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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ADDRESS OF ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT H. JACKSON

welcoming the  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

to the Department of Justice.

I want to extend to all of the officials and employees of the Immigration and Naturalization Service a hearty welcome to the Department of Justice. I hope that you will soon find yourselves at home in the Department and at one with its purposes.

I have long been familiar with the splendid work of your Service. It has a distinguished history and it may well be that the period which we are now entering will mark one of its high points. For at this time with our pressing alien problems your Service becomes one of the key branches of the government. The focus of the country's attention is upon you and will be for some time to come. The responsibilities of each of you will from now on be heightened. The country looks to you for strong, wise, and intelligent action.

These are not easy times in which to handle the problems that arise in connection with the alien. The swift currents of international conflict unloose dangerous emotions and distort our normal perspective. In that setting, the greatest single force for national stability will be a confident knowledge on the part of the country that you are doing your job forcefully, effectively -- yet calmly and in a common-sense way.

For that reason I want to outline the policy of this Department on the problems within your jurisdiction.

1. There will be a more strict control of the privilege of entering this country. The doctrine that any person may come to this country unless it is shown that he is a menace must at least temporarily yield to the policy that none shall be admitted unless it affirmatively appears to be for the American interest. To that end, in cooperation with the Department of State, greater strictness will be exercised over privileges to enter and an increased vigilance at borders.

2. We favor a simple, straightforward registration and identification of all non-citizens who are in our midst. This of course carries no criminal stigma and no implications of any sort. It is a simple recognition of non-citizenship common in all countries. It must not be carried out offensively or oppressively.

If I, as an American, were today a resident in a foreign country, I would welcome the opportunity to go to the authorities and explain the reason for my presence and what my activities were, and to obtain some kind of certification which I might show as evidence of

my good faith. I believe that in this country alien registration will bring to those aliens who comply with it a large degree of protection from local harassments and other embarrassments, and that this plan if carried out properly will be a benefit to the alien who complies.

3. After registration is completed there will be a residue of unregistered aliens who will not comply, either because it would disclose illegal entry, or because it might disclose other crimes, or because many of them are ignorant or uninformed or mistaken about our law. We must set up machinery to deal fairly and dispassionately with these cases according to the individual merits of the particular situation.

4. I cannot emphasize too strongly that it is the duty of a department which claims to be a Department of Justice to deal with the non-citizen in this country without prejudice, without malice, and with scrupulous fairness. The three and a half million aliens in this country are most of them loyal to our principles. We must remember that most of them have sought this country as a haven from

other systems of government. Most of them, like millions of immigrants before them, have the makings of good Americans. But hateful or unjust treatment of loyal non-citizens may have the result of making them the prey of those who would organize a "fifth column" here. No greater disservice to the cause of American unity and defense can be perpetrated than the wholesale arousing of hate against persons of foreign birth who have been attracted to this country by our promise of American opportunity.

It will be the duty of this Department, while firmly insisting upon alien observation of the precautions which we see fit to take for the national defense, also to insist upon American citizens' showing due and decent observance of the rights of aliens who do so comply, and it may very well be that a protection of the legitimate rights of aliens may become as important a duty of this new unit in the Department as the enforcement of the law against them.