

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 Anonymous questions will not be published or answered in this forum.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.—Don't you think it is an insult to decent respectable men and women, though guilty of the crime of having permitted themselves to be born in a foreign country, to be asked in open court, when subjected to a naturalization examination, whether they believe in polygamy, or not? Surely the European countries, no matter what else they lack, have as good marriage laws as they have in America. Such a question embarrasses a woman and furnishes some smart examiner a chance to grin and make you feel his thoughts are not all on the governments business. —Anna J.

A.—No, I don't think its an insult to ask that question. If the examiner is conducting himself improperly, as pointed out, he cuts a sorry figure in the transaction and you should pay no attention to his grin. You are quite right that most European countries have as good marriage laws as we have in America, in fact in most countries they are better, because it is not so easy to get married nor is it very easy to get a divorce—France being an exception, something of a Reno in Europe. But admitting this fact does not remove the reason for asking the citizenship applicant this question in open court. Too many married people are today disregarding the laws of marriage in most countries inasmuch as many of them do not care to go to the trouble of getting a divorce from one spouse before they acquire another. Some of them are living almost in open polygamy. Too many married men have left their native country, and a family, behind,

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to seek a fortune in America, and after a while over here have decided to abandon the old country wife and children. Many of them marry an American girl while a wife is still living over in the old country, anxiously awaiting news from a husband who went to America. Such men frequently come into an American court asking citizenship. Should that fact ever become known you can readily see that the culprit, having lied under oath, has jeopardized himself in a very serious way. The asking of this question is largely a matter of form and should not be looked upon as being offensive, besides it gives a measure of protection to America in the eventuality that the party seeking citizenship is guilty of this crime. H.J.L.

Q.—When the war broke out I was sailing the high seas as a sailor on a German ship. When we arrived in an American port we were ordered to wait for further orders. When America declared war our ship was seized by the American government and I was not permitted to return to Germany. I was consequently detained against my own wishes and meanwhile I learned to like America so well that I went to work. No one has bothered me and, by saving, I have been able to accumulate some property and now that I have no desire to return to Germany I want to become a citizen. Of course I did not enter America illegally for I was detained under orders of the American government. The government has never made me feel that I was here wrongfully and now that I have been a permanent resident for over five years I want to obtain American citizenship in an honorable way. To get my first paper I must have a certificate of arrival, that I have not, unless the government sees fit to give it to me. What should I do to get this matter straightened out. —J.P.Z.

A.—Your case is one to be handled through the Department of Immigration. If the case is as you state, you are not subject to deportation as an illegal entrant for the very reason you have given. You should have applied to the Department of Immigration long ago for a dispensation changing your status of entry to that of an immigrant, paid your head-tax and had it over with. The fact that you at the time were classed as an alien enemy has nothing to do with your case now. If you were detained at that time and have never since been advised by any authority what you should do, which in itself is an unpardonable oversight on the part of the officials in charge, then you are certainly not illegally in this country, on the other hand there is every reason

to believe that your entry is morally legal and there is no doubt that the court's would so hold in the event that it was tested out. You should under all circumstances, if there are no other complications in your case, be able to secure an immigrant's status, by paying the eight dollars head-tax due the government, and obtain a clearance certificate enabling you to remain and to apply for your Declaration of Intention paper. The local immigration office in your city will give you every information desired. —H.J.L.

Q.—I am foreign born, but I was only a child when my parents left the old country and came to America as immigrants. My father was naturalized many years before I became of age and I was told I needed no naturalization papers on that account. My citizenship has never been considered a matter in question by anyone until it was abruptly presented in a recent case. What must I do to adjust this matter? —Theo. P.

A.—Secure a copy of your father's naturalization papers from the county clerk in the county in which your father became naturalized or the federal clerk in that district, whichever the case may be. That is all you will require to prove your citizenship. —H.J.L.

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