

NATURALIZATION BILL GETS SECOND READING

Empire-wide in Scope is Government Measure

SOME POINTS CRITICIZED

Requirements of "Adequate" Knowledge of Either French or English, Five Years' Residence, Were Among the Provisions Discussed.

(Special Despatch to The Globe.)
Ottawa, May 22. — Empire-wide naturalization was Hon. C. J. Doherty's definition of the purpose of the Government bill submitted to Parliament for its second reading today, its aim being the establishment of uniform basic principles as regards naturalization throughout the Empire, the result of agreement between the United Kingdom and the various self-governing Dominions.

Parliament was united upon the principles of the bill, but lengthy discussion developed upon special clauses incorporated in the measure by the Canadian Government. It was pointed out by several Liberals that conditions should not be made too onerous or exacting in the case of a Dominion in which national development so largely depended upon growth in population and the creation of a contented and patriotic citizenship.

Language Requirement Criticized.

Some exception was taken by western members to the provision that persons wishing to be naturalized must have an adequate knowledge of either French or English. Mr. W. M. Martin (Regina) inclined to the view that the provision might do injustice to many excellent settlers who had a thorough knowledge of German, for example, but knew little of French or English.

Residence Requirements.

In moving the second reading of the bill, Hon. Mr. Doherty reviewed the history of the naturalization laws of Great Britain and the Dominion. He pointed out that under the proposed new law the period of residence necessary for naturalization would be set at five years instead of three, but the five years could be passed in any portion of the Empire, provided that the last twelve months of the period had been spent in the country in which naturalization was sought. The other four years, however, must have been within the eight years preceding the application. All certificates of naturalization would be issued under the joint authority of the Imperial Parliament and the Parliaments of the overseas Dominions which adopt the new legislation, so that uniform naturalization throughout the Empire would be insured.

The bill also provided for the removal of the distinctions which have hitherto existed between naturalized and native-born British subjects. A further feature of the bill was that the courts were empowered to demand proof of the applicants' qualifications for naturalization. This proof would be submitted to the Secretary of States, who would issue the certificate based upon it.

Effect in Homestead Patents.

Mr. Martin raised the question as to the effect of the new law upon the issuing of homestead patents in the west. In reply, Mr. Doherty explained that the effect of the legislation would be that if a man was not a British subject he could not obtain

his patent in three years, as is possible at present, but if it was deemed advisable the Dominion lands act could be amended to meet this condition.

May Be Too Drastic.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. E. M. Macdonald (Pictou), both spoke in approval of the main principles of the bill. Mr. Macdonald, however, inclined to the view that the measure was somewhat too drastic, and he believed that Canada should not give up its own system of naturalization. He doubted the wisdom of insisting on five years' residence before a man could become a Canadian citizen.

Mr. Bennett declared the subject dealt with by the bill to be one of the greatest possible importance, especially in Western Canada. In the past, laxity in regard to naturalization had produced unfortunate results in the western Provinces. Vast numbers of foreigners, he said, had been hastily naturalized before every election, and became entitled to the rights of citizenship without any proper appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship.

The discussion was carried on during the evening by Messrs. Doherty, Levi Thompson (Qu'Appelle) Dr. Neely (Humboldt), W. F. Carroll (Cape Breton South), and others, and the bill finally received its second reading.