



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201-2483, U.S.A. PHONE (718) 625-3800

November 6, 1995

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Re: Questions Concerning Immigration or Naturalization

Dear Brothers:

As world conditions continue to deteriorate, it is understandable that some in the Christian congregation begin to consider migration as a means to alleviate physical hardship. When publishers seek advice concerning immigration laws, it is good to remember that an elder's comments should be limited to spiritual issues.—See *Awake!* of February 22, 1994, pp. 25-7; April 22, 1993, pp. 17-19; and May 8, 1992, pp. 3-12.

From time to time the Society receives inquiries from publishers in the United States who are considering naturalization. Whether one should apply for United States citizenship or not is entirely a personal decision. Each individual must make his or her own final decision. A factor to consider is whether the naturalization law may require one to violate his conscience or Bible principles. The Society's publications in the past have commented on the general topics of oaths and citizenship. Sufficient information to assist one who is making a decision on citizenship is provided by examining these topics in the *Watch Tower Publications Indexes*.—See *Awake!* of July 22, 1975, pp. 27-8, and *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1973, pp. 62-3.

If publishers approach you with questions regarding immigration and naturalization, you may inform them that this is entirely a personal matter that does not involve the Society or the local congregation. When you are questioned or your assistance is requested in this purely personal matter, it is best to suggest that the individual seek an attorney that specializes in immigration matters. You may help the publisher to realize that it is not necessary to be a citizen to be baptized or to preach the good news of the Kingdom. Publishers can be helped to see that regardless of the nation in which Jehovah's Witnesses are citizens or the part of the earth in which they happen to live, Jehovah is capable of protecting all those who serve him.

At times, members of the congregation who are pursuing citizenship may be asked by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to have their local congregation provide a letter confirming their status as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Whether a body of elders will provide such a letter of good standing is left to the discretion of each body of elders handling the matter.

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

November 6, 1995

Page 2

Each body will want to consider seriously whether providing such a letter is appropriate in light of the individual's standing in the congregation. Since the local body of elders is in the best position to decide whether such a letter should be provided, the Society will not involve itself in determinations of this nature.

If the body determines that a letter of identification is appropriate, a brief letter could be provided concerning a publisher's standing in the congregation. The enclosed sample is an example of what you may provide. Any embellishment or elaboration of this letter is not permissible.

Additionally, local immigration authorities may ask the applicant to obtain a letter from their "church" outlining the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses and/or the local congregation respecting the bearing of arms. **Please DO NOT COMMENT on that subject in any correspondence with governmental authorities. Any such letter may be written by the individual applying for citizenship regarding his or her personal beliefs on neutrality.** It may be that the publisher is told that their application will be denied without said letter. This is the risk they take in pursuing citizenship. The congregation is organized to advance Kingdom interests and not to involve itself in an individual's personal pursuit of citizenship. The congregation cannot comment on matters of personal individual conscience.

We trust the above information clarifies and simplifies this matter. Please receive a warm expression of our Christian love and appreciation for the work you are accomplishing in behalf of our brothers.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. I. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

Enclosure

(CONGREGATION LETTERHEAD)

(Current date)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Re: (Name of publisher)

This letter is to inform you that (name of publisher) is a member of the (name of congregation) of Jehovah's Witnesses and has been associated with this congregation since (date). According to our records, (name of publisher) was baptized on (date).

Sincerely yours,

Presiding Overseer

(Please note: This letter to the local immigration authorities must be written in the English language.)