

THE PROBLEM OF AMERICANIZATION

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The Problem of Americanization by Peter Roberts

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PETER ROBERTS

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INTRODUCTION

THE word Americanization has become a household term — among the native-born a synonym of anxiety, dread, or duty, among the foreign-born one of misgiving, suspicion, or hope. There are more than five million aliens in the United States, ninety-five per cent of whom are kindly disposed to America. The remaining five per cent comprise the radicals, whose souls are lashed by breezes of doctrines, emanating from continental Europe, writhing in the hand of doctrinaires who treat a starving and bankrupt patient. The radicals have a well-organized speaker's bureau, a many-tongued press, and a fervency in attack which cannot be paralleled by any constructive and conserving agency interested in aliens. If Bolshevism and I. W. W.-ism are to be successfully combated, America needs a program of enlightenment, an army of volunteer workers, a wide-awake press, and a zeal for American democracy akin to apostolic fervor. The radicals have long had the right of way in communities made up of foreign-speaking peoples. We should match this with a propaganda of enlightenment as to what the principles of American democracy are, how it operates, and what the prospects are for a successful future.

The purpose of this book is to aid men and women giving all or part time to the work of Americanization. It emphasizes the heritage that is ours, submits a program and a plan of operation, outlines how men and women may be trained to do the work, and points to the goal which all Americanization workers should keep before them. America suffers with a world that is worn and torn. In these days of reconstruction we need to recall the heroism of men and women of all lands who have suffered to bring about a better to-morrow. America's future is full of hope, but it is inseparably involved in the question of whether or not we are willing to weld our five million aliens to the body politic by sympathy, justice, good will, and brotherly kindness. This can be done if we have unflinching faith that out of all aliens, staunch defenders of this great democracy can be formed.

The program and organization outlined in the book have been successfully used in many fields. They are the fruits of years of service for and with immigrants. My aim has been to interest the teacher and the general reader in the most important phases of Americanization. The view-point of the book, as well as the choice of details, has been influenced by my connection with the Y. M. C. A. as director of its Americanization activity. My work for the last fifteen years has brought me in contact with all kinds of immigrants in every state in the Union. Never has the work of Americanization been more promising than now — promising, because of the eagerness of the foreign-born to receive what America

has to offer, and because of the willingness of the native-born to give a helping hand to all who honestly try to become Americans. If the leaders of the foreigners and public-spirited Americans in industrial centers where aliens live plan wisely, and coöperate heartily in the work of assimilation, the beneficent result will be better understanding and greater solidarity among the peoples forming cosmopolitan communities—a consummation devoutly wished by every true American.

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