



Department of Justice

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"RELAXATION OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS"

ADDRESS

BY

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Attorney General of the United States

Luncheon Meeting

of the

Florida Hotel Association

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I appreciate your invitation to speak here today.

I am going to talk about a subject which is fundamental to your business of operating hotels. My topic is travel -- particularly travel to the United States from foreign countries. Travel in this country is always attractive, of course, especially when the objective is a vacation in your own delightful State of Florida.

I hope we non-Floridians can prolong our visit here to see Florida's magnificent advances in industry and tourism. We'll not then make the mistake of the American who made the "Grand Tour" on a plan which allowed 48 hours at the most for each of the great capitals and cities of Europe. When he returned to the United States a neighbor asked him whether he had seen Venice.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "but when we got there they were in the midst of a terrible flood. All the streets were under water and all the people were traveling around in boats. We didn't even get out of our hotel!"

Despite the experience of our American friend, international two-way travel offers significant advantages for the good of our Country. An interchange of visitors provides an important means of achieving better world understanding and of relieving world tensions. The recent visit of the International Hotel Association to Washington was of great significance.

Today I would like to tell you something of what your Government is doing to encourage and stimulate international travel for these purposes.

As you know, Americans are famous travelers. Great numbers of our citizens go abroad each year. This is a good thing, and we wish to encourage it. Through foreign travel, we gain knowledge and understanding of other people -- of their ways and of their culture and customs. Through friendships made abroad, we encourage foreign visitors to come to our country. Thus, the benefits flow both ways. By visiting with us and learning of our customs the understanding of our foreign visitors is heightened and their misconceptions about us and our way of life are dispelled.

Much is being done to promote this "2-way street" concept and to facilitate the international exchange of visitors between the United States and other nations.

In his message to Congress on March 30, 1954, on the subject of foreign economic policy generally, the President emphasized the advantages to be gained from the interchange of travelers. Recognizing that the promotion of tourism is primarily a function for private enterprise, he pointed out, nevertheless, that governmental action can be helpful. He therefore called specifically for the simplification of procedures relating to customs, visas, passports, exchange or monetary restrictions, and any other regulations that sometimes harass the traveler.

Following his message the President sent a directive to the executive departments principally concerned with international travel. Among these was the Department of Justice. I shall

deal briefly with actions which we have taken in the Department of Justice to carry out the President's directive, and then turn to some of the other Government departments which are striving to reduce barriers and handicaps to international travel.

One of the necessary encumbrances to travel imposed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in the Department of Justice is the important requirement of inspection. For purposes of our security, safety and welfare, it is essential that all citizens and aliens who arrive at our ports of entry be inspected to determine their qualifications for admission to the United States. This phase of the Immigration Service's work is of vast proportion and potentially a troublesome bottleneck.

To better understand this consider for a moment some of the figures:

In the fiscal year 1956, there were more than 134 million arrivals at all United States ports and by all means of travel. True, more than 129 of the 134 million arrivals were border crossers - that is, frequent commuters across the Canadian and Mexican border. Nevertheless, the problem is the same. Each arrival must be inspected, and the number last year was the largest in the history of our country.

Well over a half million of those arrivals were non-immigrants - visitors who came to this country for various purposes. This figure is another all-time high.

Now, in the past the inspection process has taken place upon arrival in the United States, that is, at the ports of entry. But, in order to speed up the flow, the Immigration Service has instituted a system wherever possible of conducting the inspection abroad. We call this a system of "preinspection." Through preinspection, admissibility is determined either before the journey commences or en route. It eliminates delay for immigration inspection after landing.

Stations for preinspection are now located at Toronto and Winnipeg and at Montreal and Bermuda.

For air travelers, we have a system of preinspection which operates in Hawaii and in other territories of the United States.

En route inspection is in operation on board vessels of the American President and Orient Steamship Lines operating from the Far East.

The results obtained from the system of preinspection have been highly gratifying to everyone concerned, and we are planning to add to the stations thus far established. Consideration is being given, for example, to preinspection on a permanent basis in Havana, Cuba, Nassau in the Bahamas, and in Mexico City.

Customs controls for incoming visitors and returning travelers have also been centralized. These coincide with other inspection operations at points of entry. They are administered by the Treasury Department in complete cooperation with the Department of Justice.

Where possible customs inspection is also accomplished on board trains or at the point of foreign origin. The possibility of establishing inspection staffs at air traffic centers outside the United States, similar to those established for immigration inspection, is also under consideration.

Within the limits of the law, the Department of Justice has taken other steps to ease travel, such as in the matter of travel documents. Existing law permits the Attorney General and the Secretary of State jointly to waive documents for non-immigrants coming here from contiguous territories, such as Canada, or adjacent islands, like Bermuda, on a basis of reciprocity with those areas.

With the concurrence of the State Department, the Department of Justice has waived visa requirements for non-immigrant travel for Canadians, for certain Mexican citizens, and for British subjects in Bermuda who wish to visit the United States. Concurrently our own citizens are relieved of comparable requirements when traveling to Canada, Mexico, or to Bermuda. Consideration is being given to similar mutually beneficial arrangements with other contiguous territories and adjacent islands.

Another especially effective arrangement relieves resident aliens visiting Canada, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Bermuda, and the Bahamas for periods up to 30 days from obtaining visas, re-entry permits or border-crossing cards. In this instance, also, we are studying the possibility of further extension of the arrangements.

The changes thus far mentioned are now in effect. These constitute part of our program. But this is not all. Additional changes for easing travel requirements are contemplated. Some of these will require legislation. Our experience has indicated, for example, that some of the provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 are creating unnecessary limitations upon travel to the United States and imposing hardships upon visitors to our Country. To eliminate these, the President

acting upon the recommendation of the Department of Justice, has asked the Congress to amend the law.

He has recommended repeal of provisions which require fingerprinting of visitors who intend to remain in the United States for temporary periods only. Although no stigma is attached to fingerprinting in our minds, it is not a requirement of travel in other countries. The procedure is regarded as objectionable, especially to visitors who come here from countries in which fingerprinting is looked upon with disfavor. It is an obstacle to travel by these people. Our experience with these provisions has shown that the requirement does not contribute significantly to our national safety and security. Consequently, we have recommended its repeal.

We have also recommended amendment to the law so as to permit travelers, who are merely in transit through the United States, to go through without complying with all the standards for admission. With the increase in air travel, aliens traveling from one foreign country to another often find it necessary to pass through the United States without any intention of remaining here.

A South American flying to or returning from Europe, for example, will often pass through the United States. We feel that he need not be required to meet all of the standards for admission, coupled with inspection and examination, that normally apply. Under present requirements, he may be found deportable or excludable. An amendment of the law which would permit direct transit would be useful. It would eliminate hardship to the traveler, the loss of good will,

and would remove much expense from the transportation companies.

We feel also that the law should be amended to eliminate the necessity for inspection and application of all grounds of exclusion to aliens seeking admission to the mainland of the United States from Alaska and Hawaii. This results in expense to the Government and causes delays and inconvenience in travel. These territories are part of the United States, and aliens who entered or are present in them are already subject to all of the provisions of the law.

Proposed legislation to accomplish these changes in the law has been submitted to the Congress by the Department of Justice.

I should like to turn now to activities in other departments of Government.

First, as to the Department of State. As a preliminary to offering extended rights and privileges to foreign visitors, the Department of State has instructed all of its embassies to negotiate with the governments to which they are accredited to work out agreements which will assure Americans similar rights on a reciprocal basis.

Among the changes available for reciprocal agreement are many which liberalize visa requirements. For example, visitors from reciprocal-agreement countries may now obtain a non-immigrant visa for any number of visits within a period of four years and with no fee. The previous period was two years.

It is possible to revalidate such a visa up to four years without a formal application. Previously, this was limited to a 2-year period also. These arrangements have been successfully negotiated for nationals of 57 countries.

Another innovation permits the visitor a year to obtain the validation, whereas the period was formerly only three months. This is to facilitate the travel of those who reside long distances from the United States, who could hardly be expected to pay another visit to the United States within a short period of time.

Entry procedures have been further simplified to permit the use of a visa, valid for both business and pleasure, whereas formerly a separate visa was required for each.

The State Department has also arranged to permit aliens to have their names registered and maintained on quota-waiting lists while enjoying the privileges of a non-immigrant visa for bona fide visits. In order to prevent abuse, this privilege is extended with the understanding that the name may not be reinstated as of the date of original entry.

To speed up paper work, which is always a delaying factor, the State Department has now converted to a new and simplified application form for non-immigrant visas. Moreover, consideration is being given to the elimination of fee stamps - another harassment to the traveler. A more simplified system of recording fees is being considered in substitution for the stamps.

Consistent with the "2-way street concept", the Department of State continues to make it easy and convenient for Americans to apply for passports for travel abroad. The only burdensome requirement is that of appearing in person to make the initial formal application. However, renewals may be made in writing and further speed-ups have been developed through recent revisions in the passport forms.

Commencing July 1, 1956, Congress began making funds available to the International Travel Division in the Department of Commerce for the specific purpose of promoting international travel. The Division offers expert advice and technical assistance on the expansion of facilities in foreign countries.

For example, working through the International Cooperation Administration, advice on the "know-how" for developing tourism has been offered to the Latin American governments. The Government of Brazil has already availed itself of this offer, and consideration is being given to projects in other South American countries.

Private industry is of course, performing the major role in promoting and developing international travel. But in these activities the Department of Commerce is the Government counterpart. It provides the focal point for information on tourism and for cooperation with Government agencies generally.

Government and private tour agencies are working together effectively through the establishment of committees representative of each. There is a Travel Advisory Committee made up of 30 executives of the principal tourism organizations in private industry. There is also an Interdepartmental Committee on Foreign Travel with membership from all of the executive agencies concerned with international travel or with border crossing formalities.

In the Treasury Department an important improvement has been sponsored. For the first time in over half a century there has been a revision of the passenger's baggage declaration. Those of you who have

struggled with the long, old-fashioned declaration will appreciate the value of an improvement there. The principal feature of the new form is simple "Yes" or "No" type questions.

Another Treasury contribution affects private automobiles. Visitors who bring cars for noncommercial purposes may now do so free of duty. As a result of recent legislation they are classified as personal effects.

Throughout Government responsible authorities are endeavoring to provide improved facilities to handle international traffic. Time does not permit a full exposition. Even the traditional quarantine has yielded to stepped-up procedures. In the interest of expedition, the Public Health Service now stations medical officers in foreign countries to examine applicants for visas abroad in order to facilitate entry procedures upon arrival in the United States.

Let me comment briefly at this point on a program which is very close to the heart of President Eisenhower, namely, the People-to-People program. As you know, this program, conceived by the President, seeks the day-to-day cooperation of United States citizens who, by making the proper personal contacts with their friends and business acquaintances in other lands, can go far toward building a friendly climate between our nations. Sometimes it is possible that this type of contact can be more persuasive than the formal statements and actions of a government body. It is left to the committees which represent the major industries of America to find a way to make their contribution. It was typical of the alertness, and public spiritedness, of the American Hotel Association, that you people were in on this program at the outset.

Last year the American Hotel Association did something which I think is in the fine spirit of the People-to-People program. They attempted to import several hundred refugee cooks and bakers from European countries, to meet a need for that type of skill in our hotels. They made a similar effort in behalf of the Hungarian parolees who came over here following the seige of Budapest. Unfortunately, the Refugee Relief Act expired December 31, and put an end to the admission of these people to America. But I am sure that this willingness on the part of American business to aid these families in coming to the United States, and making a brand new start, must have left an indelible impression in the communities in which those people live.

In the whole field of international travel, there are numerous advisory boards and committees set up within our federal government. Charlie Horrworth, executive vice president of AHA, serves on one of these committees, while the staff of AHA's Washington office serve on others. If the Departments of State, and Commerce, and Justice can work together with your own spokesmen and industry leaders, I am sure that we can bring about a healthy growth in travel back and forth across our boundaries. To that end, I assure you here today of my complete, earnest collaboration at all times.

These are some of the ways by which this Country may continue to retain its role as the economic and cultural leader among the nations of the world. More remains to be done. Each of us through friendship and cooperation can help bridge the narrowing space that separates our country from others. Each of us can do our share in cementing the ties which have long bound us with the free peoples of many lands. Each of us can help through our constant efforts. An important ingredient of success in your business is friendliness. It is an equally important element in our relations with foreign nations. By encouragement, and support of two-way international trade we can help maintain our nation's leadership of the free world.