

alized Canadian citizens. So that with due inquiry as to their fitness, we should remove all annoying restrictions upon applications for naturalization. The suggestions I have made in this bill are of the simplest character and should, I am sure, meet with the approval of the committee.

Mr. McQUARRIE: Will the minister explain what the changes are?

Mr. COPP: I assume my hon. friend was not in the House the day before yesterday when I explained the proposed changes. I shall be glad, however, briefly to restate them. Prior to 1914 all applications for naturalization were made to the local judges of the courts in the different provinces. The application was presented to the court on the opening day and if no objection was made during the entire sitting of the court and the judge was satisfied that the applicant was a fit and proper person to become a Canadian citizen, the application was granted. In 1914 a change was made; it was provided that naturalization certificates should be issued, not by the judges of our courts, but by the State department. The applicant files his application with the clerk of the court, where it remains on file for three months. It is not published in any way; it may be hung in the clerk's office behind the door or the safe. At the end of three months, notice is supposed to be given to the applicant; he then appears before the court in person and the judge inquires into his qualifications for citizenship. Formerly the judge at this point had the decision in his own hands, but by the act of 1914, amended in 1920, it was provided that the judge should simply report to the Secretary of State whether he approved or disapproved of the application, and if the Secretary of State found the applicant to be a fit and proper subject for naturalization the certificate issued from the State department. My hon. friend, in discussing this matter the other day, suggested that it would be giving any minister very great power to leave wholly to him the decision whether or not applicants for naturalization should be given certificates. But by the present act, irrespective of the report made by the judges, irrespective of whether they approve or disapprove of the application, the Secretary of State has absolute discretion to say whether or not the application should be granted. In other words, I am taking no more power than we have under the present act, but I am asking that we do away with the provision under which a man's application is held up for three months while it is posted, perhaps, behind the door or elsewhere in the

office of the clerk. I do not suggest for a moment that the clerk would secrete it purposely, but there is no publication given to it and there can be no advantage in holding the application up in this manner for three or four months. The committee will agree that upon careful inquiry being made into his qualifications, it is our duty to give to an applicant for naturalization a reasonable opportunity of becoming a citizen of Canada without undue delay and that, so long as we provide reasonable safeguards, we should remove as many stumbling blocks as we can from his path.

Mr. McQUARRIE: What investigation does the minister propose to substitute for the investigation that has been made by the county court judges? It is very necessary that someone should have the opportunity of coming in personal contact with the applicant. The minister says that the Secretary of State under the present law can issue a naturalization certificate irrespective of the report made by the county court judge. I suppose the minister would not suggest that the Secretary of State or the Under Secretary of State would completely disregard the report of the county court judge. I believe that we should give naturalization to proper persons, but we should also safeguard the right to become a naturalized British subject because that right carries with it certain privileges which later on may become troublesome. We have had cases of that in British Columbia. We have found that naturalization certificates were issued without proper investigation. That was previous to 1914, and we have found since that time that naturalized British subjects who were improperly naturalized are demanding and insisting on certain rights to which they claim they are entitled because of their citizenship. I say it would be a great mistake to grant naturalization in a purely formal manner, long-distance naturalization, as it were, naturalization granted here in Ottawa perhaps three thousand or more miles away from the person who is applying for naturalization. I think the strictest kind of investigation should be made, and I submit, Mr. Chairman, that that investigation should be made by county court judges; I think they are eminently proper persons to conduct the investigation, and that they perform their duties in a very conscientious manner. I think it would be a great mistake for the Secretary of State at Ottawa, whether the present incumbent of the office or anyone else, to grant naturalization without some kind of personal examination of the applicant by some person who is qualified to