

# The State Department

## *in the Travel Field*

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In the broad and varied field of international travel the Department of State occupies an important place and performs essential services for United States citizens.

As a basic policy the Government believes in "the encouragement of bona fide travel of nonimmigrant visitors between all countries as a vital factor in promoting trade, economic and cultural understanding"—to quote a declaration of the Executive Committee on Economic Foreign Policy. This constructive and forward-looking concept underlies all of activities of the Department of State on travel matters, and is tempered only by clear recognition of the existing political tension in the world and the need for protection of American security.

Foremost among the Department's responsibilities in this field is the issuance of passports and visas, under statutes enacted by the Congress. Requirements are clear and unmistakable; and their purpose is to insure that every bearer of an American passport is a citizen in good standing and worthy of the Secretary of State's recommendation to foreign countries, and that every foreign holder of a visa to enter the United States has been examined and found to be entitled under the law to this privilege. These are not matters of small importance in a world of political unrest and cold warfare.

### **230,435 Passports**

The volume of passport work is impressive. During the 1948 calendar year 230,435 passports were issued by the Department for travel abroad, through the appointed

machinery of application at the nearest United States District Court or State Court having naturalization authority (3,664 of them) or the passport agencies in New York or San Francisco, or the Passport Division of the Department in Washington. The average time required per passport was about 5 days, although at Washington, New York, and San Francisco the entire formality is frequently accomplished in a matter of hours.

As for visas, United States Consular Offices in foreign countries issued 307,731 to nonimmigrant aliens in fiscal 1948. In addition, the Department issued 1,999 diplomatic and official visas.

Canada and Mexico, being contiguous to the United States, have special status with respect to the requirement of passports or visas for travel to or from them. Indeed, a United States citizen is not required by this Government to have a passport for travel anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, although many persons obtain them as a proof of identity which in emergencies may have inestimable value, and because of the requirements of certain foreign countries.

### **International Conferences**

Other essential functions performed by the Department of State in connection with international travel are less well-known to the public. These include the arranging of United States participation in international conferences; agreements relative to fees and taxes; protection of citizens against discrimination in foreign countries; international agreements for the facilitation of motor travel, such as the proposed Convention on International Road Traffic now under consideration by the United Nations; cooperation with the Public Roads Administration and the Central-American Republics on the construction of an Inter-American Highway between Mexico and Panama; and general economic factors involved in

the international balance of payments, in which travel expenditures are playing an increasingly important role.

All these activities are carried on in close collaboration with other Government departments, with the objective of reaching a unified United States position on important policy questions involved.

Travel's glamor is symbolized by this night shot of the Rock Island R. R.'s Rocket leaving Chicago.

