

On many occasions before 1915, the British Dominions discussed, at London, the question of nationality in order to come to a mutual understanding of the circumstances under which naturalization in any Dominion would be recognized in any place of the British Empire. Up to 1915, the naturalization in the United Kingdom, as well as in any of the Dominions, conferred rights and privileges of British nationality only in that part of the Empire where it was granted.

At the Inter-Colonial Conference of 1907 the Dominions insisted on a uniformity of naturalization for the whole Empire, rather than an Act which would force them to recognize as a British subject by naturalization a person who, for some reason, would never have been naturalized by them. Consequently, the United Kingdom adopted the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, which came into force on Jan. 1, 1915: Canada followed immediately and the other Dominions in later years.

The Naturalization Act, 1914, and its subsequent amendments, which remained in force until Dec. 31, 1946, was patterned after the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, the difference being in the procedure only.

The Act of 1914, commonly called the Imperial Act, conferred the status of world-wide British nationality. In effect, it removed Canada from colonial status in respect to naturalization and gave British subjects in Canada precisely the same status as that held by British subjects in other parts of the British Empire.

The foregoing action represented a major step in naturalization in Canada and resulted in 1914, in the establishment of the Naturalization Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State, at Ottawa. Prior to that time, naturalization had been administered locally by the various courts throughout Canada. These courts issued the certificates and merely filed returns half-yearly with the Department of the Secretary of State. The issue of certificates of naturalization had not been centralized at Ottawa and it was not until the passing of the Naturalization Act, 1914, that there was full federal control of the administration of naturalization in Canada.

In the course of time, and particularly after the Second World War, there was a growing feeling that Canadians should be identified officially as such. With this in mind, a Bill was drawn up in which the term "Canadian citizen" was used for the first time in relation to naturalization. This Bill, the objective of which was to create a Canadian citizenship, was approved by Parliament in 1946 and became effective by proclamation on Jan. 1, 1947. By this legislation all previous Naturalization Acts in force in Canada were repealed; this included the Canadian Nationals Act, c. 21, R.S.C. 1927. (See Section 1, pp. 155-161, for details of the Canadian Citizenship Act.)

Section 1.—The Canadian Citizenship Act

On Jan. 1, 1947, there came into force the Canadian Citizenship Act. By this legislation all previous Naturalization Acts in force in Canada were repealed; this included the Canadian Nationals Act, c. 21, R.S.C. 1927. The purpose of the Act is to give a clear and simple definition of Canadian citizenship and to provide an underlying community of status for all the people of Canada that will help to bind them together as Canadians. Heretofore, the only definition of Canadian citizenship was to be found in the Immigration Act, and that was a limited one,