

THE TWENTIES IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Five political cartoons on the controversial issue of immigration restriction are presented in this collection. Published between 1919 and 1924 in mainstream newspapers, they reflect the position held by many, but not all, native-born Americans without direct ties to families overseas. How did the debate incorporate the postwar Red Scare, the Americanism campaign, and the national striving for “normalcy”?

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- ❑ **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?
- ❑ **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national and world events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?
- ❑ **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.
- ❑ **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon’s meaning?
- ❑ **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist’s point?
- ❑ **TOPE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?
- ❑ **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist’s point?

QUESTIONS

- ❑ How are Uncle Sam, Congress, and arriving immigrants portrayed in the cartoons? Why?
- ❑ How might they have been depicted by cartoonists opposing immigration restrictions?
- ❑ How does the *Denver Post* depiction of Uncle Sam differ from the others? Why?

NATIVE & FOREIGN



“Democracy Doesn’t Breed that Kind”
Des Moines Register, June 6, 1919



“We’ll Tell the World”
Los Angeles Times, April 15, 1924



"Democracy Doesn't Breed that Kind"

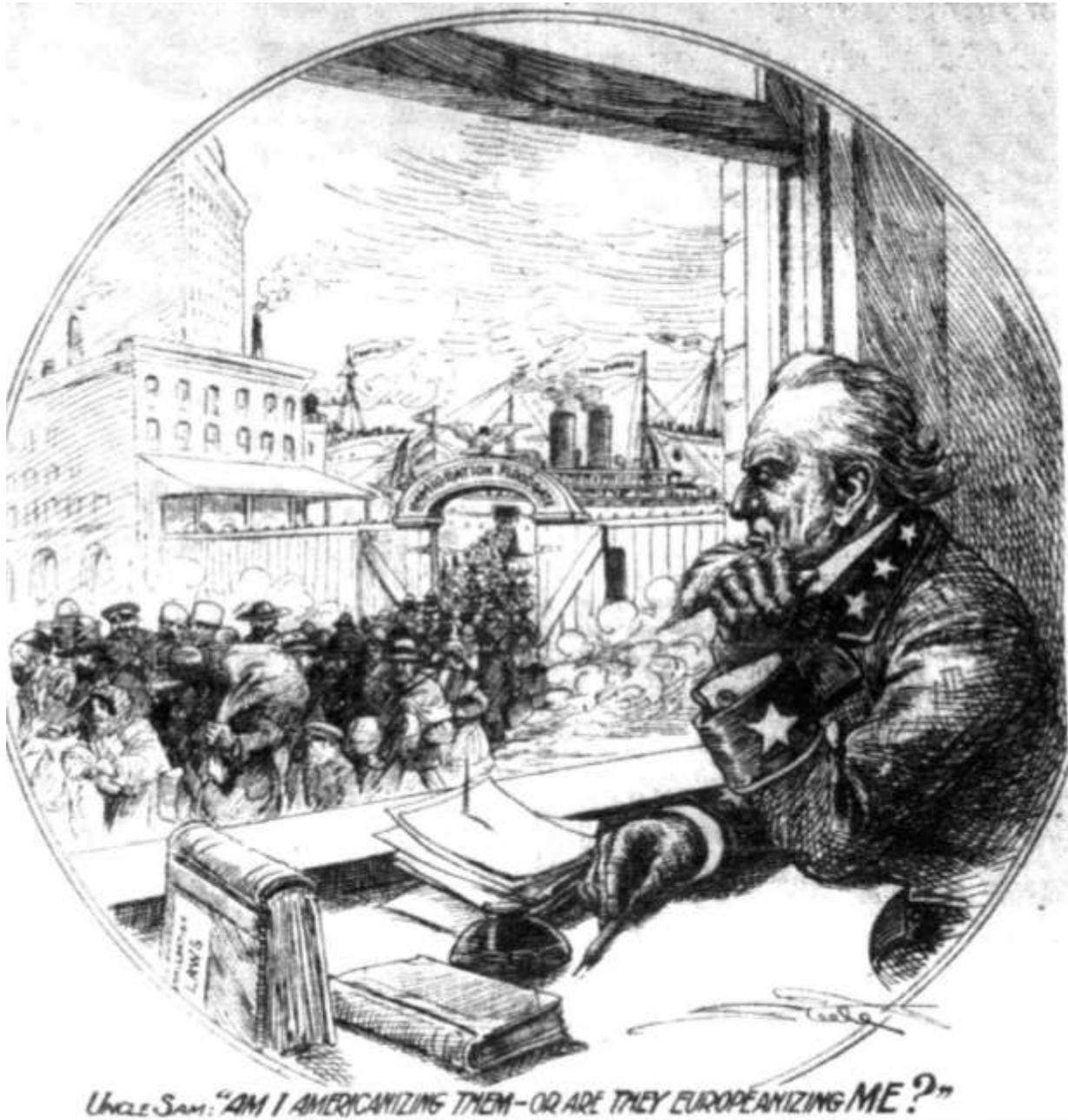
Des Moines Register [Iowa], June 6, 1919

Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

Immigration. Laws. Congress. Uncle Sam.

"Alien malcontent": caricature of the bomb-wielding Russian Bolshevik radical.

Reproduced by permission of the Jay N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. Digital image courtesy of the University of Iowa Libraries.



**“Uncle Sam: ‘Am I Americanizing Them—
Or Are They Europeanizing Me?’”**

The Denver Post, September 30, 1920

Cartoonist: Albert Wilbur Steele

Immigration floodgate. Immigration laws. Flags: From Europe. From Asia. From Russia (?)

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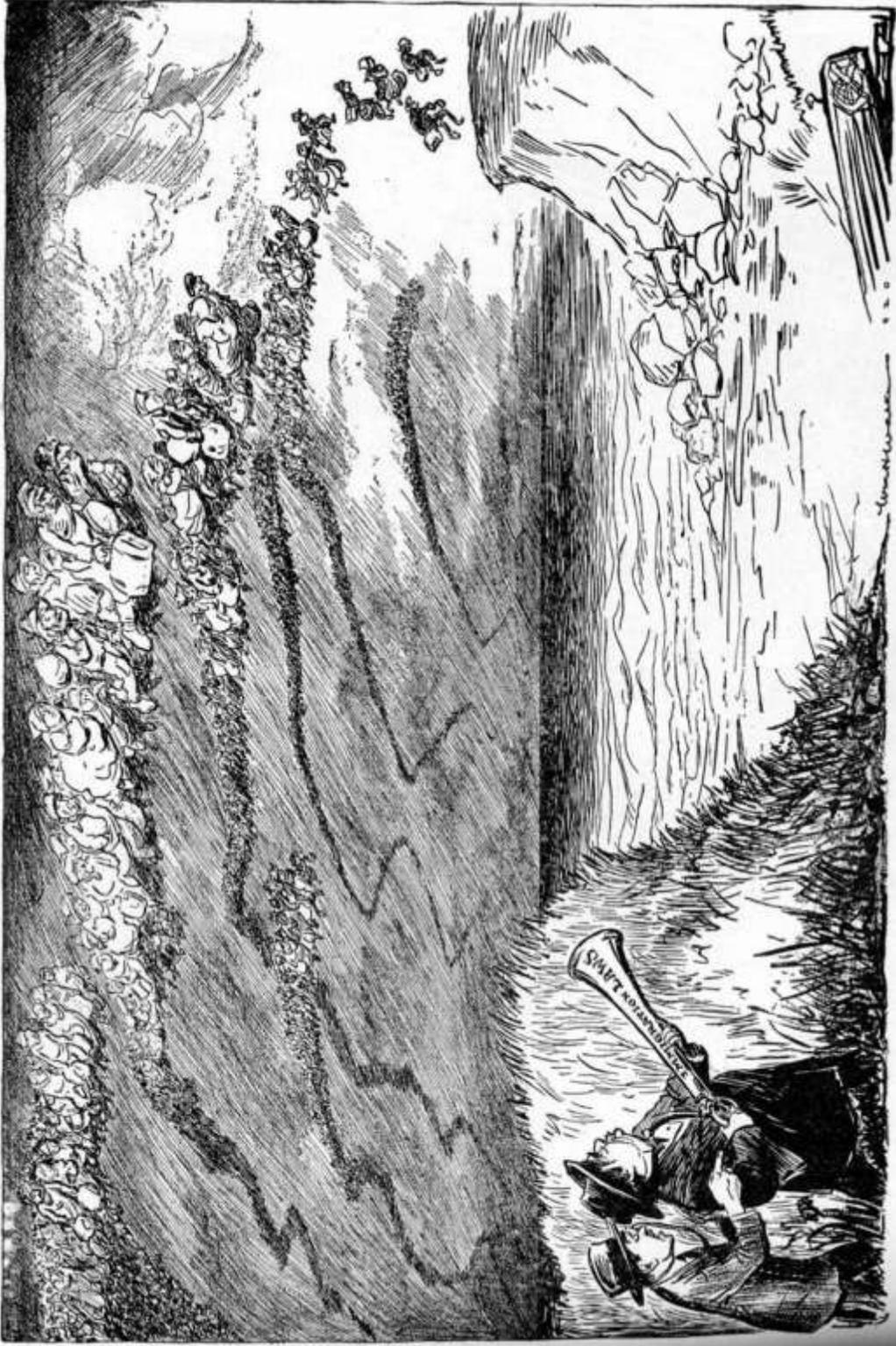
“The Tariff and Immigration Questions”

Chicago Daily Tribune, March 1, 1921

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

U.S. Household. Labor. Capital [Business/Industry/Finance]. Cheap foreign labor. Cheap foreign goods.

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“Citizen: ‘You Can’t Stop ‘Em with that Old Gun, Congress.’”

Life, April 14, 1921

Cartoonist: William A. Walker

The first law in U.S. history restricting immigration—the Emergency Quota Act—was passed on May 19, 1921, after months of deliberation.

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“We’ll Tell the World!”

Los Angeles Times, April 15, 1924

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

U.S.: the melting pot. Our new immigration restrictions. Europe. Undesirables.

On April 12, 1924, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an immigration bill that restricted the number of immigrants admitted from any country to two percent of the 1890 U.S. population from that country, nearly eliminating immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The formula remained the law of the land until 1965, when the national origins quota system was replaced by a policy that based admission on skills and family ties with U.S. citizens.

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