

Mr. KENNEDY: I think that is too broad and would not be in the interests of the Chief Electoral Officer himself. I should like to have that discussed at some time.

Mr. ILSLEY: If that was discussed formerly and ruled upon, why open it up again?

Mr. KENNEDY: I was ill that day and was not here.

The CHAIRMAN: For the purpose of the discussion which Mr. Boys wishes to inaugurate, I think by unanimous consent we will agree that that ruling will be suspended until Mr. Boys has finished talking, at all events.

CAPTAIN BAKER called.

The WITNESS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, may I thank you for the privilege of appearing before you? We in advancing or suggesting this amendment to the clause which refers to the procedure under which blind voters shall cast their ballot, have in mind raising the status of blind people. Now, throughout the community, our blind people are simply a cross-section, excepting that they are deprived of physical vision. May I just for a moment refer to the present situation? First of all, I am well acquainted with blind people and their views from coast to coast in Canada. For some years I was concerned with blinded soldiers, their training and after-care, and know intimately every Canadian blinded soldier. Then, sir, I have been associated with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind as Chief Executive Officer and General Secretary, and in the course of my duties I have come in contact with blind people from coast to coast, and in my contact with blind people I have discussed this matter with a great many of them, and I find there is this trouble in their minds about voting, the fact that they are, under present circumstances, required to declare an open vote. Now the situation is this, sir, in truth. I may say that I lost my sight overseas in adult life, and I was looking forward to exercising the ballot in the ordinary way as you do; but, having lost my sight, I am now required to enter the polling booth, which is as dark to me as it would be for you at midnight with no lights on, and I enter the polling booth with my wife or other adult friend as escort, and I hear a voice which I take to be that of the returning officer, and I hear other voices which I take to be the scrutineers, and I hear movements which I take to be made by from one to a dozen other voters waiting their turn, but often to me an embarrassing situation to me above all other considerations. I must first of all take the oath that I require assistance in the marking of my ballot. I do not object to that because I recognize that is a necessity; but when that is finished I must proceed and declare before the group just whom I wish to vote for. We had an instance of one blind soldier in Toronto, who also lost his arm overseas, who voted and then twenty minutes after his return to his store or place of business he was congratulated by two gentlemen on the way he had voted. We are anxious, sir, to induce the blind person in the community to take an interest in the community, to be self-respecting and respected in the community. We find at the present time a diffidence on the part of blind people to exercise their vote. Some hold semi-public positions, while others are connected in ways in which the question of a vote, whichever way cast, may affect them disadvantageously. Not that they are attacking the character of the appointed officers or others who may be in the polling booth, but rather that they would like to have that greater feeling of confidence, as I personally would like to have. When my wife goes to the polling booth with me, I would like to have my wife mark my ballot for me according to my direction and as suggested in our suggested amendment, that she will be required to take