

## LEAGUE OF FOREIGN-BORN CITIZENS

The League of Foreign-Born Citizens is a non-racial, non-sectarian organization, founded in October, 1913, for the purpose of interesting our newer citizens in civic affairs and causing those who have not yet been naturalized to take steps toward making them American citizens.

Headquarters were established at 46 East Third Street, New York City. Within one year the membership had grown from 5 to well-nigh 500. There are now about 650 members. On March 1, 1915, the League moved to larger headquarters, at 82 Second Avenue. We there maintain a library and reading-room and an auditorium. The headquarters has become a civic center, to which a vast number of the foreign-born population of the city congregate.

Our League is accomplishing an unique result. We realize that a lack of understanding soon grows up between the older generation of immigrants to these shores and their sons, all too prone to get out with sympathy with the feelings and views of their parents. We recognize this fact and have aimed to combat it. We are succeeding. The young men are encouraged to bring their parents to the League, and many, whom we have made into citizens, have become active in our work and have, in turn, encouraged their sons to aid in our efforts toward civic improvement.

The work is divided into a number of bureaus.

## BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION

Relatives of immigrants who are detained at Ellis Island apply to the director of this bureau for assistance in enabling their friends to be admitted to this country. The facts are ascertained, and in cases where would-be immigrants are detained because they are likely to become "public charges," we aid their kin in securing the necessary bonds so that the immigrant is allowed to enter.

The League has been handling cases for applicants whose relatives were detained because of alleged physical ailments, and is endeavoring to assist them in minimizing the expense incident to such detention.

## FREE NATURALIZATION CLASSES

(Directors, Aaron Glauterman and Leon Rosen)

The naturalization work is divided into three grades. Grade A: Applicants are assisted in the preparation of their citizenship papers. They are taught to read and write English. By arrangements with the county clerk's office, their blanks are stamped with the signature of the League, and the naturalization clerks readily issue the official first papers to applicants presenting the stamped blanks. Applicants have, by this means, saved two to three hours when they come to the county clerk's office with their blanks fully prepared for them at the League. Grade B: Applicants for second papers are aided in the preparation of the blanks for their second papers and are assisted in obtaining their certificates of arrival. Grade C: Classes in the history and principles of our government. Applicants are instructed in the meaning of our Constitution and are taught to answer questions necessary for proof of a proper appreciation of American institutions.

We had found an appalling inertness on the part of a vast number of immigrants toward taking the steps necessary for becoming citizens. The reasons were, of course, largely the inaccessibility of the naturalization courthouses and the time consumed in the making out of the preliminary blanks at the court. But more than these actual obstacles was the vague belief that the process itself was so difficult to understand and to overcome.

Arrangements are being made with the county clerk whereby naturalization clerks will be present at the League certain evenings each week to grant first papers to applicants. This will, of course, mean a tremendous saving in time to the applicants.

We hope to bring about in New York City a method which is proving successful in Los Angeles, Cal., whereby great saving of time for prospective citizens and for the courts can be accomplished. We are planning the following: The members of our naturalization classes are to receive a diploma from the League at the close of their course of instruction. This diploma will be accepted by the courts as evidence

of satisfactory knowledge of the Constitution and history of our government, and will be accepted by the judge in lieu of the examination to which applicants are now subjected.

The people are getting to know of the existence of the League and that it welcomes prospective citizens; that we solve doubtful problems with regard to eligibility, that we save them time and needless worry. In short, the very existence of the kind of organization we are striving to be has aroused citizenship activity among the people. Our records contain the names of a number of applicants who have come to our League who have been in this country fifteen years, and some of them as long as twenty years, without ever having taken steps toward naturalization. They are now on their way toward citizenship.

## FREE CIVIL SERVICE CLASSES

(Directors, Louis Goldberger and William Zucker)

Young men are encouraged to prepare for a life of service to the city. They are taught to feel that a government position is more than a mere "job," but that upon the character of such work largely depends the well-being of those dwelling in our city.

In turn we are endeavoring to aid the associations that are seeking a pension for the city's employes who have given their best years to the service of the municipality.

## PUBLIC WELFARE WORK

We have assisted in opposing the literacy test and other objectionable features of the proposed immigration bill.

We have assisted in changing the New York State Law which prohibited non-citizens from laboring on public work, so that they may be enabled to secure positions in grades of work for which citizens are generally unsuited.

We have helped to fight the movement to curtail the free public lecture system.

The League has obtained from the city government the adoption of a policy whereby peddlers were permitted, for a two weeks' period prior to the Passover and Tabernacle holidays, wider privileges for vending their wares throughout the city.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

A course of public lectures by the heads of the city government upon the work of

their respective departments is given at the headquarters of the League on the first and third Sunday evenings of each month. A concert is given in connection with the public meetings and we are striving to combine a pleasant social evening with the spread of knowledge concerning our governmental problems.

At Cooper Union, on the evening of January 14th last, the League conducted a public "Experience Meeting," at which the heads of the New York City government told what they had already accomplished and what they plan to do.

The New York *Evening World*, commenting editorially, said: "This meeting, under the auspices of the League of Foreign-Born Citizens, is said to be the first of its kind ever arranged in New York City. It is an interesting attempt to bring an administration face to face with the public it serves."

The New York *Mail*, in an editorial, said: "The Cooper Union meeting of the League of Foreign-Born Citizens went a long way toward establishing in this city the good old-fashioned town meeting, and the Mayor did his part to make this scheme effective in the struggle for good municipal government."

We are arranging a meeting of welcome in honor of Governor Moses Alexander of Idaho, a foreign-born citizen, who will address the League upon his visit East during the latter part of April. The Mayor of our city will extend to him the official greetings of the city of New York. Other eminent men will address the meeting. Borough President Marcus M. Marks will be the honorary chairman.

The League has come to be recognized as an active factor in all civic and communal efforts. Existing civic organizations have always consisted chiefly of the exceedingly few men who evince concern in affairs other than those that affect their immediate business or professional interests.

Our function seems to have come to be this—that we are arousing in hundreds and more of the vast body of people hitherto indifferent to public questions a civic consciousness. Our work is gradually becoming recognized and city officials have frequently called upon us to aid them in public causes.