

Mr. BATCHELOR—*cont.*

should not seek to bring about Imperial naturalisation by an Imperial law, but whatever is done should be done directly by the Parliaments of the Dominions concerned. Thirdly, we must recognise the divergence of the law in the various States; we must make no attempt to bring about uniformity of the law in naturalisation so far as local naturalisation in any particular Dominion is concerned.

We find that there are some considerable differences in the conditions under which naturalisation is effected in the various Dominions. The conditions usually laid down are that there shall be a certain length of residence, which runs from five years, I think, in the United Kingdom to two years in the case of Australia.

Dr. FINDLAY: There is no limit at all in New Zealand.

Mr. BATCHELOR: No limit at all. Thus it runs from five years down to nothing in the case of length of residence. Other conditions are payment of fees—from about 5*l.* in the United Kingdom, running to nothing in Australia, where there is no fee at all charged. Then there is evidence required of good character, and that varies. The United Kingdom require the evidence of four reputable persons. In the case of Australia, we require the evidence of some official—the written evidence of some person in an official position. Then there is the very great difference in the law of naturalisation regarding the races that may be naturalised. For instance, in Australia and New Zealand, and I am not quite sure about Canada for the moment, Asiatics may not be naturalised under any conditions. There are also educational conditions laid down. Those are the principal ones.

Now, it occurs to us, and I put it to the Conference, that there are a great many people—many thousands perhaps—in every Dominion of the Empire who can comply with all the conditions, the most severe conditions, and the point is, whether it would not be worth while to give certificates of naturalisation to those persons who can comply with any standard that may be set up. Supposing we have a standard of Imperial naturalisation which covers the most drastic conditions—if I may use the word “drastic”—not of each, but of the whole of the Dominions, any Dominion then could give not only local naturalisation, but could grant, so long as the conditions of this Imperial standard which might be set up are complied with, a certificate of Imperial naturalisation; every one of the Dominions could do that. That appears to us a way in which we could bring about the advantages of Imperial naturalisation without having any difficulties at all about the complete local autonomy, the complete right of every part of the Dominions to determine whom it shall admit into its own country. It does not raise the question of Asiatic exclusion; it does not touch the question of the payment of fees, or any of the other conditions. We do not ask any one of the Dominions to vary its law in any degree at all; but each Dominion should carry legislation authorising, recognising, or acknowledging the holders of Imperial certificates to the full advantage of naturalisation in their communities. I do not know whether I have made myself quite clear as to what we propose, but we think that there are some very manifest advantages in having naturalisation which will run right through the Empire, so that persons going anywhere, having been naturalised, and having complied with the Imperial conditions need not be naturalised further. Once admitted to Imperial naturalisation that naturalisation continues, and wherever they go they are subjects of the British Empire.

In Australia and New Zealand, of course, this matter arises pretty frequently. People go across from Australia to New Zealand very readily, and it is rather absurd that they should have to take out fresh naturalisation certificates in each place. Being naturalised in Australia does not mean being naturalised in New Zealand, where the conditions are practically the same; and at present there is no means by which we can grant any naturalisation that will apply in New Zealand, nor can they in New Zealand grant anything that applies in Australia. I should think the same thing would apply to Canada and Newfoundland. Then, of course, from all the Dominions people come very extensively to the United Kingdom.

The advantages of an Imperial certificate are so obvious that there is no need to discuss the matter at length, but I think what I have suggested is a practical method