

The Powderly Report and the Cowen Report
by Lee Jaffe and Laurie Sosna

The *Powderly Report* holds a special place for research into the history of emigration from Europe in the early 20th century. As a US immigration official, Terence V. Powderly embarked on a "secret mission" to Europe to investigate the causes and conditions of mass emigration from Europe heading to the US. The first section details Powderly's investigation of the causes of emigration from Europe, the process of inspection at embarkation points throughout Europe; and his observations of life in various countries in 1906-1907. Even in his off-point observations – the efficacy of vaccinations, the dress and cleanliness of migrants, the local rate of wages and cost of living, the trustworthiness of officials – Powderly provides valuable insights into life in Europe in those times. The second section is a report on various subjects: white slave trade, Turkish & Russian immigrants, conditions in the UK, alien contract labor and the third addresses alien contract labor. While Powderly's report does not specifically focus on Jewish immigration, his descriptions of the screening process at the various ports in Europe make it a valuable companion to the *Cowen Report*. Immigration inspector Philip Cowen gives an eyewitness report of anti-Jewish persecution in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Unlike Cowen, however, Powderly is less sympathetic to the emigrants' plight and therefore more in tune with US public opinion and the emerging political discourse regarding immigration.

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The *Cowell Report* can be viewed or downloaded directly from the NARA Library site at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/602984>. The report is also in the public domain and may be freely used, crediting NARA as the source as follows:

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