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CITIZENSHIP TRAINING FOR ALIENS TO BE MAJOR EDUCATION WORK OF WPA

A greatly expanded program of Americanization instruction to facilitate the naturalization of aliens who want to become citizens was announced today by WPA Commissioner Howard O. Hunter.

The new plan calls for the establishment of Americanization classes, manned by specially trained teachers from the WPA Adult Education Program, in practically every community in which there are sizeable populations of non-citizens. The program is sponsored by the Department of Justice, of which the Immigration and Naturalization Service is a part, and will be co-sponsored in each state by state departments of education

The plan is an expansion on a greatly magnified scale of a type of work which has been carried on by the Adult Education Program ever since the inception of WPA, Mr. Hunter pointed out. Americanization classes in the past have "graduated" an average of approximately 30,000 non-naturalized adults each year who have successfully met the citizenship requirements of the naturalization courts. From this point on, he said, Americanization will become the largest single phase of the Adult Education Program, employing from a third to a half of its teacher personnel.

The alien registration conducted last fall and winter revealed a total of over 5,000,000 non-naturalized persons above the age of 14 living in the United States and its possessions, Mr. Hunter said.

Two-thirds of them had taken no steps at that time to acquire citizenship. It was further revealed that the median age of the alien population is approximately 48 years as against 28 years for the nation as a whole, and that more than 15 percent are illiterate.

"So large a block of non citizens who, in theory at least, owe allegiance to foreign countries, is a potential menace in a time of national emergency," Mr. Hunter declared. "Those who do not understand our language, our Constitution and our form of government are most easily made the dupes of foreign propagandists.

"We know actually, however, that a great majority of our aliens desire to become citizens; that many of them have failed to do so simply through procrastination or because they have not known how to go about it. And the overwhelming evidence is that they make good citizens once they have become naturalized.

"It is the comparatively small percentage who intend to live in America without assuming the obligations of American citizenship who constitute the main threat in our 'alien problem.'

"This new program of education will remove the most serious obstacle in the path of those who really desire to become citizens. It will afford them an opportunity not only to learn our language and customs but also to learn about the Constitution and our democratic form of government, which is necessary to meet the technical requirements of the naturalization courts. A knowledge of English, furthermore, will speed their social integration and enable them better to earn a livelihood."

Basic instruction in English is usually the most essential subject in Americanization classes, Mr. Hunter pointed out. Experience has shown that many thousands of aliens are unable to read and speak

English effectively in spite of the fact that they may have lived in this country for years. When a fair command of the language has been obtained instruction is given in American history, civics and other topics designed to impart an understanding of American culture and forms of government.

In his final examination for citizenship the alien is required to demonstrate an understanding and attachment to the principles of the Constitution. The course of instruction planned by the WFA is intended to impart the fullest understanding of these principles, Mr. Hunter said.

A special training program for teachers is now being worked out which will familiarize those to be assigned to the new program with the most recent techniques in adult education. Insofar as possible, teachers will be chosen with some foreknowledge of the languages and national background of the predominating alien groups with whom they will deal. All books and text materials will be furnished by the sponsors.

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