



**Americanization Program
of the
Committee on Foreign-Born Women,
Committee on Women in Industry,
Council of National Defense,
Washington, D. C.**

AMERICANIZATION PROGRAM
of the
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN-BORN
WOMEN IN INDUSTRY**

FOREWORD

HE foreign-born woman must be considered as a part of the family. She must also be considered as a part of the community and the industrial life. The children born to these women in the United States are by that fact made citizens and must be considered as a part of any program of Americanization.

**A Better Understanding of the Foreign-Born
Necessary**

We want to consider and must understand better the non-English speaking groups in our midst—that large mass of the foreign-born who are so essential to our industrial and social well-being; men and women who are the backbone of our great industries, our steel and iron works, packing houses, railroads and mines. Thirty-two million or thirty-five per cent of all of our people are of foreign-born parents. Thirteen million are foreign-born. This is indeed a population we would find it difficult to do without. They are living with us a part of the community. They largely make up our great industrial centers. We must not forget that they will live with us as an integral part of the community after the war, as they did before the war, and for this reason it is essential that during this war time no bitterness nor prejudice should be engendered. The present need for national unity and the security of our future demand that good will and good understanding be established between all the different people in the United States.

**Issued by the Committee on Foreign-Born Women in
Industry.**

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Our Obligation to the Foreign-Born

While it is true that we offer many opportunities to the immigrants from foreign lands, we must humble ourselves in the face of the conditions under which they are compelled to live. Go to any industrial center—South Bethlehem, Pa., South Chicago or the Stockyards and see the kind of houses in which we Americans with our boasted ideals have permitted the little new citizens to be born and reared. What have we done to Americanize these industrial conditions? We fall so far below the ideals of labor conditions held by the foreign-born workers that we have a labor unrest continuously. The past wages and, in many places, the present wages of our non-English peoples have not been equal to the growing American standards of the family. The unskilled worker wants a home of his own and tries desperately to meet the monthly payments. In the struggle, his wife often has to go to work, either at night or in the day time and the children are neglected. Can we wonder why they do not flock to our evening schools to learn English after long days of monotonous ugly work? These conditions do not inspire the fathers and mothers to learn a new tongue. We have not as a community seriously considered the relation of housing of unskilled labor to good citizenship. We have not considered that good housing, good industrial conditions and recreational facilities are fundamental to Americanization, especially for the unskilled labor.

The Children of the Foreign-Born

One of the most vital points to consider is that children born to these foreign-born peoples in the United States are by that fact made citizens. The too rapid Americanization of these children into pert young people without respect for authority is a dangerous problem. We should make every effort towards encouraging the children of the foreign-born to appreciate the culture of their parents'

native land. It is well to remember that culture is a possession that grows best by handing its life roots from one generation to the other. If these first generation Americans are cut loose from the culture of the past of their parents, they start their young lives in our country without nourishment for the higher sides of their natures. Reverence and respect for authority are not developed. The children of the foreign-born need to learn that the heroic is human, belonging to all lands; that Washington and Lincoln have comrades in all countries where the people love liberty.

Utilizing Old World Culture as a Key to Our New World

One way of getting the ideas and customs of America to the foreign-born is by giving him illustrated talks about America in his own tongue. It is erroneous to say that we retard the progress of immigrants by allowing them to keep up the traditions and language of their native land. Five to ten years are lost for cultural purposes because adults do not know English. In their first years in this country, our language cannot feed their minds. They are shut away from the intelligence common to the English-speaking population. The children who early learn English give to their parents scraps of news and half truths that are confusing to the adult. Thus, the child soon becomes the interpreter and the important member of the family, feeling himself superior to his old country parents. It is not simply the learning of the English language which counts, but the ideas and the inspiration gained through the language as well. New ideas can be presented to these adults only in a language which they understand. Thousands of Poles in the Stock Yards district, who had just listened resignedly to English speakers, telling of the part the Government had had in securing for them an eight hour day, ceased to be a mass of non-English speaking Poles and become humanized and

responsive as soon as the same facts were made clear to them in their own language. It was significant that, after they understood, these unskilled workers cheered the Government and the Liberty Bonds.

The important place which the immigrant holds in our industrial life overshadows his spiritual contribution to our Nation. Yet all who want to understand him better must recognize that his ideals of democracy, his sense of justice and his reverence for Lincoln and Washington who embody to him ideal Americanism, are not only very real contributions to our civilization but that they are greatly needed in our country today.

THE PROGRAM

English the Common Language

For the sake of national unification and for all practical purposes, English should be the common language. There should be national legislation making compulsory all elementary education in the English language.

For cultural purposes and for the sake of the children, the foreign peoples should be permitted to retain their native language and their children be taught to respect that language, but English should be taught for unification.

The non-English speaking women in industry should be taught English as a Safety First method. The day is not far distant when man-labor will be scarce. Women will have to do men's work at high speed, because of the demand for the largest amount of output in the shortest possible time. To safeguard these women and still secure the necessary output is a serious problem. It has been found that the non-English speaking women are put at the lowest paid and the most hazardous work, such as Railroad Section-hand work, work in Round Houses, etc. Many of these foreign-born women are seriously handicapped socially and industrially because they do not

understand the language of their bosses, nor speak the tongue of the community in which they live. Difficulties arise because they do not understand orders. They do not know nor understand labor laws or industrial standards. They are easily deceived and exploited by the unscrupulous and have little chance for advancement. They become victims of unprotected machinery and fire because they cannot heed the warning given in point or by word of mouth. Out of a large group of girls in a factory when asked what the Exit signs meant, only one could tell or explain that they meant "get out." The Ford automobile factory reports that by teaching of English to their foreign-born employees accidents have been reduced 54 per cent.

Preliminary Work

The accepted methods of publicity should be employed including getting the advice of the editors of the foreign papers, the heads of school centers, the principal and teachers of the public school, the district nurse, and not forgetting the prominent men and women of the neighborhood. This work should be done by the ablest, the most tactful and the most well informed persons obtainable. Antagonism in any foreign quarter to this work is fatal to its success. Until there is a friendly response from the neighborhood people themselves the time is not ripe to begin further work. But this work will be wasted unless we give the man and woman the material they need and with a spirit that will keep them in the school.

Factory Classes

To assist the men and especially the women who work all day and do not attend night school, free classes should be offered by the Board of Education in factories on company time, taught by trained teachers. This is the most direct way of getting English to the foreign-born woman and man. One New

York firm gives three-quarters of an hour on company time for learning English, the teachers furnished by the Board of Education. At present New York, Cleveland and Chicago school boards are forming factory classes on company time.

Public Schools

All the work done in factories should have as its objective point the public schools. The schools should be open as social and educational centers for adults of every industrial community. The public school must be humanized and socialized and brought by enlightened public opinion to adapt itself to the needs of the times.

Preparation for Teaching

The old policy that anyone can teach a man or woman English is unfortunately too often heard or implied today. There should be definite training for this work and provision for it should be made by instituting training classes. The teaching of English to the adult foreign-born is and should be a highly specialized form of pedagogical work. It requires not only a knowledge of psychology and pedagogy, but a deep social consciousness to make the work successful. Friendliness is the first requisite for the teacher of the foreign-born. There must be a real appreciation of the man or woman and a deep realization of their contribution. The teacher must understand the psychology of the simple mind and yet treat the students as men and women; must neither patronize nor treat them as children. Mr. A. W. Castle of Cleveland says: "Begin with his intelligence and not with his ignorance." After all, a sympathetic understanding and good will create an attitude of mind that goes further than method.

Direct Method of Teaching

The lessons should be given with objects, pictures, lantern slides, charts and leaflets as far as possible. The English which is given

the foreign-born man and woman must be simple but with a content which will appeal to the intelligence of the adult. English related to their every day life will be of the greatest practical value to them. Therefore, the first lessons used deal with food, clothing, shelter, etc. These lessons are followed by those relating to their job, the product they are handling and its value to the community. After this, there should be lessons on Safety First and First Aid, followed by very simple lessons in Civics, which include something of the history of this country, its institutions, advantages and responsibilities of citizenship, study or visits to public buildings and institutions which they as citizens have a right to use. There should be, finally, talks on simple laws every man and woman should know.

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The Immigrant Contribution

I am the immigrant.

Since the dawn of creation my restless feet
have beaten new paths across the earth.

My uneasy bark has tossed on all seas.

My wanderlust was born of the craving for
more liberty and a better wage for the
sweat of my face.

I looked towards the United States with eager
eyes kindled by the fire of ambition and
heart quickened with new-born hope.

I approached its gates with great expectation.

I entered in with fine hope.

I have shouldered my burden as the American
man-of-all-work.

I contribute 85% of all the labor in the
slaughtering and meat packing industries.

I do 7/10ths of the bituminous coal mining.

I do 7/8ths of all the work in the woolen mills.

I contribute 9/10ths of all the labor in the
cotton mills.

I make 19/20ths of all the clothing.

I manufacture more than half the shoes.

I build 4/5ths of all the furniture.

I make half of the collars, cuffs and shirts.

I turn out 4/5ths of all the leather.

I make half the gloves.

I refine nearly 19/20ths of the sugar.

I make half of the tobacco and cigars.

And yet I am the great American Problem.

When I pour out my blood on your altar of
labor, and lay down my life as a sacrifice
to your God of Toil, men make no more
comment than at the fall of a sparrow.

My children shall be your children, and your
land shall be my land, because my sweat
and my blood will cement the foundations
of the America of Tomorrow.

If I can be fused into the body politic, the
melting pot will have stood the supreme
test.

FREDERICK W. HASKINS.