

A Question and Answer Page for Foreign-Born

Questions on Americanization, Naturalization, Citizenship, Civil Rights and all matters of importance in regard to the necessary adjustments for foreign-born who have come here for the purpose of remaining permanently, will be answered promptly and as fully as possible, By Judge J. A. Buchanan, President Astoria Americanization Council in Astoria, and by H. J. Langoe, Editor The United American. Anyone asking a question may request that it be published under such pseudonym as he desires but the questioner must in all instances sign his correct name and address to the letter that accompanies the question. Anonymous questions will not be published or answered in this forum. People who are living in Astoria and vicinity may address their questions directly to Judge Buchanan.

Q.—I have lived twenty years in this country and want to become a citizen, but I have lost the paper which showed the name of the steamer I came over with. I am told that I must prove that I am here legally before I can get any papers at all. Now I can't remember the name of the boat, it was an English boat, and I can't remember exactly the time I landed, it was in the spring of 1896. My surname begins with Z and English speaking people always write it with S or C unless I tell them, so I am afraid my name even on the passenger list of the steamer, if I remembered the name and the date I arrived, wouldn't help out much because they probably have it wrong there too. I am so discouraged as my children and everybody now are talking about it and blaming me for everything. Yes, I am to blame, that's true, but why didn't they talk about citizenship, and the importance of getting citizenship papers, to the immigrants of 1896, as they are doing to the immigrants of today? If they had, I would have kept that slip of paper, or gotten a new slip before I forgot all about those earlier days in my life in America. Now its everywhere: "John are you a citizen? Got your papers yet? Why, why, why?—Oh its too bad, too bad, you should have done soandso and soandso, etc." I get so mad I could go jump in the lake. I am not a foreigner, though they call me one. I am an American, paper or no paper. I feel it in my bones, in my heart, oh, it hurts, it hurts, my tears—I cannot see when I am working. It bothers me so. I am old and this trouble is making me older. I have worked hard and been honest. God knows. I paid my taxes, my home—nice American home too. My children I educate, two teachers, one daughter married big American doctor, one son, now in the university, studying civil engineer. What is the matter with old dad now, no good foreigner, got no paper, bah! Oh, its not what you call American justice, I know it, I feel it, only people are different, no love, no pity, no sympathy, no nothing. My wife, good mother, she too love America, we don't care for old country, only made mistake, we got no papers, nobody said nothing about it and we work, and work hard, all the time to save and have home and give our American children good education. Why we are no good now? I can't understand. I love America, I want my papers and mother's too so we can hold them in our hands, press them to our hearts before we die and know that we are legally Americans, without shame and that "too bod, too bad" from anybody. We have a little American flag in our home with picture

of Teddy Roosevelt our great American, how we loved him. There is no foreign country flag or nothing in our home. We are grateful for what we got in the old country, our good parents, strict bringing up, training to work, be happy, content and honest, but that's all. We love America because it's our home, the government is right, it will always be right if only the people don't change too much, like they are today—don't care for work, justice, honesty, truth and good morals. No country can stay that way, not even America. I made mistake, yes, but why make it so hard for me? I meant no wrong, only neglected something I did not know was so important for some day, someday when I should be old and bent, when I should feel the hurt, so bad, so bad. If you can think of something to help me out I would appreciate it. I like The United American, it is so American, so just, so fair. If only all America had that feeling we should not be in tears, mother and me, when we sit so lonesome with the fire place in the evenings. Americans in the hearts. Americans, like our children, but in the eyes of our neighbors only foreigners, "too bad, too bad."—John P.Z.

A.—My dear fellow American. You started to ask a question but you have delivered a sermon, a sermon so complete, a story of thousands of honest true-blue foreign born, assets to American life, in every way, that cannot be overrated. Yet they are aliens in name, because they did what you did—worked hard and forgot. No one told them in those years to hurry up and get their papers. America didn't care as much then as now. Instead of bringing help and kindly assistance to these so that they might catch up and learn indeed that America is just and fair, we have been busy making laws to "teach these foreigners something" by way of taking away from them their source of livelihood and incidentally making it very hard for them to right their mistake and obtain citizenship. Too much technicality, laws, technical points and technical people. That's what is giving America a wrong slant in public opinion here at home as much as in foreign countries. But America is still sound. The big heart-beat of America is for you John. To that bigger America you belong and stand accepted on your confession of faith, your honest face and true sentiments, as you have told your little story, no matter all the cold rules issued by the technical office-holders and bureau-chiefs which have closed the door and made it so difficult for you to obtain the papers that can at best be nothing more than an outward manifestation. I would rather be

without all the citizenship papers ever issued, than be without that American spirit that is yours, that spiritual bond that has been knit, year by year, between you and America and taken root in the very soil of our land. Unless the Department of Labor should modify the ruling which has closed the door to you, or that you by some incident should recall the name of the steamer and the date of your arrival, making investigation for proof of legitimate entry possible, you may find it very difficult to get by. Nevertheless you are a part of that spiritual America, without which the geographical boundaries would mean so little. The technical rules administered by technical people may prevent you from raising your hand publicly to speak from your heart the oath of allegiance, but meanwhile all their technical rules are incapable of keeping out those who have a two-fold purpose in view in citizenship, who readily give lip service to America though they have treason in their hearts. Keep your faith, John, it's yours and America's in common, and some day the ruling that is barring you may be changed so that you may be able to enter the American hall of citizenship for which you have been so well prepared these many years. —H.J.L.

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