

## "The Aliens' Club of America"

An Editorial Reaction to the Proposed Alien Registration Plan which will be Presented in the Next Congress by Able Proponents, who will Request Immediate Legislative Action

**I**F NO BETTER plan of registering the aliens in America has been suggested than the one appearing from press reports to have been endorsed recently by Secretary of Labor Davis, in a speech delivered before the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, then there is room for a lot of wholesome suggestions.

Why force the suggestion, already in extreme disfavor in public opinion, of anything like an alien organization, connecting up the unnaturalized immigrants in America in a vast "fraternal club" of which every alien **must** become a member, and be able at all times to show his membership card when called upon to do so? Such an institution would in itself hold unpleasant possibilities. By the aid of shrewd alien manipulators it could become a rather unwieldy institution, though Uncle Sam would stand charged with responsibility for its existence. By the aid of a little alien enlargement and elaboration such an organization might become the dispensary of unwholesome propaganda inimical to the best interests of America and the aliens alike. As an organization, though its "fraternity" scope might never go beyond the nominal stage, its titular status would invite suspicion and subject the individual alien to a contumely that could draw upon the old state of intolerance for every shade of verbal flavoring. The reaction would be a contumacious state of mind among all aliens that might develop great possibilities for serious mischief.

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The press report from New York on which this article is based contains the information that Secretary of Labor, James Davis, and Congressman Albert Johnson, appeared on the program, both declaring that bills for an alien registration system will be introduced in the next session of Congress on the basis suggested at that meeting. Just what is to go into the registration bill may be gleaned from the following two paragraphs of the news item reporting the meeting:

Declaring that there are nearly 7,000,000 aliens in the United States who would come under the planned registration, Secretary of Labor Davis claimed that among these aliens there are many criminals and bootleggers. "Take the New York East Side as an instance," he stated. "It is full of criminal elements."

The Secretary of Labor outlined the plan of the registration which is "to be conducted on the basis of a 'fraternal club.' Every registered alien will receive a card which will show his 'membership' in the 'aliens' club of America.' He will have to produce this card every year to the local authorities, just as one comes to the annual meeting of his club. After five years he will become a citizen and will no longer be a 'club member.' And just as every club covers its own expenses through membership dues, the aliens ought to cover the expenses of the registration thru 'membership dues'," he stated.

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The New York East Side is just what rotten New York politicians have made of it. Nothing contributes more to make the East Side a breeding place for crime than the ramshackle dwellings and horrible filthy old tenement houses that appear so forbidding to an outsider that except for the smiles and the laughter of the street urchin at play and the cheerful and animated faces of the innumerable curbstone merchants, backing

their wares with a Fifth Avenue assurance — he would never dare enter for fear that these ancient "brickpiles" would collapse. Were it not for the political pull of the Americans who own the tenement shacks and brick-houses, which are revenue producing only as long as there are browbeaten immigrants willing to take a chance on their lives, on the East Side, they would have been condemned by any decent municipality as unsafe and insanitary for the health of a common variety of a less particular kind of domesticated animals.

The East Side resembles a great immigrant depot, spreading out over a vast area from the old Bowery. The old Bowery itself has changed since the closing of the American saloon, but "the misery that likes company" is not difficult to find in its immediate neighborhood. Not five per cent of the houses that are rented for human habitation in the entire immigrant city of the "East Side" could stand inspection on the point of construction safety, ventilation and plumbing. No American citizen, native or foreign born, from the outside, would live in any East Side house as an alternative to imprisonment. The downtrodden immigrant from Russia, Poland, Italy and the Balkan states, of course, he finds much in the East Side that is in common with the poor people's quarters in the country from which he came, so he tarries on the "East Side" because he understands the problem of finding life's sustenance among the East Siders, and they understand him. Yet talk to a policeman with a human heart action, who has been on an East Side "beat" for many, many years, and he will tell you something of the human values that find hiding places over night in the cellars, garrets or ill-smelling hovels on the "East Side" and you begin to wonder if with all that pathos the "East Side" is not a human diamond in the rough — rough because the America beyond, doesn't care. There are criminals in the "East Side", but there are some very good reasons for the cultivation and nurturing of criminal predilections in this cosmopolitan section of the great city of New York, yet, the Secretary of Labor may not know it, the members of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce may not know it, but the "East Side" is **not full** of criminal elements.

For the purpose of knowing something at first hand of the present conditions of the "East Side," the editor of The United American spent some little time "down" in that section this last July and is, for that reason, less prejudiced against the "East Side" dwellers, but more against those who are individually and collectively to blame for the very things that are wrong with the "East Side." It would not hurt official Washington to spend less time on prejudiced reports and a little more time in personal investigation.

The plan offered that a registration fee be charged as a sort of club membership dues, instead of handling the thing as a straight departmental matter of business, is as inadvisable as the setting up of the "club" itself.

The matter of carrying out an intent in government in America under cover of a subterfuge, should

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