

gesting it will receive the consideration of the house, but I cannot promise action will be taken.

Mr. HEAPS: I am afraid of introducing any amendment to any act of parliament; I have been rather unfortunate in regard to any bill I have tried to introduce. I feel as the minister felt a moment ago when he spoke of the leniency that a magistrate might show towards applicants for naturalization. My own understanding is that as a rule magistrates have been fairly strict in their interpretation of the law, and where a person, even of the age of seventy, who may have raised a large family in the country, has been unable to comply with the strict letter of the law, he has failed to obtain naturalization. This means considerable hardship in old age when they find themselves ineligible for old age pension. If the magistrate had some discretionary powers such cases might be dealt with considerately, but I find that as a rule magistrates claim they have no discretion, that the law is rigid. I feel that there should be some discretion vested somewhere to meet such situations.

Mr. LUCHKOVICH: I think in the case of elderly citizens such as I have referred to, who want to get naturalization papers, if their community or municipality, through the Secretary or councilmen, could show by letter or affidavit that the applicant was a desirable citizen even though he does not understand French or English, such a recommendation should have some weight with the judge who is hearing the application.

Mr. CAHAN: I think if it were left to the municipality it would be found in many cases that their position would be adverse to the applicant, because our office has received during the last three years many protests from municipalities against granting certificates of naturalization to those who do not understand well either the English or the French language. They insist that the granting of a certificate of naturalization imposes a heavier burden upon the municipality in respect of providing relief, which it is not prepared to meet. Therefore they have in many cases protested very strongly against making any concession to the alien who does not understand French or English.

Mr. LUCHKOVICH: If the alien is able to pay his taxes I do not see how it would be a burden on the municipality.

Mr. CAHAN: The alien who is competent to earn his way and pay his taxes and has lived in this country thirty or forty years without finding any inconvenience through

[Mr. Cahan.]

not having a certificate of naturalization is caused very little trouble. But in the case of an alien who, after reaching a certain age, suddenly finds it necessary to apply for public relief, who sometimes frankly states in his application that he is applying solely in order that he may be put on relief—some are very frank and state that—in such case if it were left to the municipality, even your western municipalities, I am afraid the decision would be adverse.

Mr. HEAPS: I suppose that is only in the case of aliens who have been in the country a period of five years, which enables them to comply with the laws of the country as far as naturalization is concerned?

Mr. CAHAN: I will mention a case that is before my department now, of an alien, an American, who has been in this country thirty or forty years. He has led a good life, he is recommended by those who know him, but he insisted that he was going to live and die an American citizen, did not wish to assume British nationality. The other day he applied for naturalization, stating that he was applying, not because he wished to become a British subject, but solely that he might be put on relief in the town where he lived. If that case were left to the municipality I am afraid the certificate would not be granted.

Mr. HEAPS: I do not see what difference the granting of a certificate would make in that particular instance. I understand if an alien has been in this country more than five years he is not subject to deportation proceedings, so whether he becomes a Canadian citizen or not makes very little difference.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): But if he goes on relief?

Mr. HEAPS: The instances I tried to bring to the attention of the committee are of people who have made their home here for twenty or thirty years, have reached the age of seventy and require naturalization papers to be eligible for old age pension, which will take them off relief.

Mr. CAHAN: I admit frankly that cases of great hardship are brought to my attention where certificates have not been granted. But to remedy that situation would require a substantive amendment to the Naturalization Act.

Mr. LUCHKOVICH: Suppose the case of an applicant who is refused citizenship papers on the ground that he had not sufficient knowledge of English or French, and the