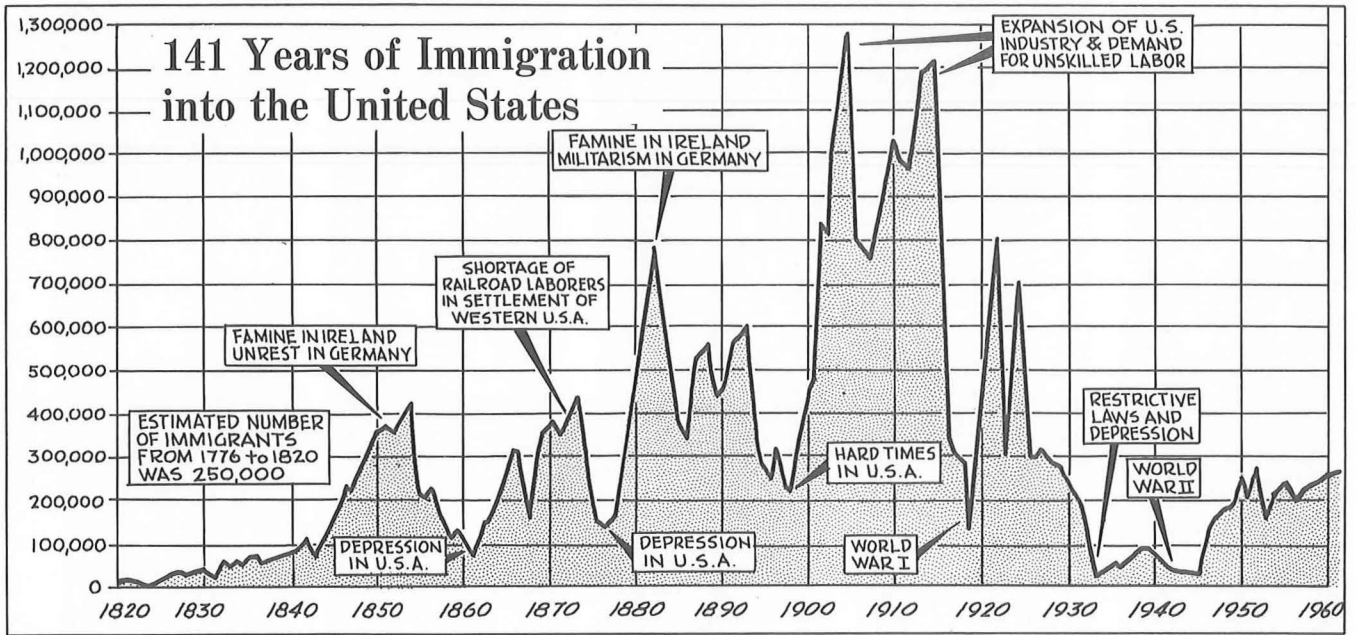
8,600 skilled craftsmen foremen and individuals	12,100 technicians
14,000 physicians and surgeons	30,000 engineers
28,000 nurses	9,000 machinists
4,900 chemists	7,000 tool and die makers
1,100 physicists	

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF IMMIGRANTS

July 1, 1963 - June 30, 1964

Professional and technical workers		20%
Clerical and office workers		16%
Craftsmen and foremen		13%
Laborers, except farm and mine		11%
Machine and vehicle operators		10%
Private household workers		7%
Farm laborers and foremen		7%
Service workers except priv. household		7%
Managers, officials, and proprietors		4%
Others		5%

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Annual Reports, RFS Est.

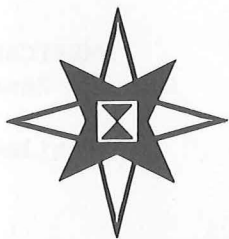


Courtesy of Philadelphia Inquirer
William Streckfuss - Staff Artist

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services
160 North 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

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160 North 15th Street, Philadelphia, Pa., 19102