

PROBATION FOR ALIENS

By REMSEN CRAWFORD.

PERHAPS, after all, the Republican platform makers at Chicago did make themselves fairly well understood on one subject—immigration. Did you read that plank? Stripped of glittering generalities and vote-catching phrasology, the gist of its immigration policy may be found in this one sentence:

"To facilitate Government supervision, all aliens should be required to register annually until they become naturalized."

What does this mean?

Well, to the great mass of the people it doesn't mean anything more than an indulgence in the privilege of making vain, idle suggestions, granted to all platform makers of whatever political party they may be. But, to those of us whose task or privilege it has been to study immigration close-up, being at work day in and day out at Ellis Island, this plank in the Republican platform means an indorsement of the Johnson bill, and, to us, this falls like a political sensation.

The Johnson bill is one of the 200 or more measures now pending before Congress making for the regulation and control of immigration. It may be generally and briefly described as a bill which would change completely the present system of handling and classifying immigrants. It provides for the registration of every immigrant alien who lands upon the shores of the United States. By its terms, in the determination of the eligibility of an alien the burden of proof would be placed upon the alien and not upon the immigration

agents of the United States. If the Johnson bill should ever become a law every alien in the United States would be under surveillance. He or she would have to renew his or her registration once a year and pay a tax in accordance with his or her advancement toward our American standards of character and citizenship during the twelve months just preceding the renewal of registration. At the end of the fourth year the alien is no longer required to pay a tax or register, the assumption being that he or she will by that time have been safely and serenely schooled, coaxed, or steered into the blessed enjoyments of full-fledged American citizenship.

Does this plan sound too theoretical? Does it smack too much of the old passport game of nations, so often alluded to as a Machiavellian method of enforcing diplomatic tyranny? Is there too much of the doctrinaire, too little of the humanitarian in it? Does it sound like saddling upon the country another great army of detectives and deputy sheriffs? Is the scheme to control immigration fraught with centralization of Federal domination, so repellent to the American conception of freedom?

Affirmative answers to these questions should not be given hastily. The Johnson bill was presented to Congress by Albert Johnson, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration. He is from the State of Washington, where the spirit of Americanism runs high, particularly in regard to the liberties and license of the alien population. He is a careful student of immigration, and, perhaps, the most vigilant opponent of Bolshevism in Congress; witness his re-

cent clash with Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post, because of the latter's alleged leniency in enforcing the Deportation act of Oct. 16, 1918.

Moreover, the Johnson bill is supposed to have been partly drafted by Anthony Caminetti, the present head of the Bureau of Immigration. Mr. Johnson is a Republican and Mr. Caminetti is a Democrat, so there cannot be anything like intended partisanship in the plan.

In all cases of admission the alien would have to register, describing himself, furnishing a photograph and giving his future address. Annually thereafter in the month of January he would have to renew his registration and pay a tax. The initial tax upon arrival of an adult male or unmarried female is fixed at \$2. But, beginning the second January after arrival, the alien must pay, in the case of adult male and unmarried female, \$10 for each annual re-registration. The initial tax upon arrival of unmarried females and children under 16 is fixed at \$1, and the annual re-registration tax for this class is put at \$5 for the next four years. If after the first year the alien has learned to read English \$1 will be deducted from the tax, and \$2 will be deducted if he or she can both read and write English. Three dollars will be deducted in case the alien has learned to read and write English and in addition has gained a knowledge of civics, and so forth, until the alien has become thoroughly Americanized and qualified for citizenship.

It is clear that such a system of registration and taxation is going to require a great force of Immigration Inspectors and agents, stationed by districts throughout the country.

The Republican immigration plank in its entirety follows:

"The standard of living and the standard of citizenship are its most precious possessions and the preservation and elevation of those standards is the first duty of our Government.

"The immigration policy of the United States should be such as to insure that the number of foreigners in the country at any one time shall not exceed that which can be assimilated with reasonable rapidity, and to favor immigrants whose standards are similar to ours.

"The selective tests that are at present applied could be improved by requiring a higher physical standard, a more complete exclusion of mental defectives and of criminals, and a more effective inspection, applied as near the sources of immigration as possible, as well as at the port of entry. Justice to the foreigner and to ourselves demands provision for guidance, protection and better economic distribution of our alien population. To facilitate Government supervision all aliens should be required to register annually, until they become naturalized.

"The existing policy of the United States for the practical exclusion of Asiatic immigrants is sound and should be maintained."

Such is the Republican attitude in the matter of immigration. What will be the policy of the Democrats? Little as may be thought about it by the native American voter, this question is uppermost just now in the minds of millions of voters who were not born here. There has been a great rush for naturalization since the war. For the year 1918 more than 450,000 applications were received for citizenship papers. Courts have worked overtime issuing certificates of citizenship. There will be more "new" voters next November than ever before. That these "new" voters, born as many of them were in other lands, will use their franchise as a force for shaping our immigration policy in the future cannot be doubted. Their selection of candidates will be largely a matter of the declarations made concerning the immigration issue.