

*Plebiscite Act*

although we do not have that type of legislation in New Brunswick. In that province a municipality wishing to make a capital expenditure takes the necessary steps, and the matter is referred to the legislature. That would apply to a town council or a county council, as the case may be. Such by-law would be reviewed by the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the government of the day accepts some responsibility in the matter.

I do not say the government accepts full responsibility, but it follows some policy, and either accepts or rejects. However, our by-laws are not submitted to the people—I believe it would be much better if they were, because such submission is an added control over councils.

In Ontario, however, the submission of by-laws to the people is universal practice. I am told that in British Columbia it is a procedure stipulated by law. I believe most provinces in Canada must have something analogous, where the voter writes his "yes" or "no". That is the simplest possible form of ballot. I am convinced that this one would be confusing.

Mr. McLARTY: I believe the voter simply makes a cross.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Yes; he does not write at all.

Mr. McCANN: I cannot see that there is any particular advantage or disadvantage in having the question repeated on the ballot paper. I have voted several times in reference to municipal by-laws in Ontario, and if I remember correctly, it is the practice to have the question appear only once. But I believe the minister will recall that in an ordinary election it is customary to put the names of those for whom the ballot is to be cast in alphabetical order. There is some advantage, especially when there are three names, in being either at the top or the bottom. There are many people who are inclined to vote for names at the top or the bottom. If the committee wishes to carry out that idea, then this would be reversed; it would be "no" and "yes", not the other way round.

Mr. McLARTY: Would the hon. member make it affirmative or negative?

Mr. McCANN: I do not know whether the "yes" being first reflects the wish of the government or not. If it does, then perhaps there is an advantage in having it at the top. But if you are going to follow the practice usually followed in electoral contests and have it in alphabetical order, then the "no" should be opposite the first question and the "yes" opposite the second.

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

Mr. HOMUTH: I agree with the hon. members who take exception to this form of ballot. I think it will be found that many people will go into the polling booth and instead of putting a cross or writing anything down, they will simply strike out that word which they do not want. If they want to vote "no", they will strike out the word "yes", and spoil the ballot. As the leader of the opposition has said, when we submit ballots to the municipal ratepayers in Ontario we submit the one question and then there is a "yes" and a "no" and they vote accordingly. I think the ballot provided for in the bill is most confusing and is going to cause a lot of difficulty. There is no reason at all why we should not do what has been suggested. In reference to the various plebiscites taken in Ontario, hon. members from this province will recall that the one in 1919 contained four questions. There were four different questions, but each question dealt with a different phase of the liquor act.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: What did you get? You got Mitch.

Mr. HOMUTH: No; we never got Mitch; Mitch just happened. There were other votes taken later on. The one taken in 1921 was submitted in such a way that it was simply a question of "yes" or "no". I think we could change this ballot from what it is.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): Some time ago in Ontario the voters in most of the municipalities were asked to vote, "Are you in favour of daylight saving—yes or no?" There was no possibility of the voter getting mixed up. If you have this thing the way it is now, I know in my riding you will have half the ballots spoiled.

Mr. BOUCHER: I am altogether too young to remember the vote on the liquor question in Ontario, but I have had considerable experience with people signing forms and answering questions such as on applications to the civil service commission. My opinion is that this ballot is most confusing in many ways. I think the question should be asked just once and then have the word "yes" with a square after it in which the voter could put his mark, and then the word "no" with a square after it. There would be a place in which the voter could signify his intention. The way it is now the people will think they have to strike out that portion which they do not approve. In my humble opinion the ballot in its present form is very confusing. The voter will be led to believe that he is required to do more than is necessary, and there will be an obscurity as to his wish as expressed in the ballot. I would suggest that the question be a great deal simpler than it is now.