

## CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

### OFFICIAL REPORT

Friday, April 8, 1938

The house met at three o'clock.

#### GERMAN PLEBISCITE

##### POLLING OF VOTE OF GERMAN NATIONALS IN CANADA WITH RESPECT TO AUSTRIA

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Possibly the house will permit me, before we reach the special order, to answer a question asked yesterday by the right hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett) with reference to the German plebiscite to be taken on April 10. My right hon. friend asked:

(1) Has the German government asked the Canadian government to provide facilities for the vote?

(2) What reply was made?

(3) What steps have been taken to ascertain if any of those who claim the right to vote have been naturalized?

The answer to the first question is "no," and consequently no answer is required to the second.

With regard to the third question, I might say it is not anticipated that any German nationals resident in Canada will participate in the plebiscite. No question arises of German nationals voting in Canada. The present plebiscite is being held under the provisions of the German electoral law of 1933, as amended in 1935, whereby German nationals living abroad are accorded the right, although they are not obligated to exercise it, of securing from the German consular authorities in the countries in which they reside voting certificates, which are accorded on proof of their German nationality. These voting certificates permit them to vote in German elections either: (1) by returning to Germany; or (2) by taking passage on a German ship and voting on the high seas.

The law provides that if a minimum of ten German nationals in a particular port request it, and a German ship is available in port, the German nationals may be taken outside the territorial waters and permitted to vote.

In the present instance, while the plebiscite is to be held on April 10, there are provisions to cover special cases, which would permit voting at any time between April 1 and April 15. I have been informed by the German consulate that in so far as they are aware, no arrangements have been made either in eastern or in western Canada for German nationals resident in Canada to take advantage of these provisions.

It is unlikely that there would be any substantial number of naturalized Germans in Canada who would be eligible to participate in the plebiscite. As a general rule, under the provisions of German law, a German loses his German citizenship upon naturalization in Canada. There are a few relatively unimportant exceptions to this rule.

There is a possibility that there might be persons resident in Canada who had been naturalized under the provisions of the Naturalization Act and who, notwithstanding such naturalization, were recognized by German law as retaining German citizenship. There is a further possibility that such persons might be in a position where they could participate in the plebiscite. If they did so participate, they would be subject to section 9 of the Naturalization Act which makes provision for the revocation of certificates of naturalization by the governor general in council on report of the Secretary of State of Canada.

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think the country will be pleased to receive the answer that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has been good enough to make. There arises out of the last part of the answer, however, a question that need not be elaborated now, but an opportunity may be offered again to do so. The truth is that numbers of Germans who had been naturalized in this country responded to the call of their country in 1914, and they gave us to understand that they felt they were bound to do so. It was desirable, I think, in view of the statements which appeared in the press, that we