

13 June, 1911.]

NATURALISATION.

[8th Day.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER—*cont.*

of the Dominions which derive their authority from the Parliament of Great Britain, the effect should be the same, and that man should be *civis Britannicus* all over the world.

Now, as to the method of obtaining naturalisation, I agree with Mr. Batchelor that it would be extremely difficult to have the same methods adopted in every country. The circumstances vary very much; nothing shows that better than the variety of legislation which we have upon this subject. In Great Britain the period of probation before an alien can become a British subject is five years; in my country it is three years; in Australia it is two years; and in New Zealand, I understand, it is no period at all—a man can arrive one day and be naturalised the following day. That shows that the local conditions vary so much that uniform legislation is hardly to be attained. I see no objection for my part at all to this varied legislation; let every Dominion for itself determine what is the period of probation which it will subject an alien to before it makes him a British subject. I see no reason at all why the conditions should not vary as they do now. If we adopt these two principles, that is to say uniformity in effect but diversity of methods, I think we reach the solution we are seeking to obtain. That is the policy which I would submit to the Conference. If these two principles are recognised and adopted I think we have found an easy solution of a very serious problem and one which has given us a good deal of trouble hitherto.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I do not see any objection to the Imperial Parliament legislating in connection with naturalisation for application throughout the Empire, and I think it is necessary that it should be done, with certain reservations. In our country the course that we follow is that there is no time limit; if a man has the necessary education, and his character is all right, a certificate is furnished by a Magistrate, and we may naturalise him within a month after he comes to our country. On the other hand we have people in New Zealand to-day who have been there 20 years whom we would not naturalise, because they cannot comply with the requirements as to citizenship of our country, and therefore they are refused.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that an educational test?

Sir JOSEPH WARD: Yes, an educational test and a character test. If reservations are provided in the proposed Imperial Bill, which would be submitted for the consideration of the respective Governments, to enable us to exercise certain powers within our own territory, I fail to see any reason why we should not have uniformity right throughout the British Empire dealing with naturalisation. I am inclined to think that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was probably not quite right in stating that where naturalisation was conferred upon a British subject he was then *civis Britannicus* all over the world. As a matter of fact there are Continental countries that will not accept the naturalisation of a British subject here if the naturalised person be of their nationality, so that it does not apply in the way in which it was suggested.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I do not understand that.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: There are cases where a man is naturalised in Great Britain, but his naturalisation is not accepted all over the world—in some Continental countries it is not accepted.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: That is a different matter altogether. That depends upon foreign interpretation, and not upon what concerns us here.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: So far as we are concerned, in New Zealand, we would not accept it either.