

have received I would judge that it is proceeding very, very slowly indeed. The last consolidation of the Dominion statutes was as far back as 1906, and when one has to determine a question under the Naturalization Act, the Criminal Code, the Patents Act, the Copyright Act, or any of the dozen other enactments that might be enumerated, it is necessary to have practically a complete set of the statutes from 1906 down to the present if one is to be sure that no amendment is overlooked. The Naturalization Act is one of the most difficult acts we have to interpret, and there is a great deal of force in the suggestion of the hon. member for St. John City (Mr. Baxter) that a consolidation of the present law be made, to include any amendments the Secretary of State now proposes. I fancy the Under Secretary of State could do it in a day or two; I undertook to do it once as Solicitor General, but that act is not in force now. If that were done we would have an up-to-date act which would embody all the legislation on the subject and obviate the necessity of going into all the enactments as we now have to do when any difficult question has to be determined. Just one other point: the discussion of clause 4 of the bill which we are now considering, will occupy some considerable time. I know that my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen), who is not in the city to-day, would like to be present when the discussion of this section proceeds. The minister realizes that the present proposal is a subversion of all the past practice in this country in regard to naturalization. I think as far back as our law extends the matter of the naturalization of aliens has been investigated and passed upon before some judicial tribunal. The old system—the oldest I remember—was one under which the applicant made his application to some officer of the court, different officers being named in the various provinces. The application was read in open court on the first day of the court's sitting, and during those sittings any person had the right to offer objections to the naturalization. If no objection was taken during the entire sittings of the court, a formal certificate was granted and a man became a British subject. But it was a judicial proceeding, notwithstanding the informal manner in which it was conducted; it was a matter in which the courts of Canada were called upon to exercise judicial discretion. My hon. friend now proposes to remove from the courts of the country that discretion and practically place it in his own hands. Under section 4 of the bill he proposes to change the

whole system of naturalization as we have had it in Canada since confederation and take it into his own department. It is provided that the Secretary of State will be the person to say whether this man or that man shall or shall not be naturalized, shall or shall not have the right to vote for a candidate for election to this House. That is a serious proposal; it would clothe the minister certainly with a great deal of new power. If the present system has proved unsatisfactory in any way; if it has proved costly or expensive or inconvenient, there must be a method of remedying the situation without placing in the hands of a minister of the Crown the sole right to say whether the hundreds of people whom we expect to come to this country shall or shall not have the right to vote. I for one, so far as I understand the matter now, would feel compelled to oppose such a proposal to the very utmost of my power. However, what I would ask the minister at the present time is that he allow us a short time to consider this very radical change in our naturalization law. It may be suggested that we were wrong in the past, but I am not impressed with the conviction that we were nor am I impressed at this time with the propriety of the proposal made in this bill. If my hon. friend will let the matter stand for a couple of days and in the interval consider the question, which is one of great importance, of consolidating the whole law, the bill that we are to pass this session will be one of tremendous advantage to the profession to which I belong as well as to the people generally. I know from a discussion I had with the Under Secretary of State, within a couple of years, anyway, that he could without very much effort, through his intimate knowledge of all these acts, produce a consolidated act which would be of the very greatest advantage to us all.

Mr. COPP: I assure my hon. friend that I do not introduce these proposed changes with any idea of taking into my own hands the jurisdiction respecting naturalization. The clause my hon. friend refers to has been suggested by officials of my department who have had this matter in hand during the last few years and who have, I think dealt with it very successfully indeed. I agree that this is a very radical change from the present system. But I would point out that the Secretary of State has discretionary power to-day either to grant naturalization or to refuse it, and that the Secretary of State under 9 p.m. this provision is not taking upon himself any more authority than is provided for in the very act that my hon.