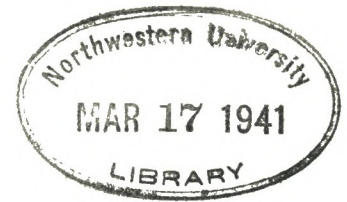


FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY
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WPA WILL CHECK REGISTRATION STATEMENTS OF 4,700,000 ALIENS

A nation-wide project to verify the recent registration statements of 4,700,000 aliens living in the United States will be inaugurated shortly by the WPA in various ports of entry, Howard O. Hunter, Acting Commissioner of Work Projects, announced today.

Sponsored by the National Defense Commission and co-sponsored by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice, the undertaking is the newest in a long series of WPA clerical projects which have indexed, restored and assembled records, relating to the arrival or naturalization of nearly 25,000,000 immigrants.

The verification project will utilize these indexes to check the information regarding immigration provided last year by the aliens who filled out forms covering the salient points of their personal histories as required by the Alien Registration Act of 1940.

Preliminary work has already begun at Ellis Island in New York, through which three-quarters of the immigrants have passed, Mr. Hunter said, and units will be set up at other ports of entry. Registration papers will be assembled from all parts of the country at the appropriate ports for comparison with the records of immigrant arrivals.

"The Immigration and Naturalization officials consider this

work of great importance to substantiate the statements of the non-citizens who live among us, for their own convenience and protection as well as for the protection of the nation," Mr. Hunter said.

"As with the work WPA has already done on immigration and naturalization records, the verification project no doubt will sift some chaff from the wheat, but it will also serve to correct innocent mistakes and protect honest aliens."

Previous WPA work, covering indexing, renewal and centralization of immigration and naturalization records, has become especially important in recent months because of the defense program, Mr. Hunter emphasized. Its value has been enhanced particularly by the Alien Registration Act and the law of last June prohibiting the employment of aliens on secret, confidential and restricted government contracts.

Immigration and Naturalization offices have since been flooded with inquiries seeking information required for the registration and by employers and employees requiring certification as to the legal status of foreign-born persons to be employed in defense industries. Their status has been checked with a speed and certainty which otherwise would have been impossible, Mr. Hunter explained, thus preventing instances of bottlenecks in defense employment.

The program to modernize the record of alien arrivals began with the assistance of WPA more than five years ago. Index cards were prepared for periods for which none existed, existing indexes were consolidated and all were merged so that information regarding the arrival of aliens could be located speedily by name rather than by date

or ship at the major ports of entry. The visas which immigrants carry for admittance and ship passenger lists were covered in this task.

Projects covering these types of record have been conducted at the four principal ports of entry--Ellis Island, St. Albans, Vt., Philadelphia and Boston, through which some 90 percent of the immigrants have entered. At New York alone more than 50,000,000 cards and papers were handled by WPA workers in the course of the work.

To facilitate the checking of naturalization, the papers of foreign born citizens in State and Federal courts throughout the country were indexed and cards filed by sound rather than by spelling to simplify their location and eliminate difficulties arising from various spellings.

The phonetic index, in which like-sounding names are grouped, has been centralized in the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington, reducing the time for verifying naturalization in many instances from weeks to hours.

A third major phase has been the indexing of all alien seamen who have touched at various eastern ports since 1917. This index, also phonetically arranged, assists in the identification of those who remain illegally if they come in contact with authorities at some later date. Illustrating the importance of a register of alien seamen, one was removed at the outbreak of the present war from a pilot boat in an eastern harbor, where he presumably was stationed to check ship arrivals and departures.

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"The modernization of these vital records is of inestimable value to the Federal government and to millions of foreign-born citizens, alien residents and their children," Mr. Hunter said. "The value of such readily-available records has grown in the recent years of social advancement at home and political changes abroad."

"They are often needed to prove legal entry, to verify derivative citizenship, to establish citizenship in qualifying for Civil Service as well as defense positions, to prove legal status for pensions and to establish inheritances. They are more important now than ever to the government in tracing fugitives and undesirable aliens. And no doubt one of their greatest services will be providing the basis for verification of alien registrations."

The verification project has been grouped with other records projects which continue the work already done for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Together these projects form a major unit in the broader National Defense Research and Records Assistance Project, which was approved by the President with the National Defense Commission as sponsor and an initial allotment of \$6,321,596 in WPA funds.

Under the authorization, WPA workers may be employed on emergency clerical and statistical work with various government agencies concerned with defense activities serving as co-sponsors in their particular fields.

The records assistance project is under the direction of Dr. Milton Forster and the general supervision of Mrs. Florence Kerr, Assistant Commissioner in charge of Community Service projects, and Harvey E. Becknell, director of research and records programs.

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David S. Williams, formerly in charge of immigration and naturalization records projects in New York City, is national consultant for the verification and related work.

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