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ADDRESS

BY

HONORABLE HERBERT BROWNELL, JR.  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

AT

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

EBBETS FIELD & POLO GROUNDS

New York, New York

Thursday, November 11, 1954

November 11th is a hallowed day for all Americans. It has been the day on which we paid tribute to those who gave their lives in freedom's cause in the first World War. At the hour of the armistice which ended that bloody fighting, we offered silent prayers -- prayers of thanks, and of hope and peace. Now, November 11th formally has been set aside for tribute to all United States veterans, living or dead, who fought to keep us free. And it continues as a day dedicated to memory of the past and hope for the future -- hope that all men can learn to live together in peace as we have done in this American melting pot of the world.

This November 11th, however, assumes added significance. It has meaning which makes it an even greater honor for me to be with you today. It is a privilege to join you in celebrating your entrance into United States citizenship. It is a pleasure to join your friends and relatives in congratulating you and wishing you well as citizens of our nation.

Throughout the United States, in Hawaii, in Guam, more than 48,000 persons, yourselves included, have met in solemn assembly to receive the cherished blessings of citizenship in these United States. The judges and clerks of our Federal courts have done a magnificent job in arranging these ceremonies with the splendid help of civic and patriotic organizations and of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The fact that more than 48,000 of you would leave your homelands, your relatives, your old friends to join our brotherhood of liberty is living proof that America still stands before all the world as its greatest symbol of freedom.

Your oath of allegiance to the United States required your renunciation of all former allegiance. This solemn pledge does not obligate you to forego your natural affection for the land of your birth. Rather, it exacts from

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you a sincere promise of unswerving loyalty to this Nation above all others.

Malignant forces of tyranny today would destroy all that you found desirable in this nation. The leaders of the communist conspiracy would destroy the very concepts of human dignity upon which this Nation is founded. They would destroy the right of every man and woman to seek his or her own way of life. They would deny the God-given rights which we all hold so dear.

The falsity of the communist doctrines and practices is evidenced by your solemn actions today. As your forefathers before you, you have chosen the American way of life. Your path has not been smooth. Indeed, many of you risked your lives to penetrate the Iron Curtain to join us.

We appreciate that. We hope and pray that we shall never fail the trust you have placed in us. In that trust, in this living demonstration of your faith in the dignity of man, we are humble as well as proud.

Just two days ago, President Eisenhower saluted your courage, your determination, and your belief in a simple meeting at the White House with 22 of the applicants for citizenship. The honor and tribute was not theirs alone. It went out to all of you. The President's unprecedented action signified his very real desire to proclaim to you the full meaning of this day.

United States citizenship is priceless. It is a heritage of the freedom-loving peoples of all ages. It is based on the dreams and toil and bloodshed of those who first came to the New World -- and of the millions of others, like yourselves, who followed them.

From this day hence, you stand on equal footing with all the citizens of this unique Republic.

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With those who guided and assisted you in preparing for this day, you have discussed the many privileges which now are yours as citizens. Also, you have studied the duties and responsibilities which you voluntarily have assumed.

Remember always that constant vigilance is the price of continued freedom. Accept the truth that recognition of the equal rights of others is the best assurance that our own rights will be preserved. Be constantly aware that the law, manifested through the orderly procedures of our courts, is the true guardian of our liberties.

The Government to which you have sworn allegiance is your Government. The people are the masters. The Government is the servant, doing for the people only those things which they cannot do individually for themselves. As citizens, you should acquaint yourselves fully with the mechanics of your Government. You should study and discuss the issues before it. You should make your voice, and your vote, heard. It can be representative only to the extent that you help make it so.

Our Government is not static. It must remain flexible to meet the needs of changing times.

For example, as you well know every alien who applies for admission to the United States must be inspected by an Immigration Officer to determine his or her admissibility under our laws. For generations, that was done only after arrival in this country. Repeatedly, persons approached these shores with every expectancy of being allowed to enter, only to be denied this privilege in the final stage.

Much has been done over the years to eliminate this heart-breaking situation. Today we are going a step further. We are inaugurating new

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pre-inspection procedures. These procedures contemplate that, in many instances, this admissibility inspection no longer will be conducted upon arrival. It either will take place at the point of foreign departure or, when that is not practical, while enroute to the United States.

We have had a form of such pre-inspection for sometime for some of those entering the United States from Canada, our very good neighbor to the North. Negotiations are underway to extend the procedure to air travel originating in Cuba, Mexico, Bermuda and similar areas. Recently, we have been able to institute pre-inspection on American President Lines ships from the Far East and, this week, we are starting trial extensions of the program to some travel from Europe.

As a citizen, you are of course interested in how well the Government does a job with which you yourselves have had intimate experience. So you ask: What does this pre-inspection mean to the friends and relatives abroad who are perhaps the immigrants of tomorrow?

The procedure will serve a two-fold purpose:

First, inadmissibility of any alien will be determined before arrival, and often before departure from abroad, materially reducing the hardship which comes with exclusion at a port of entry.

Second, the alien in possession of proper documents will be admitted with virtually no delay at the port of entry by the Immigration authorities.

Thus, the final tension and uneasiness felt by so many in the last stage of their great journey will disappear. The seemingly long delays in what is then this strange land will be reduced markedly.

And, I can assure you that there will be a continued study to extend and improve this program.

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Of course, while this is underway, you may ask: What of those who still might be detained because pre-inspection is not yet available for them? And, what of those awaiting possible deportation? What are we doing about the problems for the individuals here?

Now, these problems of detention also have been studied intently. As a result, we have formulated a new policy -- a policy which I am pleased to announce today because I believe you will agree it will make a vast improvement in one phase of your Government's relations with individuals. It is one more step forward toward humane administration of the Immigration laws under the fine leadership of Commissioner Joseph M. Swing.

In all but a few cases, those aliens whose admissibility or deportation is under study will no longer be detained. Only those deemed likely to abscond or those whose freedom of movement could be adverse to the national security or the public safety will be detained. All others will be released on conditional parole or bond or supervision, with reasonable restrictions to insure their availability when their presence is required by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In the past year, more than 38,000 were detained for varying lengths of time in exclusion cases alone, not including those cases involving migrant workers along the Mexican border. Of the 38,000, less than 1,600 were actually excluded at ports of entry, and of these, only about 110 were excluded as subversives and about 360 as criminals. So, under the new policy, somewhat less than 1,000 might be detained in any given year in exclusion proceedings.

The new detention policy is so far-reaching in scope and effect that the Department of Justice is discontinuing its six seaport detention

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facilities at New York, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, San Pedro and Honolulu.

The best known of these, of course, is Ellis Island in New York Harbor. It was established as an immigration station in 1892. More than 20,000,000 persons have been processed there on their arrival in the United States. In fact, in the year 1907 alone, 1,200,000 persons arrived through Ellis Island. But today the little island between the Statue of Liberty and the skyline and piers of New York seems to have served its purpose for Immigration. Only 200 to 300 persons have been detained there in recent months. Only part of one main building has been used. So, on November 19th, the little gray ferry which has made its hourly run from the Battery to Ellis and return over the years will make its last trip.

All immigration service functions will be centered at 70 Columbus Avenue. When needed, other more modern detention facilities will be used. The island buildings, I feel sure, can be put to useful service in other work.

Our Government will save more than \$900,000 in the move from Ellis Island alone. The total savings at all six such facilities is estimated at more than \$1,300,000. Those at Boston, San Francisco, and San Pedro already have been closed. Those at Seattle will be closed shortly as will most of those at Honolulu.

I report these administrative matters to you as fellow citizens who have a keen awareness of what they involve. In the years ahead, you can play important roles in bringing about other beneficial changes in government activity, in this field and in others. Our system of Government functions best when its citizens work at their duties, when they make it

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a point to be well-informed, to reach considered opinions and to express those opinions.

You now are an integral part of that Government. Cherish the new heritage which it has given you. Retain the ideals of our forefathers and guard them well. Above all, remember your responsibilities as well as your privileges for, if you do, the United States holds for all of us an abundant life with happiness, liberty and security.

On one of the truly great days of your lives, I offer my heartfelt congratulations. Welcome to the American family.