

*Naturalization Acts*

Now it is obvious to anyone that it may be comparatively easy to say with regard to any particular citizen that he was not of good character five years previously. In that case, without any trial whatever, without any court coming to a decision on the matter in any form, the individual who has imagined himself to be a citizen of this country would thereby have withdrawn from him all the rights of citizenship. That, it seems to me, is an arbitrary power that is against all the ideas of British constitutional liberty that we have had in the past. To have made a change in that regard would seem to me to be something that might very well be brought before us at this time. But that provision still exists, and without any change in that particular clause we are being asked here to vote in favour of a further extension of this power to one individual.

But I would like particularly to call the attention of the House to the effect of this kind of provision and of this kind of procedure on the immigrant who comes to this country. We have tens of thousands of aliens scattered throughout the Canadian northwest. Many of them have come from other lands where they had exercised the rights of citizenship. They have been told that they could become free citizens of Canada. But for this they must wait five years—surely long enough. I should like, if I could, to get away from the official atmosphere of this House and ask you what effect it has upon these immigrants if, when they do make application for citizenship, they are treated more or less as though they were criminals, and mounted policemen sent around to investigate their character and their manner of life during the previous five years. There may be, it is quite true, an occasional criminal amongst them. I do not deny that; but I take it that we ought not in any sense whatever to regard prospective citizens as probably criminal. Surely the very essence of the British law is that a man ought to be regarded as innocent until he is proven guilty; he ought to be regarded as a good citizen until some definite charge is laid against him. Coming before the county court is a dignified proceeding. The people in the neighbourhood of the applicant's home have a chance of registering their opinion of his character. The judge is a man who is able, presumably, to give a disinterested opinion upon the evidence presented. There is no imputation whatever, there is no inference, that the applicant is anything but a desirable alien citizen honourably seeking to acquire citizenship in this new land. Any change in the procedure which would make it even possible

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

for the Secretary of State to send in an outsider to make inquiries among the neighbours of the applicant as to whether, possibly, he had done something that was wrong is a distinct lowering of the standard of citizenship which we ought to encourage in this country. For the sake of these tens of thousands of immigrants—many of whom those of us from the West know personally—I would ask that the citizenship of Canada should be placed on a higher plane; if so, I think that coming Canadians would, if necessary, gladly travel a hundred miles rather than submit to the inquisitorial methods proposed by these amendments.

Mr. BAXTER: I do not propose to discuss at all the technical questions which have arisen under the existing act. I am inclined to think that my right hon. leader has correctly interpreted that act. I only want to take the hour and a half or more that has been spent in trying to find out what a single paragraph of this act means as a text upon which to try, if I may, to emphasize to the House what I think was the wisdom of my suggestion the other day when this bill was before us, and that is that the measure should be reprinted and we should have here in one pamphlet exactly what it is intended the naturalization law of Canada shall be after this legislation is put through. We have spent an hour and a half debating as to what the present law may or may not mean, and I think I am not exaggerating when I say that there is not one individual here who is absolutely sure.

Mr. GERMAN: Several are absolutely sure.

Mr. BAXTER: All right, but they do not agree. I think this House will concur in the view that British citizenship is not a thing to be handed out like some cheap decoration, and that we do not want people coming to the shores of this country, with bombs in their pockets or criminal records, and being advanced by every possible sort of misguided sympathy to the status of Canadian citizenship.

Mr. JACOBS: They will have to carry the bombs in their pockets for five years.

Mr. BAXTER: They might find places of concealment. I think my hon. friend might show them places where they could conceal them for a time and then take them, if necessary, if there was an outbreak, for instance, in the city of Winnipeg.

The second point I should like to make is that while citizenship should not be given lightly to any one, the law ought to be so