

*Hannah Aldrich
Program*

W.C.C.O.

Radio Interview

9/7/42

*3 P.M. to
3:30.*

Q: Mr. Humphrey, what is your position and your relationship to Citizenship Education?

A: I am employed by the Minnesota Work Projects Administration. My title is that of State Chief of the War Services Section. One of the programs included in the War Services Section is that of Citizenship Education.

Q: What is the National Citizenship Education Program?

A: As a result of the Alien Registration in 1940 it was found that there were approximately 5 million persons residing in the United States who were not citizens. More than 58,000 of these are located in Minnesota. In the interest of national unity the Department of Justice through its Immigration Service sponsored a National Education Program for the foreign born. This program is a co-operative enterprise between the Department of Justice, the United States Office of Education and the Work Projects Administration. In Minnesota citizenship classes are offered by the public schools, the WPA and other organizations that are interested in education for the foreign born. It is recognized that most of the non-citizens have as great a love for America as any of us who were privileged to be born in this state. Most of them are loyal and wish to become American citizens. Now that we are at war the work of the National Citizenship Education program is all the more important because the citizen must understand the issues that are at stake. He must know why we are fighting and what we are defending. Citizenship Education stiffens the national morals.

Q: What are the steps necessary to become an American citizen?

A: The steps in the naturalization proceedings are relatively simple. First of all a non-citizen must make a declaration of intention before the Clerk of Court. After having lived here for 5 years and the declaration of intention is 2 years old he can petition for naturalization. This is generally known as "Applying for his second papers." Secondly, he must have 2 witnesses to testify to his good moral character and his loyalty and attachment to the principles of the Constitution. In addition he must be able to speak the English language and to pass the education test. The examination for citizenship is held by a federal examiner.

"Q: Would you say that the obtaining of American citizenship is relatively easy?

A: Not at all. The procedure is relatively simple but the task of passing the educational tests cannot be called a simple matter. I dare say that our foreign born who obtain their citizenship papers after their educational training are much more aware of the principles of the American Constitution and have a much better knowledge of the workings of our government than most of us who have our citizenship, not because of our own efforts, but because of birth.

Q: You mentioned, Mr. Humphrey, that there are over 58,000 non-citizens residing in Minnesota. Just how do you justify these figures when American citizenship is such a precious possession?

A: Only recently have we made a concerted effort to encourage our foreign born to take out citizenship papers. The impact of this war and a recognition of its total nature has brought all of us to the realization that if America is to win it must have the complete support of every person residing within its borders. Previously we paid far too little attention to such matters as citizenship education. However, let there be no mistake about it, the vast majority of our foreign born are loyal and true Americans. They have worked for and believe in American democracy. Most of them have been so busy doing the ordinary tasks of life that they have not had time or taken time to go through the procedure of citizenship. Now that an effort is being made to fulfill this procedure thousand's of non-citizens are taking advantage of the educational opportunity offered to them.

Q: Surely you must have come across some very interesting personal incidents in the numerous citizenship education activities.

A: Yes, I think one of the most interesting human interest stories brought to my attention deals with a Minnesota resident who came to this country approximately fifteen years ago. Her son graduated from the University of Minnesota and two months before his graduation received his citizenship papers. That son is now serving in the armed forces of this country. Suddenly the mother realized that American citizenship was not something to be taken lightly but was a possession being defended to the death by her own boy. Even though she had reached that period in life known as "old age" she immediately registered for citizenship education and fulfilled all the requirements necessary for obtaining her citizenship papers. She said that if her boy could fight for America surely she could live

for it and be an American.

Q: Have you any other incidents that you feel are quite interesting?

A: Yes. Up in northern Minnesota there was an elderly gentleman around 75 years of age who attended one of the citizenship classes. His health was none too good and that, along with his age, prompted the instructor to ask him why he was so eager to obtain his citizenship papers. Surely he had not very many more years to live and yet his enthusiasm was one of the high-lights of the whole education class. When asked why he was so eager for citizenship training he responded that now more than ever he appreciated what America meant and that it was his fondest wish to be an American citizen before he should pass away. He had always lived as a good American and he wished to die with all of the rights and honor of American citizenship. I have another incident called to mind that seems to demonstrate some of the changes that are taking place in America. A woman enrolled in a citizenship class, told her story to the instructor. She said her boy had attended American schools and was now in a foreign land serving with the American army. The young man had never learned how to write in the native language of his mother and she had never learned to write in English. Now that her boy was thousands of miles away and her only means of communicating with him was by letter she resolved to learn to speak and write the English language. She has been a most faithful attendant at the literacy and citizenship classes and is well on her way towards obtaining her citizenship papers. The tragedy of war and the realization of the danger to America brought this kind woman to recognize that American citizenship and a knowledge of the English language were vital to her happiness and security.

Q: These stories are most interesting and undoubtedly you have come across many others but time does not permit us to go on with these brief personal sketches.

A: I think it can be summarized in saying that our foreign born have been so busy raising their families to be good Americans, working and toiling to give them the privileges and opportunities of an education and a good home that the mothers and fathers have not had time to declare their intention and go through the steps of obtaining citizenship. Their heart and spirit is of America and soon many of them will have the certificate of citizenship which is so precious to all of us.



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