

THE IMPERIAL CITIZENSHIP INAUGURATED TODAY.

A change of great importance comes into effect today. Heretofore naturalized Canadians have stood in a peculiar position. Canada is a British country and yet their privileges as citizens were not recognized throughout the Empire, being restricted to the Dominion. Hereafter on taking out their papers they will stand on an equality with all the other subjects of the king.

The situation that has prevailed in the past was an anomalous one but not more so than much else in connection with our Empire organization. Now that it has been put an end to, as it should have been long ago, we may reasonably expect relief from other absurdities that have stood in the way of logical imperial development.

At present the people of Canada have, as a matter of practice, control of their own affairs. But in point of law, they are under the ultimate jurisdiction of the imperial parliament, a body in which they have no representation. They are liable to attack by the enemies of Great Britain but they have no voice in the making of war and peace. They can invoke the protection of the British army and navy but they are under no obligation to share the burden of supporting these forces. They can involve the Motherland in trouble with other nations but it cannot, without interfering with the rights of self-government, which they have enjoyed for three-quarters of a century, exercise any restraint upon them.

It should be clear to anybody that these loose governmental arrangements cannot last indefinitely and that one of the tasks that must be undertaken in the new era that will open at the end of the war will be the creation of an imperial constitution that is in keeping with the dignity of the dominions overseas and the benefits which they derive from the status of subjects of the King.

Premier Borden urged, in time of peace, that we should face this task. The events of recent months have demonstrated how imperative it is and in the series of splendid addresses which he has delivered on the war he has reiterated with added force his convictions on this point, and urged a definite move in the direction indicated.

It is well that from today those who are Canadians by adoption will stand on the same plane as those who are Canadians by birth. But it cannot be said of either that their British citizenship is complete. It cannot be till they share to the full both the privileges and the responsibilities that that citizenship carries for the people of the British Isles.

We must progress either along these or along purely national lines. There is no alternative.

The difficulties attending the remaking of a constitution for the British Empire are enormous but if the British citizenship of which we claim to be so proud is worth anything we must face them. If we do this in the spirit that now prevails throughout the King's dominions they can be overcome.