

an oath, an amendment that in our opinion, sir, and in the opinion of blind people across the country, and we hope in your opinion, will provide quite sufficient safeguards.

There has been one point raised with reference to the group in which we find ourselves at present in the election act, and that is, those who are illiterate or who, for other reasons, must require assistance in marking their ballot. May I respectfully submit, sir and gentlemen, that blind people are a cross-section of the community and are, in the main, intelligent. Many of them, a very large number of them, are very well educated. Their inability to mark their own ballots is definitely because of a physical handicap. The question of illiteracy may be due to any one of many causes.

One other point, sir. In asking for this amendment, we hope to induce many of our blind people who have practically given up voting because of the present situation, to take an interest in the community, and there is one point which I think you will all recognize, that 70 per cent of all the blind people in Canada to-day lost their sight after the age of twenty years; in other words, they had their sight up to adult life; some of them lost their sight at thirty, forty and fifty years. Many of those people—and they are in the large majority—have enjoyed the use of the secret ballot when they had their sight, and it comes as a great hardship, and an embarrassment to them, to be required to declare an open vote.

I think, sir, that is all I care to say at the moment. I do not want to take up more of your time, but I will be glad to answer any questions you may care to ask.

*By Mr. McPherson:*

Q. I have never seen the condition that you mention in my own experience. Under the usual practice in Manitoba, under the provincial act—and what should be the practice under the Dominion Act—according to the instructions issued, the returning officer and the two scrutineers should go to the polling booth away from the public and mark your ballot. It should never be marked in public. I mean, you should have voted outside in the general room.—A. On one occasion, I think, sir, I had permission to take my wife into the polling booth, but on every other occasion it has been done standing out in front of the counter, or the desk of the returning officer, when I never quite knew how many people were present. There is one point, sir. As I understand it in our present act, there is no definite requirement that the returning officer must take you to the privacy of a polling booth.

Q. There is, in the instructions to the returning officer. He must take you, along with himself and the two scrutineers, and not in the presence of anybody else.—A. Would they have the ballot box with them.

Q. As a rule, there is a little compartment in the corner of the room, where everybody goes behind, and that is where they should take you.—A. What we were anxious to do was to avoid complicating the procedure in the polling office. Now, if we require four persons to go into the private booth with us and leave the machinery of the voting office unguarded, so to speak—

Q. I was not contesting your suggestion at all I was merely saying that I had never seen it done.—A. I find, sir, that there is a great variation in the procedure.

Q. There should not be.

*By Mr. Totzke:*

Q. Your suggestion was that only a certain person could go with one blind person at that election?—A. Yes, sir.