

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Robinson is here now and, in order to regularize it, I understand we have all to consent to hearing him. I take it that consent is granted, so we will call section 37 of the present Act and if you have something to address to the committee, Mr. Robinson, would you please come up and say so.

Mr. MACINNIS: Is that section 37 of the Bill or the Act?

The CHAIRMAN: Of the Bill.

Mr. ROBINSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to present a couple of bouquets, first, to our Chief Electoral Officer because he has done a good job over a number of years; and next, to our chairman of the committee. When I say to "our chairman of the committee" I mean that he comes from a riding which is very close to my home, which is Grey-Bruce; and part of his riding takes in the riding that I represent. I know that after handing out these two bouquets, anything that is fair will be distributed around to all of us.

I have no great grievance at all, but I think it is something which applies to all you honourable members who are on this committee.

In 1945, I had occasion to be intrigued into running an election; and during that election campaign I found out that there were several chaps in the riding in which I was running who were being disfranchised for the reason that they were serving on boats on the great lakes and probably on the St. Lawrence, and so forth. Maybe that applies more to our riding than to some of the other ridings which you people represent, because I am suggesting that in our Bruce riding we do have probably more than 200 miles shore line.

So during that election, I had occasion to write to our returning officer and I have here, in my hands—and I know our Chief Electoral Officer will not mind my reading an excerpt from a letter which he wrote back to our returning officer, and this is it:

I do not see how it will be possible for these sailors from Warton and Kincardine to exercise their franchise at the pending general election, unless they are present in their home polling division on polling day.

Well, I was elected—and I would not say whether it is good or bad, still I was elected anyway. So, in 1946, I did have occasion to write to our Chief Electoral Officer in this way:

Referring to the last federal election, several of our sailors in Bruce riding were not able to exercise their franchise on account of being out on their ships.

I would like to request of you to attempt to have the Act revised so that such will be rectified at the next federal election.

Just let me give you an excerpt from the letter of the Chief Electoral Officer in reply to me:

The granting of special voting privileges to sailors and other classes of persons who are unable to be in their home polling divisions on polling day is a matter which can, of course, be dealt with only by parliament.

It is expected that a special committee on election matters will be set up at the next session of parliament to consider the several amendments to the Dominion Elections Act, 1938, which I suggested in the report, dated September 15, 1945, that I made to the Speaker of the House of Commons pursuant to section 58 of the said Act.

You may rely that, when the committee is set up, I will bring your suggestion with regard to sailors to their attention.

Now, gentlemen, this is the suggestion that I wanted to deal with. I would like to say this: that at times we seem to bend over backwards to give the franchise to people who, may be, were not born in this country; therefore, I