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SECRETARY OF LABOR WILLSON

THE MAKING OF A CITIZEN



PHOTOS BY UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD, N.Y.

HUNGARIAN TYPE OF IMMIGRANT



ELLIS ISLAND, NEW YORK

Ln the bureau of naturalization of the department of labor one of the greatest, most extensive and potential pieces of constructive administrative work has been going on for almost a decade without attracting any particular attention on the part of the general public. This work has its foundation in the very vitals of the national fabric and consists in the work of making citizens out of the raw material of the resident foreigner who has been coming to this country from all of the nations of Europe ever since its discovery, and in vast and increasing numbers during the past three generations.

The making of a citizen, in so far as the requirements of the law are concerned, is no difficult matter, but to make a citizen in spirit, sympathy, and loyalty, one imbued with all of the essentials of love of country, is a vastly different matter. For over a century the nation quietly and persistently slept upon this most important duty and permitted anyone, even the most unscrupulous, to violate the naturalization laws and to add hundreds of thousands annually to the enjoyment of the privileges of the franchise, the holding of office, and all of the other rights, held in ancient Rome to be sacred to the natural-born citizen.

Congress, however, was aroused by the report of the commissioners of naturalization, appointed by the president, and on June 29, 1906, passed the current naturalization law. By this law, all of the courts, both state and federal, and the officials of these courts, in their ministerial relationship, were placed under the supervision of the United States government. This administrative authority rests with the bureau of naturalization of the department of labor.

With the creation of this federal control, all of the lawlessness ceased, except in sporadic cases which arise because of the ignorance of some particular candidate for citizenship, his in-born fear of the government and the law, which make him the prey of the unprincipled, willing to win a few dollars by quick rather than honest methods.

Almost two and one-half million foreigners have asked for citizenship during the first eight and three-fourths years of federal supervision of the naturalization law. Almost one and three-quarters million of these have declared their intention, or taken out their first papers. Something over three-quarters of a million have asked for final papers, and, of these, about 650,000 have been admitted to citizenship during that time.

During the same time, there have been upwards of 85,000 foreigners who have been refused admission to citizenship. Over one-half of these have been denied because of mental and moral unfitness. The bureau has kept a close supervision over this phase of its work and as early as 1907, through its activities, the public mind was directed to the necessity for providing some means to enable these unfortunate candidates from the vast foreign populace not only to accomplish the act of admission to citizenship, but to equip them better to carry on the daily fight for their livelihood. For it is among these that the fight for their existence is carried on under the most adverse circumstances.

While the above figures indicate a large number among the foreign element of this country coming forward for citizenship, the number does not appear relatively very large when it is known that in 1910 there were nearly 14,000,000 foreigners in this country, that of this number 9,000,000 were not citizens, and that the foreign body has been increased nearly 1,000,000 annually since that time. By far the larger portion of the foreign residents of this country have retained their allegiance to the sovereignty of their birth. Reports in the public press have shown that many of these are ready to respond to the call of their native land, leaving the country of their nativity, leaving the personal, family, industrial, and others who have grown up in this country, for the stronger call of allegiance to the foreign sovereignty. This was the case prior to the great war in Europe, in the lesser wars among the Balkan States. Many have gone back to the old countries who have declared their intention. Some of these afterwards returned to this country and presented themselves before the courts of citizenship for admission. Judges of the naturalization courts have held that such absence from this country in the armies and fighting under their native allegiance broke the continuity of residence for naturalization purposes, and denied their applications.

Among the approximately 14,000,000 foreign residents, 1,850,361 are classed as illiterate. These illiterates are the natural prey of the deceiver and scheming foreigners and natives, as well as every turn. They compel them to pay both in cash and blood, for every service which is sold and imagined, and in the gratification of their desires. However unscrupulous or unprincipled this conditions has been studied by the bureau of naturalization in its application to



HEBREW IMMIGRANT BEING QUESTIONED AT ELLIS ISLAND

the administration of the naturalization law. It is safe to state that although 85,000 foreigners have been refused citizenship because of mental and moral unfitness, at least that many have been admitted to citizenship, in spite of these deficiencies, during the period of federal supervision. The courts have been reluctant to refuse citizenship to a candidate, even though he be ignorant of our institutions or of the privileges conferred upon him. Especially is this so where there are no facilities offered by the cities and towns where the petitioners live for overcoming these defects. In many places the public schools have, under the inspiration of the bureau of naturalization, opened their doors to the foreigner and have taught him the duties of American citizenship and, in these places, the courts have readily responded to the new order of things and refused citizenship unless the candidate could come up to the higher standard which has been brought about by the federal supervision. This system the bureau has tried out for years and with success in various localities throughout the country. There is scarcely a state in the whole country that does not now have citizenship classes carried on either by the public schools or under the direction of private agencies.

In many localities where there are hundreds, and indeed thousands, of citizens admitted annually, no cognizance had been given this important proceeding by the general public, municipal officialdom, public school or other authorities until brought to their attention by the representatives of the bureau of naturalization. This was so evident that the bureau, through its officers, brought to the attention of the mayor of the city of Philadelphia, last winter, the fact that about 4,000 petitions for naturalization would be heard during the spring months and, as a result of this, approximately 8,500 new citizens would be made at that time in the persons of the candidates and their wives and children, born abroad. This resulted in the first reception extended by any municipality in the United States to its citizens of foreign birth.

This reception was but one of the activities of the bureau of naturalization to bring to the attention of the entire nation this most vital activity of citizenship. In the press of the day preceding the reception, there was published throughout the United States announcement of the nationwide movement for the education of the resident alien body through the candidates for citizenship. Heretofore the activities of the schools have been directed almost wholly to the candidate for final papers, while the foreigner possessing his first papers, or who has just declared his intention to become a citizen at some future time, has been largely neglected. The bureau has recognized, however, that there has been a constant and steady, though silent, appeal coming annually from the hearts of hundreds of thousands of foreigners holding first papers, for relief, help, and assistance to the attainment of their hopes and desires in this country.

The law permits an alien to declare his intention who is an illiterate. In from two years to five he is eligible to petition for naturalization. During that period, while the United States holds the candidate to be on probation, it has done nothing heretofore to help his claim except in a very meager way. The bureau of naturalization has been the only governmental agency which has extended to him the helping hand. It has now arranged and perfected plans for the help-hand to be extended to the nearly half a million foreigners who each year ask for citizenship. During the last year over 335,000 foreigners declared their intention and petitioned for naturalization. This is the high-water mark since federal supervision. The federal census records for the United States show that the foreign popula-

tion is many times greater than the number who come forward for citizenship. In many states the proportion of candidates for citizenship to the entire foreign-born white population is at the lowest possible ebb. In no state does it exceed 50 per cent, while in some states it is as low as 2 per cent. This is true of the number of foreigners who take out their first papers and those who become citizens. In some states there are more foreigners living outside of the large cities than in them, and yet the largest number of candidates for citizenship are found among those living in the cities. In many parts of the country there have been more candidates admitted to citizenship in given localities than is represented by the entire number of registered voters. In many places they represent a majority of those of voting age. A goodly percentage of the candidates for first papers come from the early arriving immigrants. Many who are admitted to citizenship are unable to inscribe their names in the English language but do so in foreign characters unintelligible to the American born. Many who are admitted to citizenship have only the most meager ability to speak our tongue and have but slight ability to comprehend it.

Some of the school authorities have agreed to furnish descriptive matter printed in various tongues for further facilitating the foreigner in the selection of a school. Where the conditions justify it, school authorities have signified their willingness not only to open the night schools for foreigners, but special day schools for the foreigners whose vocations require them to work during the night. The bureau expects to prevail upon many of the school authorities to open schools for the education of the foreigners where none have been established.

As illustrative of the enthusiasm with which the co-operation of the school authorities is being offered, one superintendent of schools in one of the great metropolitan centers has stated:

"You will find the board of education and school officials ready to do everything within their power to make this splendid movement, authorized by your bureau, a success in this community, and we assure you in advance that we will be very glad to co-operate with your field officers to the limit of our ability. We are enthusiastic over the plan which you propose and hope that the work that will be done in this city the coming year will be such as to meet with your hearty approval."

Others, expressive of a like interest, have been received. All have agreed to give their heartiest endeavors towards the realization of the desires of the bureau of naturalization and to get the chambers of commerce and other civic organizations and the press behind the movement locally so as to arouse public sentiment and start the wheels into operation to secure the appropriation of the necessary funds for opening the public schools or extending their activities where they have been open to foreigners. Others have volunteered to give to the bureau of naturalization the information it desires so as to enable it to show annually the number of foreigners responding to the appeals of the bureau and the school authorities to attend the public schools: The number of illiterates; the number who have entered the public schools before taking out their first papers; the number who are naturalized citizens before entering upon the public schools; the number of males; the number of females; those having ability only to speak their native tongue; those able to read in their native language; those able to write their native language; and such other information as will enable the bureau to picture graphically the practical results in the annual reports of the bureau of naturalization and the department of labor and other channels of publicity.

Individuals interested in social work, patriotic and other public activities have also most encouragingly expressed their willingness to co-operate towards the advancement of the work of the bureau in every possible way.

TRIBUTE TO A SPORTSMAN.

"Are there any fish in this stream?"
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(Signed)
THOS. H. HOLT, Agt.
St. Joseph, La., May 12, 1915.

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