

the right to vote in provincial elections. I am informed that a Bill conferring the franchise upon women has been introduced in the legislature of the province of Nova Scotia at its present session. If that Bill should pass, the position would then be that in six provinces of the Dominion women have the right to vote in provincial elections, and in the three other provinces they have not that right. Then the situation, so far as this Parliament is concerned, would resolve itself into three alternatives: either that we should leave the situation as it is at present, or that we should extend the franchise for Dominion purposes in each province to those women who enjoy it for provincial elections in such province, or third, that we should enact a measure in this Parliament which would enfranchise women generally, under proper safeguards as to naturalization, to which question I shall refer in a few moments. It has seemed to the Government advisable that the third alternative should be adopted.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Which?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: To enfranchise women generally throughout the Dominion. I do not depend for this upon the considerations which I have placed before the House as to the condition of provincial legislation on the subject. I do not even base it on the wonderful and conspicuous service and sacrifice which women have rendered to the national cause in the war. Apart from all these, I conceive that women are entitled to the franchise on their merits, and it is upon that basis that this Bill is presented to Parliament for its consideration. It is our belief that the influence of women exercised in this way will be a good influence in public life. We believe that beneficial results have ensued wherever the franchise has been granted to them; indeed the principle of granting the franchise to women generally was practically affirmed in the last Parliament.

There are, however, some considerations with regard to naturalization to which I must direct the attention of the House; those hon. gentlemen who were members of the last Parliament will recollect that they were then referred to. In 1914 the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed an Act known as the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914. That Act was passed also in Canada, and I think in some of the other dominions, in pursuance of a resolution which was adopted at the Imperial Conference of 1911, and which sought to bring about such an arrangement

between the Mother Country and the self-governing dominions as would place naturalization on a more satisfactory basis than it had previously occupied. There was a good deal of correspondence and discussion between this Government and the Government of the United Kingdom with regard to certain provisions of that Act, but eventually, in 1914, we passed in this Parliament a measure which in every respect, I believe, corresponds with the second part of the Imperial Act to which I have alluded. By section 10 of that Act it is provided that the wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject and the wife of an alien shall be deemed to be an alien. In 1914, after our Act had been passed, an amendment was made in the British Act, and we made a corresponding amendment in our Act at the war session in 1914. Section 10, to which I have just referred, was amended by adding thereto these words:

Provided that where a man ceases during the continuance of his marriage to be a British subject, it shall be lawful for his wife to make a declaration that she desires to retain British nationality, and thereupon she shall be deemed to remain a British subject.

Apart from that, the qualifications necessary to any person who might desire to become a naturalized British subject in Canada under the Naturalization Act of 1914 were set out in section 2 of the Act, as follows:

- (a) that he has either resided in His Majesty's dominions for a period of not less than five years in the manner required by this section, or been in the service of the Crown for not less than five years within the last eight years before the application; and,
- (b) that he is of good character and has an adequate knowledge of either the English or French languages; and,
- (c) that he intends if his application is granted either to reside in His Majesty's dominions or to enter or continue in the service of the Crown.

The second subsection provides as follows:

The residence required by this section is residence in Canada for not less than one year immediately preceding the application, and previous residence, either in Canada or in some other part of His Majesty's dominions, for a period of four years within the last eight years before the application.

One very important change that was made by this statute was the change in the length of residence required. Under previous Acts—which, however, granted only a local naturalization operative in Canada—the period of only three years' residence was required. In discussing at the last session the question of extending the franchise to