

that they should be naturalized or have something in their possession to show their nationality when they reach those foreign countries, because our present nationality is different from what it was in the old days. In those days we used to claim our British nationality. In 1910 I remember when I crossed over to France I wanted to rent an apartment, so I went to the police department and put down my nationality as French Canadian. The Frenchman struck that out and said to me: "You are English." That is the way in which the thing worked in those days. I said to him: "You do not encourage French Canadians in America by telling me I am English." I should like to know from the minister, in view of the large number of Canadians going into the foreign missionary fields, whether any steps are taken under our law to protect them?

Mr. CAHAN: I cannot speak altogether for the Department of External Affairs, but it is a fact that the great majority of those missionaries who go abroad representing the different Canadian churches, are natural born British subjects, born in Canada and therefore do not need naturalization. In the case of French Canadian missionaries abroad, if a missionary happened to have been born in France, coming to Canada later in life, particular pains are usually taken before he goes abroad to secure for him a certificate of naturalization and therefore a Canadian passport. In respect of Manchuria and China I think every effort has been made during these troublesome times to communicate to Canadian nationals such advice as may prove helpful for the protection of themselves and their families.

Mr. LUCHKOVICH: I should like to ask a question of a different nature from those that have preceded mine. May I draw the attention of the minister to the Naturalization Act which states that any applicant must live in this country for five years and must also be able to understand either the French or the English language. In this country there is a very desirable class of people who have come here in middle age and who are unable to learn either French or English well enough to qualify themselves for citizenship. It often happens that some of these older applicants are refused certificates of naturalization on the ground that they cannot speak either language. They have all the virtues; they are industrious farmers or labourers and in every respect outside the fact that they cannot speak either English or French, they would make very desirable citizens of this country. On the other hand,

we have the applicant who can speak English almost as well as Shakespeare did, but who in all other respects would not make a very desirable citizen. I have been wondering whether some mitigating provision might not be afforded so far as the first type of applicants is concerned, because I believe they would make good citizens apart from the language qualification.

Mr. CAHAN: I notice from the returns which we receive from the courts of the provinces of the middle west that when these cases come before the judges, the latter sometimes exercise a certain leniency in giving their decisions whether the applicant is versed in English or French. From the reports I notice that if they can understand French or English sufficiently to know what is said to them and to make some reply in the ordinary way, the judges are quite lenient; but to change the law would require a substantive enactment of the parliament of Canada.

Mr. LUCHKOVICH: Supposing somebody got on a judge's nerves and he refused to exercise that leniency?

Mr. HEAPS: A very important point has been raised by the hon. member for Vegreville. Cases have come to my attention of people who have been in the country twenty-five or thirty years, have attained the age of forty-five or fifty, but have lived in scattered districts where it has been practically impossible for them to become familiar with either the French or the English language. When they reach the age of seventy, without having obtained naturalization papers, and make applications for old age pensions, because of their inability to speak English they are practically barred from the benefits of the Old Age Pensions Act. These people have given good service to the country, and through no fault of their own find themselves unable to obtain naturalization. I wonder if it would not be possible in such instances, where a person has been a good citizen and has all the other qualifications to receive old age pension, that some discretionary powers might be vested in the minister whereby such people could become Canadian citizens and eligible for old age pension.

Mr. CAHAN: That is not for me to decide. I confess that one is moved to leniency in certain cases, but one is dealing with a substantive enactment of the law of this country. If my hon. friend will introduce an amendment along the lines he is now sug-