

ballots are put in, they cannot be removed. This definition—

“Box” or “ballot box” includes bag or other receptacle for containing ballots.

—is so very loose in its character that a returning officer might very well use any open vessel, anything that might be the handiest, even his pocket, if necessary.

Mr. MURPHY: Or his hat.

Mr. PUGSLEY: There should be some provision, the same as we have in the Dominion Elections Act providing for an ordinary ballot box. I do not think there would be any inconvenience in supplying the proper officials with those boxes, and it would be a certain safeguard; whereas, if an officer feels that, under the law, he can carry the ballots about in any receptacle he pleases to use he might think that people could be trusted, and then when he would come to seal up his ballots in some particular receptacle, he might find that he would have a good many ballots that were never cast by the electors at all. It is due to the soldiers that proper safeguards should be placed around the taking of the vote and the return of the ballot, so that the soldier, when he casts his ballot for a particular party or candidate, may have some reasonable assurance that that ballot will be sent back to Canada and counted at the proper time. The only reference to depositing ballots in the ballot box will be found in paragraph (b) of subsection 2 of section 9 which says:

... the deputy presiding officer, who shall without unfolding it—

That is in the case of counterfoils.

—ascertain by examining his initials and the number of the counter-foil, that it is the same paper as that furnished by him to the voter, and shall then, in the presence of the voter, remove and destroy the counterfoil, place the ballot in the proper envelope and deposit in it the ballot box.

That should read “deposit it in the ballot box”. The words “in” and “it” have been transposed. It is intended, of course, to put the envelop in the ballot box, but, as the clause reads, the ballot box is to be put in the envelope. Paragraph (e) of section 9 provides that the voter shall place the ballot in the ballot box, which might mean that it could be placed in a pail or a tin can or in an open bag. I think the minister will see that there should be a section providing that the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery shall secure a sufficient number of suitable ballot boxes which could be kept under lock and

key, and sent forward to the different officials who are to take part in the taking of the vote. Here are some four hundred thousand voters whose ballots are to be cast. Why, in the interests of the soldiers themselves, and in the interests of the Canadian people, should there not be the same reasonable safeguards surrounding the procuring of a proper ballot box, and the placing of the ballots in a secure ballot box, as in the case of an ordinary election? In an ordinary municipal election all these safeguards are provided, but here, where we are providing for the taking of the votes of 400,000 soldiers, we are providing no safeguards whatever so far as the procuring of proper ballot boxes is concerned.

Mr. DOHERTY: It may be that there should be more exact description of the nature of the receptacle; but, assuming that to be so, this is not exactly the section where that provision should be made. This is only a definition of what “box” is understood to mean when it occurs in this Act. To avoid giving a description every time we want to mention the receptacle that is to hold the ballots, we say that the word “box” shall mean the receptacle that is to be used, whether it is a box or a bag. When we come to deal with the manner of taking the vote, I shall be pleased to consider whether it would not be desirable to insert, as far as that may be possible, a specific description of the receptacle. The operations on this side of the ocean will rest upon the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, and on the other side of the ocean on the Acting or Assistant Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, who is to be appointed and who will perform on the other side of the ocean the functions of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.

It is true that the provisions of the Dominion Elections Act may be more specific as to the kind of box, but if I am not mistaken, it is part of the duty of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to provide the boxes that are required; and I would assume that it would be part of the duties of the Acting Clerk of the Crown in Chancery on the other side to provide the receptacles, whatever they may be, which are deemed best and most suitable. It did seem to us desirable that we should not prescribe absolutely that the receptacle must be a box in any particular form. Otherwise, we might create a condition where the soldier would be deprived of his vote just because the officer properly authorized did not have a box of the particular shape.