

made numerous requests for ballot boxes to be sent out, it was impossible to get boxes in time to send them to the remotest part of my constituency and the returning officer undertook to take such boxes as he found in the post office basement and to put the ballots into those boxes. There should be some provision by which men residing in the remotest parts of the country should get ballot boxes in time.

On section 51—Forgery or destruction of ballots.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Is this the same as in the old Act?

Mr. GUTHRIE: Yes, except subsection "L." The former Act, section 255, provided disqualification, which is removed by the draftsman of this Bill. He makes any offence specified in this section an illegal practice punishable on summary conviction as in the Act provided. Under the former Act the offender was disqualified as well as subject to penalty.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Should we not continue that provision?

Mr. GUTHRIE: I really cannot give an explanation for its discontinuance. I think that the former section was passed in 1908 after some irregularities had taken place in the riding of West or East Hastings, and there was considerable excitement in the House at the time. I remember the present hon. member for Hastings (Mr. Porter) produced one of the fraudulent ballot boxes in Parliament, and there was a debate on the subject, as a result of which the clause was made very drastic, including not only disqualification for a term of years, but imprisonment for five or ten years. I think probably the draftsman in enumerating these offences came to the conclusion that they were illegal practices punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both. The former section was certainly more severe than the present one, and I really do not know that there is any reason why it should be changed.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The offences enumerated in this section are serious, and it would seem desirable to make the law as strict as possible. I think the old section is preferable to the one here. There is a great temptation on the part of an officer who wishes to be corrupt to take advantage of his position, and the more difficult and hazardous any attempt at illegality can be made, the better it will be for the sanctity of the ballot.

[Mr. H. A. Mackie.]

Mr. GUTHRIE: I do not see any reason why the old section should not replace subsection "L," and I therefore move that this subsection be struck out, and the following paragraph inserted in lieu thereof, making the term of disqualification seven years instead of eight:

(1) Attempts to commit any offence specified in this section shall be disqualified from acting at any election for a term of seven years thereafter and guilty of an indictable offence, and liable, if he is a returning officer, election clerk, deputy returning officer, poll clerk or other officer engaged in the election, to imprisonment without the alternative of a fine for a term not exceeding five years and not less than one year, with or without hard labour, and if he is any other person, with imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years and not less than one year, with or without hard labour.

Section agreed to.

On section 52—Who may be present at polling station.

Mr. ROSS: I think there is something in the Act somewhere which restricts the agent to an unreasonable extent.

Mr. GUTHRIE: That is in regard to the oath of secrecy?

Mr. ROSS: Yes

Mr. GUTHRIE: That comes later on; there is no change in this section.

On section 53—voting on certificate; certain officers and agents may vote at polling stations where employed:

Mr. GUTHRIE: I move to amend subsection 1 of section 53 by substituting the word "revising" for the word "receiving" where it appears at the end of the twenty-fifth line.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. GUTHRIE: I think that in other respects the section now conforms to sections 59, 144 and 60 of the former law, with the exception that the special provisions in the former law in regard to the Yukon have been omitted here.

Mr. PETER MCGIBBON: Would the Acting Solicitor General have any objection to increasing the number of agents from 2 to 3?

Mr. GUTHRIE: I do not just see why.

Mr. PETER MCGIBBON: As a matter of practice it is a very convenient thing, and I think it is a very just thing.

Mr. GUTHRIE: My only experience has been that two is adequate. I think it is better to limit the number. It must be