

# The Common Cause

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## Notes and News.

### The Status of Aliens Bill.

On July 17th, the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Bill was considered in Committee. On the Clause which gives the Secretary of State power to direct that the wife of a man whose naturalisation certificate has been withdrawn shall also be denaturalised, Sir W. H. Dickinson moved an amendment to insert the words "provided that she is not a natural born British subject." Sir George Cave asked that the amendment should be withdrawn in favour of one he would himself move to insert the words "provided that the Secretary of State shall not make any such order in the case of a natural born British subject, unless he is satisfied that if she had held a certificate of naturalisation in her own right the certificate could properly have been revoked under the statute." After some discussion this was accepted, though Sir W. H. Dickinson said that what was being done was not bare justice to the women, and added: "Sooner or later we shall get to a point when we shall treat women as on an exact equality with men, and allow a British-born woman to retain her nationality in all circumstances."

### A Crying Evil.

Sir W. H. Dickinson also moved an amendment to secure that when a British-born woman, married to an enemy alien, declares that she wishes to resume her nationality, the Secretary of State may, if he thinks advisable, grant her a certificate of naturalisation. He said his object was to give the Home Secretary power to remedy some of the most crying evils that had made themselves apparent during the war. "There are a very large number of British-born women—we have heard of them already this evening—who have years ago married Germans, and who now, all through the war, have suffered for that. I ask the Committee to take this opportunity of enabling

these women to claim that their cases shall be reconsidered, and that they shall be, if the Home Secretary thinks it advisable, readmitted to the benefits of British citizenship." The amendment was supported by Mr. Anderson, Mr. T. Wilson, Mr. Charles Roberts, and Mr. Aneurin Williams, but Sir George Cave found himself unable to accept it without "further consideration." He offered to appoint a committee of experts to go into the whole matter, but Sir W. H. Dickinson was dissatisfied, and moved a new clause, the discussion of which, however, was deferred till the report stage of the Bill.

### Sir Willoughby Dickinson's Proposal.

The report stage was taken on Friday, and Sir Willoughby Dickinson immediately moved his new clause. It had these objects: first, to secure to a British woman marrying an alien the right to retain her British nationality, unless she made a "declaration of alienage"; second, to provide that an alien woman marrying a British man should remain an alien, unless she asked for and was granted a certificate of naturalisation; and, third, to provide that a British woman marrying a man who was British at the time of marriage but ceased to be so afterwards should have the right of remaining British if she wished to do so. Had this clause been passed, the injustice from which women are now suffering in this question of nationality would have been attacked at its very roots. The discussion was an interesting one, and the matter was pressed to a division. The clause was lost by forty-nine votes to twenty-one was probably due to the fact that Sir George Cave promised in the course of the debate that the whole matter should be referred to a committee of experts, that there should be a woman on this committee, and that the matter should also be brought before the Imperial Conference. Mr. C. Harmsworth made the further suggestion that after the matter had been dealt with by the Committee the Home Secretary should get the Government to bring in a short Bill dealing specially with the status of women under the Nationality Laws. Sir Willoughby Dickinson has been strongly supported throughout his struggle by Mr. Charles Roberts. The twenty-one members who voted for his amendment were:—Rt. Hon. Francis D. Acland, Percy Alden, Frederick Handel Booth, Rt. Hon. Charles W. Bowerman; Rt. Hon. John Burns; H. W. Carr-Gomm; Henry George Chancellor; Sir William Collins; Percy A. Harris; Joseph King; Major Gilbert McMicking; Joseph Martin; David M. Mason; Peter Wilson Raffan; Charles H. Roberts; James Rowlands; G. R. Thorne; Henry A. Watt; Alexander Wilkie; Aneurin Williams; W. T. Wilson. Tellers for the Ayes—Sir W. Dickinson and Mr. Anderson.

### A Point Gained.

Later on in the evening the Home Secretary conceded the point that the British-born wife of the subject of an enemy state might (if she so desired) be allowed to resume her nationality. The House agreed to this. All through the debate there was a very strong consciousness that numbers of women are dissatisfied with the present arrangements, and that as women are now voters, their dissatisfaction cannot be ignored. It is interesting to see how very rapidly the fact of an enfranchisement has begun to tell. The Status of Aliens Bill was read a third time.

### Separation Allowances.

On July 17th, Colonel Sir H. Greenwood called the attention of the Prime Minister to the hardship suffered by the childless wives of soldiers and sailors whose separation allowances have not been increased since October, 1914, whereas those of











