Labor and Work in America before 1877

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Assignment 2 Final Draft

Nature of the Opposition to Outsider

Throughout the the period of colonists and even after the American Revolution, opposition and hostility between Natives and immigrants always existed. American history originated with the migration of European colonists. Since then, the flow of immigrants into America has increased constantly, ultimately causing conflicts. Americans were uneasy and unwelcoming of immigrants, the majority feeling like their normal lives were disrupted. Human beings are all trying to avoid uncertainty, thus, human nature makes the hostility between Americans and foreign immigrants increase gradually. Difference between cultures, religion, and social structure make Americans hostile towards foreign immigrants ultimately causing conflicts toward acceptance and inclusion.

Different cultures between exotic Natives and immigrants caused a series conflicts. At the very beginning of American history, European immigrants were seemed as outsiders to native Americans who also known as American Indians or simply Indians, although some of those European immigrants decided to settle down after decades or even centuries to become Americans. The arrival of immigrants from Europe brought new cultures which were pretty different from the culture of native American people. For those European immigrants, resisting their own cultures, they still lived in the style they previously lived in, and at the same time, they tried to influence the culture of native Americans and make natives to live in their ways. But not all people want to change. As Benjamin Franklin wrote in his letter to Europeans, native Indian Americans ‘visit us frequently, and see the advantages that Arts, Sciences, and compact Society procure us, they are not deficient in natural understanding and yet they have never shewn any Inclination to change their manner of life for ours, or to learn any of our Arts’ (Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 3). Just as what Franklin said, European immigrants have their own cultures which are more progressive and advanced, and, Indian Americans also have their own culture which was more natural and original; although Indians committed that white people have more advantageous society, they still preferred to maintain their own culture and lifestyle without showing the inclination to change. Franklin tried to persuaded British government that white Americans also needed their own cultures by giving the example of native Americans. British people, white Americans, and native Americans all had their own cultures which were very different, therefore, forcible implementation will cause dissatisfaction and hostility. People want freedom, and they were not willing to be ruled and forced to follow outsiders’ social rules. Full implementation of immigrant’s culture in native America will cause huge dissatisfaction and rebel. Also, Franklin suggested that, ‘O let not Britain seek to oppress us, but like an affectionate parent endeavor to secure freedom to her children; they may be able one day to assist her in defending her own—Whereas a Mortification begun in the Foot may spread upwards to the destruction of the nobler parts of the Body’ (Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 5) which also emphasizes that native American did not prefer to be compelled to follow the British rules. Franklin asked the British government to give America certain freedom to develop their own society. If immigrants can not deal with the culture difference properly, it will be a potential threat which will finally become a conflict. Conflicts and long term toleration because of culture evasion may finally lead to war. And war, is the thing that people try to prevent mostly. Therefore, how to deal with culture difference between immigrants, white Americans and native Americans was very critical to prevent war.

In addition, religion was an important factor that will cause hostility between natives and immigrants. Americans were mostly Protestants. In other words, people who were not Protestants had essential differences of them, and vice versa. People’s beliefs and religion regulate people’s behavior in certain degrees, therefore, people who have different religions may act totally different. Since religion is so important to people, religious conflict is a problem that is as same critical as culture conflict. Franklin abused German government by pointing out that, ‘Their own Clergy have very little influence over the people; who seem to take an uncommon pleasure in abusing and discharging the Minister on every trivial occasion’ (Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 9 May 1753) which he thought German Ecclesiastical Government was useless since it was unable to convince and rule their people. He also attacked German ministers that they misuse their powers and further opposed that religion and the whole country. He also censured German that, ‘they are not esteemed men till they have shewn their manhood by beating their mothers, so these seem to think themselves not free, till they can feel their liberty in abusing and insulting their Teachers’ (Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 9 May 1753). The religion of German seemed to be unacceptable for Franklin which he thought was too violence and disorganized. Hostility rises when people find radical religious difference in others. Furthermore, hostility toward Catholicism is always the biggest reason causes religious conflict. Big emergence of Catholicism in the US along with the great number of immigrants from Ireland and Italy during 17th to 18th century simulated the conflict between Protestant and Catholicism radically. One New Yorker emphasized his anger toward immigrants that, ‘Wretched, filthy, bestial-looking Italians and Irish, and creatures that looked as if they has risen from the lazarettos of Naples for this especial object; in short the very scum and dregs of human nature filled the clerk of Common Pleas office so completely that I was almost afraid of being poisoned by going in’, at the same time, expressed his discrimination toward Catholicism that, ‘A dirty Irishman is bad enough, but he’s nothing comparable to a nasty French or Italian loafer’(New Yorker George Templeton Strong Berates the Immigrants in His Midst, 336). The instinctive discrimination of Catholicism was so obvious on Americans. Being strongly disgusted with Irish, French and Italian, the most important reason is that they are all Catholicism. Americans feel discomfortable staying with Catholicism because of the conflict between Protestant and Catholicism. Those Catholic immigrants definitely could not get along well with Americans, ultimately causing conflict.

Coming of Immigrants may have the potential to change the social structure of the community which contributes to the hostility of Americans towards immigrants. Native Americans were concerned about immigrants may bring outside social structure to America, then ruin the original one. The democratic community of America suggested that rich people should help poor people to achieve their successes even though the gap between rich and poor is hard to eliminate. America was trying to help poor people to break through the dilemma when some European countries still believe that there was essential difference between rich and poor. By interpreting that, ‘In Austria, for example, the poor and illiterate are considered as the natural slaves of the wealthy and learned’, Samuel believed ‘this is contrary to the social inequality in the United States wherein the rich allows the poor to succeed in life by helping the latter rise in the hierarchy through employment and education’(Inventor Samuel F.B. Morse Fears That Immigrants Will Ruin American Inequality, 330). He was worried that immigrants from outside may bring such a disadvantageous social structure to America and ruin the positive social structure America had. Therefore, he had a negative cognition of immigrants. Which was understandable, American people believed that their current social structure was appropriate, thus, they did not want outsiders to change it. In other words, Americans rejected foreign social structure which was brought by immigrants. Also anti-Chinese circumstance raised in California because Natives were afraid of Chinese to take away their opportunities and wealth. Because of the California gold rush, an increasing number of people from all over the world came to America to seek gold which Natives felt very threatened. ‘Nearly 25,000 Chinese landed between 1849 and 1852, most of them young men who had signed long-term labor contracts and went to work for the state’s mines and railroads. Anti-Chinese sentiment quickly developed and in 1852 the state’s governor, Democrat John Bigler, proposed that the legislature restrict Chinese immigration’ (A Protest against Anti-Chinese Prejudice, 259). Natives develop anti-Chinese sentiment in order to ensure their own rights and benefits. Chinese labor were cheaper than natives, therefore, mine owners preferred to use Chinese labor instead of natives. This caused a problem that the working opportunities and social status of natives were being threatened. Natives wanted to protect their opportunities and fruits of labor because they contributed a lot to the development of America. Of course, natives didn't want people from other countries to take the benefits from them. So, natives were spontaneously work against immigrants who came to seek jobs and opportunities.

Culture difference, religious differences, and different social structures between immigrants and natives (both white Americans and Indians), resulted in a heavily hostile relationship between both parties. Any of the differences only increased the dissatisfaction from Americans, ultimately leading to revolt and rebel. The only way to eliminate hostility between immigrants and natives is finding the proper way to embrace new cultures, religions and social structure, but synchronization is not necessary. People from different countries, different societies, different groups are certainly having differences, therefore, they have no necessity to become similar or same. No evasion, and no discrimination is the best way to behave with immigrants.