

LEGISLATION

ELECTION ACTS

In addition to provisions for conduct of general services we have maintained careful regard for the future, coupled with the necessity for securing beneficial legislation. Early in 1930 we had come to the decision, after careful investigation conducted throughout previous years, that it would be beneficial to secure a justment in the voting methods affecting blind electors in Canada. Mr. Richard Myers, Assis-tant General Secretary, was specifically delegated to draft the proposed amendment with an accompanying brief and to present this at Ottawa for consideration by the authorities. The amendment was finally secured during the 1930 Session and came into force prior to the last Dominion Election in July, 1930. A blind elector may now choose a relative or friend to accompany him into the privacy of a polling booth and there mark his ballot according to direction. Proper safeguards have been provided. This has in large measure improved the status of the blind elector and is generally regarded as a timely measure. This Dominion amendment together with similar amendments affecting the Provinces of Manitoba and Prince Edward Island will be subsequently referred to in a special report on legislation as prepared by Mr. Myers and appearing on page 29.

BLIND WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT

For several years special attention has been given to the problems confronting our placement staff in their endeavours to locate blind people in general industry. Finally concentrated effort was brought to bear on the situation as it existed in the Province of Ontario. The Assistant General Secretary, Mr. Richard Myers, was specially delegated to deal with this problem and after much appreciated assistance from the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Workmen's Compensation Board and the Department of the Attorney General of Ontario, a special Act was drafted. This Act was finally passed during the 1931 Session of the Ontario Legislature and was given Royal Assent on April 2nd, 1931, thus coming into force just after the end of our fiscal year. Printed copies of this Act may be had on application to the National Office of the Institute. This Act will be of inestimable assistance in our industrial placement programme since it represents the most progressive legislation of its kind yet adopted. We are confident that the general application of the principle involved in this Act throughout every Province in Canada will greatly facilitate our industrial placement work and will remove the major obstacles which have heretofore stood in the path of industrially employable blind adults finding remunerative occupation in general industry. We must express our sincere appreciation to the members and staff of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, to Colonel the Honourable W. H. Price, Attorney General of Ontario, and members of his staff, and to the Workmen's Compensation Board of Ontario who by their foresight and interest have contributed so largely to so notable an achievement.

BLIND ADULTS OVER FIFTY YEARS OF AGE

A few of this group may be trained and employed in Institute factories with a fair degree of success, may be placed in general industry or in independent lines of business but the great majority cannot be successfully employed in Institute or outside industries. For a great percentage of this group, therefore, the best we can hope to do is to train them in the use of embossed print and in handicrafts which may furnish employment in the home. For those who have been employed in factories in earlier years and who, some time after passing into this age group, must be discontinued owing to low production capacity, the home occupations are also essential. There are, of course, many in this general group over seventy years of age for whom obviously little can be done in the way of handicraft training. For those over the age of fifty who lack independent means of support an adequate Government allowance must represent the only solution. It is certain, however, that with satisfactory provision made for this group the Institute would, through the release of funds now allocated for relief purposes, be able to extend more employment and other services to younger, employable blind individuals.

Legislation

Report of the Assistant General Secretary

ELECTION ACT OF CANADA

Hitherto the provisions of the "Election Act of Canada," in so far as the procedure a blind person must follow in voting at election time, has given rise to much complaint among many of the blind. There was a strong consensus of opinion that instead of submitting their ballot papers to be marked by the Deputy Returning Officer they should be able to select a relative or friend.

A study of the whole question of election law procedure in relation to the blind was made. Blind people were consulted, a form of amendment drafted for their consideration, and after they had expressed their approval, with their consent it was submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. This happened at an opportune time, i.e. when a select committee of the House of Commons was discussing Amendments to the Election Act of Canada.

A case for the amendment was presented to the committee. The whole question was thoroughly examined and after careful watching and nursing the Amendment became law on the 30th May, 1930.

The effect of the Amendment is to provide a new alternative method in which blind voters may vote. Heretofore, the ballots of blind voters have been marked by the Deputy Returning Officer in the presence of the Poll Clerk and agents for the candidates. Under the Amendment they may still be so marked, but alternatively the blind voter may bring a friend with him to the Polling Station, and upon both the voter and his friend taking the proper oaths they may go together into a voting compartment where the friend may mark the blind voter's ballot.

For the first time, on the 19th July, 1930, at a general election, blind people throughout the whole of Canada were permitted to vote under the new alternative procedure. Satisfaction was expressed on all sides. Not one case of complaint was reported. Steps are being taken to have each of the Provincial and Municipal Election Acts amended. The Provinces of Manitoba and Prince Edward Island at the last session of their legislatures brought down amending Acts.

THE BLIND WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT

The placement of blind workers in shops and factories has raised the question of Workmen's Compensation. Employers naturally feel in the employment of blind workers there is an increased liability to accident. The question was, could a plan be worked out whereby a blind man stands on the same footing as any other person in regard to employer's liability and the chance of getting employment because of this.

A study of the whole question of Workmen's Compensation was made. Once it appeared that a satisfactory plan had been found, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association was consulted and gave their undivided support.

The Government of the Province of Ontario was approached and after the most careful consideration the Speech from the Throne gave the first indication that legislation would be sponsored.

The Blind Workmen's Compensation Act received its final reading in the Legislature of Ontario on the 23rd March, 1931, and became operative the 2nd April, 1931.

The real purpose of this Act is to encourage the employment of blind workmen by relieving employers of the apprehension they might otherwise be under of employing blind workmen and thereby increasing the possibility of accident and cost of compensation. Provision is made whereby claims up to \$50.00 will be looked after by industries under Schedule I of the Workmen's Compensation Act and also by industries under Schedule 2. Compensation exceeding \$50.00 in both cases will be paid by the Province upon receipt of certificate from the Workmen's Compensation Board. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind is charged with the proper placement of blind workmen.

The Workmen's Compensation Board administer this Act under the same authority as contained in the Workmen's Compensation Act. This is the first statutory enactment of its kind.

Respectfully submitted,

RICHARD MYERS,

Assistant General Secretary.