

*Naturalization Acts*

Sir LOMER GOUIN (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I regret I was not in my seat when my hon. friend rose. I simply said that I would perhaps surprise him when I declared that I had received a communication from the Attorney General of Ontario asking for a certain amendment which I would introduce. I never pretended that he was not speaking the truth in what he said to this House.

## NATURALIZATION ACTS AMENDMENT

House again in Committee on Bill No. 85 to amend the Naturalization Acts 1914 and 1920, Mr. Gordon in the chair.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Has the minister anything to report to the committee since this bill was before us on a former occasion? He was to consider whether he would not have the various naturalization acts consolidated.

Hon. A. B. COPP (Secretary of State): The suggestion made by my hon. friend for St. John City (Mr. Baxter) for the consolidation of our naturalization law was referred to the officials of the department. While many arguments might be advanced in favour of the consolidation of this and other legislation, owing to the fact that a very large number of forms have been already printed under the title of the present act, and would have to be scrapped if we proceeded with consolidation, involving a waste of something like \$15,000 or \$20,000, I do not think the advantage that would accrue from such consolidation would warrant this heavy loss, especially bearing in mind that the consolidation and revision of our Dominion statutes is under consideration and will be taken in hand within a very short time. Therefore it seems to me that we might very well defer the consolidation of our Naturalization law until the consolidation of our statutes generally is undertaken.

Mr. GUTHRIE: The reason given by my hon. friend for not bringing in a consolidated bill at the present session does not appeal to me as very important. I remember that two or three years ago the same reason was given by the Under Secretary of State in relation to this same act—I think it was in 1919 when we were down in the old Museum building. This very bill was brought up and the question of consolidation of our naturalization law was objected to then on the ground that a lot of forms would have to be scrapped; and I think the Under Secretary of State had had new forms printed on that occasion. That does not seem to me to be a very substantial reason for postponing an absolutely necessary work if we are to understand our naturalization law as we should

[Mr. Good.]

understand it. My hon. friend says that the work of consolidation has been considered, and I think he says it will be undertaken. I suppose he means in connection with the revision of the Dominion statutes. That work has been going on for some time, and I think we might reasonably expect it to be completed within the present year at all events. Therefore would it not be well for my hon. friend to allow this bill to stand in the meantime? No great injury and no great inconvenience will be suffered in the next few months by allowing this bill to stand until this consolidation takes place. He will agree with me, I am sure, that what he proposes now is a very radical departure from the practice in the past in regard to naturalization. I am satisfied that a good many members will desire to discuss the question, and as the session is fairly well advanced now for a measure of this kind, I would suggest that it stand over until a consolidated bill can be brought in and passed.

Mr. COPP: I should like very much to agree to my hon. friend's suggestion if I thought it would be in the best interests of the country and parliament to do so. He will remember that this bill was introduced last session after strong requests, amounting almost to demands, from different portions of the Dominion that some changes should be made in the act generally as well as in the administration of it. Under the conditions then prevailing I felt that we would be justified in allowing the bill to stand over until this session, but now it has gone forth that these amendments would be re-introduced and considered I think we should proceed with the bill. The amendments are only two or three in number. I agree with my hon. friend that in one particular instance the change is in a way somewhat radical, but I am sure that if he will give his attention to these amendments—and I know his legal knowledge and ability will stand him in good stead in doing so—he will agree with me that they are desirable and will be of great advantage to all portions of the Dominion. After giving this matter my very best consideration, and after conferring with the officials of the department who have had charge of the administration of our Naturalization law long before 1914, I am confident that the suggested changes will be of very great advantage as affecting those who desire to become naturalized citizens of Canada. We open our doors to people from other lands; we give them to understand that our country is ready to receive them and that after residing in Canada a certain length of time they will be entitled to become natur-