

SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 729. 60th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION
Russian-German Immigrants

MR. BURKETT presented the following

LETTER FROM DANIEL J. KEEFE, COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF
THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE OF AND LABOR, RELATING
TO THE TREATMENT OF RUSSIAN-GERMAN IMMIGRANTS, ETC.

February 18, 1909. — Ordered to be printed.

Department of Commerce and Labor,
Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization,

Washington, February 17, 1909.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 13th instant, transmitting several copies of a printed circular letter bearing various signatures, the purport of this circular being that Russian-German immigrants are improperly treated and discriminated against in the matter of medical examination at Ellis Island, which results in their rejection on account of being afflicted with the disease known as trachoma.

The party who prepared this circular evidently believes that the passing of these persons by medical examiners employed by the steamship companies at foreign ports should be all-sufficient, but it only need be pointed out that the immigration act of February 20, 1907, prescribes that the physical and mental condition of aliens shall be determined by duly designated United States Public Health and Marine-Hospital surgeons. The assertion that there is discrimination against one particular class of arrivals is hardly worthy of denial, as you will realize how improbable such a condition could be.

The steamship companies are under penalty of \$100 for each alien brought to this country who is afflicted with a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease that might have been detected at the port of embarkation by a competent medical examination; that the companies may fail to carry out their obligation to their passengers by adopting proper measures to avoid the hardship of a fruitless voyage is something that this Government can not control except by the imposition of fines of the character mentioned, and there has been no leniency shown with respect to enforcing this feature of the law. On the other hand, large numbers of arriving aliens who have been found to be diseased were allowed hospital treatment at the expense of their relatives or of the Government to avoid the peculiar hardship which is always involved in separating the members of a family.

The suggestion that medical officers employed by this Government be stationed at the various foreign ports of embarkation is impracticable, as this proposition was exhaustively considered some time ago, and it was ascertained through the Department of State that several of the foreign governments objected to the assignment of American medical officers at their ports for the purpose of examining aliens about to embark for the United States. Furthermore, such examination would not satisfy the requirements of section 17 of the immigration act, which prescribes a medical examination at the port of entry, and which would undoubtedly lead to the rejection of many aliens for physical causes which could not be detected at the time of embarkation, but would, nevertheless, bring such aliens within one or more of the classes specifically excluded by the statute. The hardships incident to deportation would therefore only be partially mitigated by the adoption of the plan suggested.

In conclusion I desire to invite your attention to the fact that the circular letter referred to carefully refrains from mentioning any specific case as a basis for the allegations therein contained, and if you would like to examine the papers relating to the cases in which Dr. C. C. Young, of Wichita Falls, Tex., was interested, the files are open for your inspection, and I invite you to examine them, feeling certain that after doing so you will concur in the conclusion that Doctor Young has been accorded more consideration than the methods which have been adopted by him really justify.

DANL. J. KEEFE,
Commissioner-General

Respectfully,

HON. E. J. BURKETT,
United States Senator, Washington, D.C.