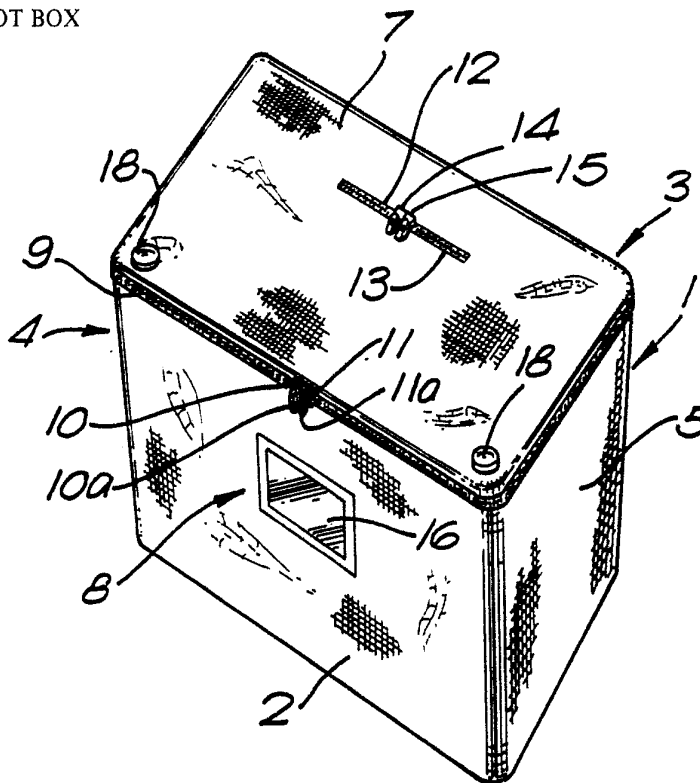




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<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB91/01298 (22) International Filing Date: 31 July 1991 (31.07.91) (30) Priority data: 9017492.1 9 August 1990 (09.08.90) GB (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): BALLOT SERVICES LTD. [GB/GB]; 724 Holloway Road, London N19 (GB). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only) : PLUMB, Richard, George [GB/GB]; PLUMB, Margaret, Louise [GB/GB]; 45 Caistor Park Road, Stratford, London E15 (GB). (74) Agents: WOODWARD, John, Calvin et al.; Venner Shipley & Co., 368 City Road, London EC1V 2QA (GB).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: AT (European patent), BE (European patent), CA, CH (European patent), DE (European patent), DK (European patent), ES (European patent), FR (European patent), GB (European patent), GR (European patent), IT (European patent), LU (European patent), NL (European patent), SE (European patent), US.</p> <p>Published With international search report.</p>

(54) Title: COLLAPSIBLE BALLOT BOX



(57) Abstract

A reusable collapsible ballot box (1) comprising a flexible outer bag-like member providing the walls (2, 3, 4, 5), base (6) and lid (7) for the box. The walls include reinforcing panels (19, 20, 21). Sidewall panels (20, 21) are hingeably attached to the bag-like member and foldable against the front and rear walls (2, 3) to allow the box to be collapsed. The bag-like member is preferably made of a synthetic fibre material and the lid (7) is releasably attached to the sidewalls (2, 3, 4, 5) by means of a zip fastener (9). The lid also includes a slit (12) closed by a zip fastener (13).

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⁺ It is not yet known for which States of the former Soviet Union any designation of the Soviet Union has effect.

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Collapsible Ballot Box

DESCRIPTION

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This invention relates to collapsible ballot boxes.

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Conventional ballot boxes are formed from metal and are provided with a hinged lid in which there is a slot for allowing ballot papers to be inserted. The size of a ballot box is determined by the maximum number of ballot papers which it would be required to receive.

15

Since ballot boxes are in use for only a very limited amount of time, there is a significant problem associated with their storage. This problem is particularly acute in the case of democratic societies, such as trade unions, which are required by their constitutions to hold ballots as part of their decision making process. Such societies are often of limited

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means and the space required to store a suitable number of ballot boxes can be a drain on resources, resulting from increased property rental charges etc..

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The volume of space occupied by ballot boxes also makes it commercially unrewarding for a firm to provide a ballot box rental service. The cost of suitable warehousing would result in the rental charges being higher than the market could stand. Furthermore the weight of conventional ballot boxes can present transport problems.

Collapsible boxes are known but these are generally for packaging purposes and therefore not suitable for use as ballot boxes as they are not constructed in a way that would enable them to provide the required level of security.

Canadian Patent No.1118734 disclosed a disposable ballot box constructed of paperboard which can be assembled from a flat condition into an erected condition. This box however is only intended to be used once and discarded after use so it is intentionally not of a very rugged construction. Neither does it provide a particularly high level of security.

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The problem to be solved by the present invention is to provide a re-usable ballot box which is rugged and secure in construction, which can be stored in a flat planar condition but erected when required for use and
5 which can be used repeatedly.

It is an aim of the present invention to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings associated with conventional and/or disposable ballot boxes.

10

The present invention provides a re-usable ballot box having walls, base and a lid and is characterised in that said walls, base and lid are provided by a flexible bag-like outer member, reinforcing means being
15 associated with said walls so as to be rearrangeable from a collapsed position into an erected position to maintain the ballot box in its erected configuration.

The reinforcing means preferably comprises a rigid
20 panel associated with each wall of the ballot box. The panels may be solid or be in the form of latices.

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Conveniently, a zip fastener may be employed to maintain the integrity of the ballot box in its erect condition, such that when the zip fastener is undone the ballot box may be collapsed. Alternatively, other
5 fastening means such as Velcro could be substituted for the zip.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of collapsing a re-usable
10 ballot box, including first, second and third walls, comprising displacing the first and second walls such that they lie parallel to the third wall.

Preferably, the method according to the present
15 invention comprises the steps of releasing a closure member, displacing a reinforcing member such that a fourth ballot box wall becomes flaccid, displacing said first wall such that it lies parallel to said third wall, deforming said fourth wall such that said second
20 wall lies parallel to said first wall.

- 5 -

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

5 Figure 1 shows a re-usable ballot box according to the present invention in its erect condition;

Figure 2 shows the re-usable ballot box of Figure 1 in its collapsed condition; and

10

Figures 3 to 5 show a re-usable ballot box according to the present invention at stages in its disassembly intermediate those shown in Figures 1 and 2.

15 Referring to Figure 1, the re-usable ballot box 1 in its erect condition is in the form of a hollow cuboid, having six walls including a front wall 2, a rear wall 3, first and second side walls 4,5, a base 6 and a lid 7, and formed from flexible sheet material, such as a
20 synthetic-fibre textile. The ballot box maintains its erected shape by the incorporation of reinforcing members associated with respective walls of the box. An open box-like lower portion 8 is formed by five

- 6 -

walls 2,3,4,5,6 of the cube and is joined along the upper margin 3a of the rear wall 3 to the rear margin 7a of the closure member, or lid, 7. The lid 7 covers the entire opening of the lower portion 8 and is maintained in that position by fastening means such as a first zip 9 which unites the three free margins of the lid 7 with respective upper margins of the side walls 4,5 and the front wall 2. The first zip 9 includes two sliding tabs 10,11 which are arranged so that each can be used to fasten a portion of the first zip 9. When the first zip 9 has been completely done up, the tabs 10,11 are adjacent each other and can be coupled by means of a padlock which can be passed through holes 10a,11a provided in the tabs 10,11.

The re-usable ballot box 1 is dimensioned such that, when considered in its erect state, its height is no greater than the distance separating the front and rear walls 2,3.

The lid 7 is provided with a slit 12 through which ballot papers may be inserted. The slit 12 is also closable by fastening means such as a second zip 13.

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The zip 13 is provided with a pair of sliding tabs 14,15 which may be padlocked together, in the same manner as the sliding tabs 10,11 of the first zip 9.

5 A transparent plastics window 16 is located on the outer surface of the front wall of the ballot box 1, behind which a card may be placed. Such a card may carry information concerning the location of the ballot box. Additionally, a legend such as "BALLOT BOX" may
10 be imprinted on the top surface of the ballot box.

Referring to Figure 2, the re-usable ballot box 1 is maintained in its collapsed, i.e. folded, condition by means of a pair of press studs 18.

15 Figure 3 shows the re-usable ballot box 1 with the lid 7 open and folded back. Within the ballot box 1 are reinforcing means in the form of three fixed reinforcing members 19, associated with the base 6, the
20 rear wall 3 and the front wall 2 respectively. Fourth and fifth reinforcing members 20,21 are associated with respective side walls 4,5. Fourth reinforcing member 20 is hingebly mounted in a corner defined by the

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intersection of the front wall 2 and the first side wall 4 and reinforcing member 21 in the corner defined by the intersection of the rear wall 3 and the second side wall 5. The reinforcing members are formed from cardboard, though they could equally well be formed from a light metal such as aluminium.

Referring to Figure 5, the reinforcing member 22 associated with the lid 7 is of reduced area in order to allow the lid to wrap partially around the rest of the ballot box 1, when it is in its collapsed condition.

A method of collapsing the re-usable ballot box 1, shown in Figure 1, will now be described. Firstly, the first zip 9 is undone and the lid 7 folded back. This allows any ballot papers within the ballot box 1 to be removed. The hingebly mounted reinforcing members 20,21 (see Figure 3) can then be displaced about their hinges so that they lie flat against the front and rear walls 2,3 respectively.

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Referring to Figure 4, the front wall 2 is folded into the lower portion 8 and comes to rest overlying the base 6. The side walls 4,5 have been folded in on themselves by this action to form the illustrated triangular end shapes. Inward pressure applied to the side walls 4,5 will now cause the back wall 3 to fold down onto the front wall 2, as shown in Figure 5. The lid 7 can now be wrapped around the open end 23 of the collapsed ballot box 1 and its free end restrained by means of the press stud portions 18a cooperating with complementary structures on the outer surface of the base.

It is envisaged that other folding arrangements or fastening means may be employed.

The re-usable ballot box of the present invention has a number of advantages over conventional ballot boxes. Its reduced weight and size mean that it is readily transportable. The nature of its construction means that it is durable, i.e. it will not rust nor is there any paint to peel, and it can conveniently be produced in a wide range of colours etc. suitable for diverse

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applications. It also has the advantage over known
disposable ballot boxes that it can be reused and
provides greater security due to the combination of the
flexible outer bag-like member and the collapsible
5 reinforcing panels associated therewith. With the
known disposable cardboard ballot box, access to the
contents of the box can easily be achieved.

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CLAIMS

1. A re-usable ballot box having walls, a base and a lid characterised in that said walls, base and lid are provided by a flexible bag-like outer member, reinforcing means (20,21) being associated with said walls so as to be rearrangeable from a collapsed position into an erected position to maintain the ballot box (1) in its erected configuration.

10

2. A ballot box according to claim 1 characterised in that said reinforcing means comprises a rigid panel (19,20,21) associated with each wall of the ballot box.

15

3. A ballot box according to claim 2 the characterised in that said walls comprise a front wall (2), a rear wall (3), and two side walls (45), the panels (20,21) being associated with said side walls and being displaceable relative thereto.

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4. A ballot box according to claim 3 characterised in that the displaceable panels (20,21) are hingably mounted such that they can be displaced to lie flat against said front and rear walls (2,3) respectively.

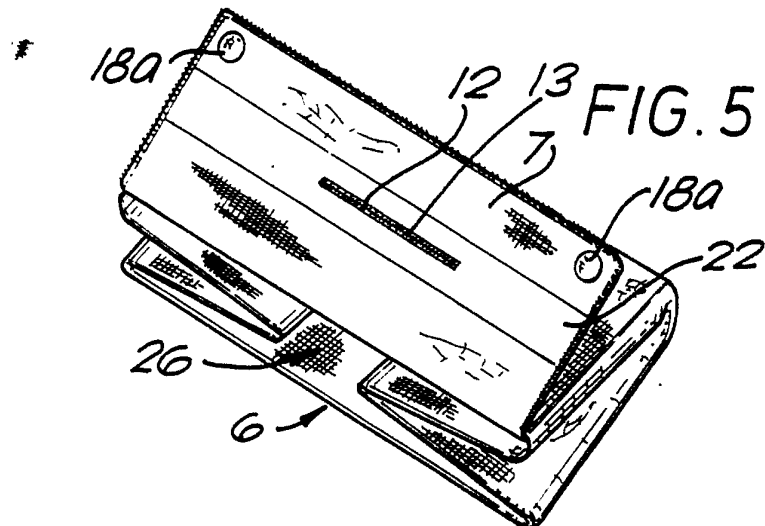
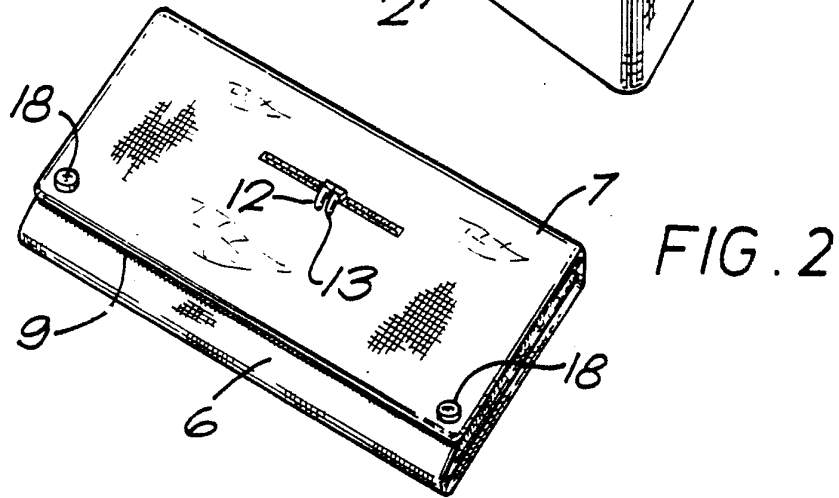
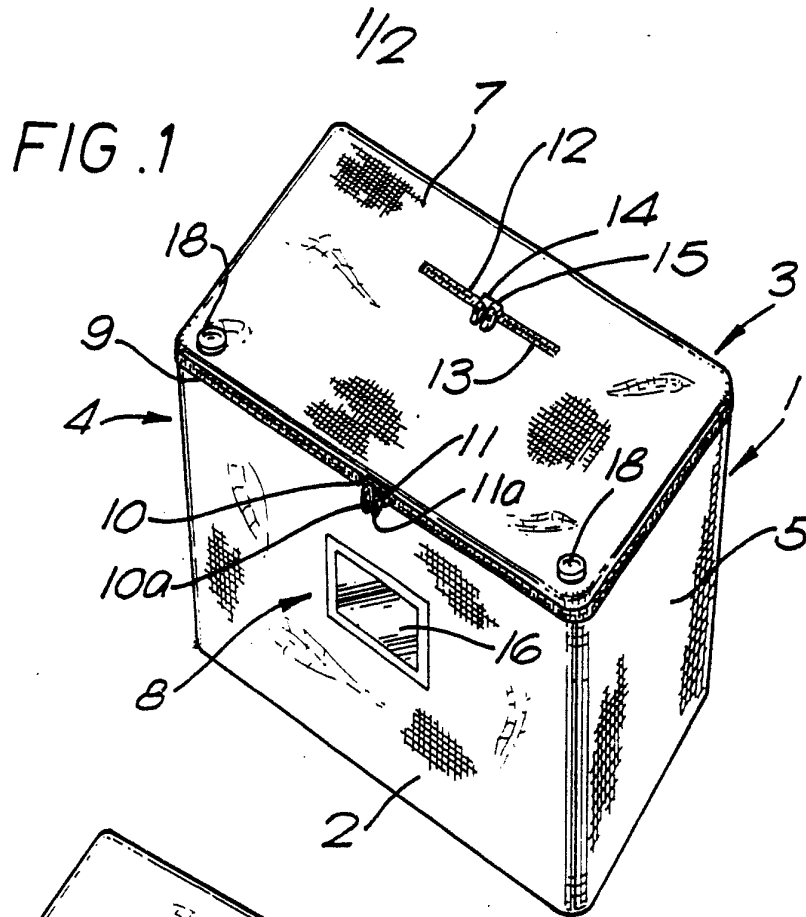
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5. A ballot box according to any preceding claim characterised in that said outer member is provided with a slit (12) and fastening means (13) operable to close said slit.

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6. A ballot box according to any preceding claim characterised in that the lid (7) is provided with fastening means (9) operable to maintain said lid in a closed position.

15



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 91/01298

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) ⁶		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC Int.Cl. 5 G07C13/02; A45C7/00		
II. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum Documentation Searched ⁷		
Classification System	Classification Symbols	
Int.Cl. 5	G07C ; A45C ; B65D	
Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched ⁸		
III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT⁹		
Category ¹⁰	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³
Y A Y A A A A A	US,A,1 673 769 (GRAHAM) 12 June 1928 see the whole document --- FR,A,1 315 104 (AMZALAK) 18 January 1963 see the whole document --- CA,A,1 118 734 (HOLMES) 23 February 1982 cited in the application --- FR,A,1 045 451 (KLAUS) 26 November 1953 --- US,A,4 160 496 (KNIGHT) 10 July 1979 --- FR,A,1 174 502 (SIMON) 12 March 1959 ---	1 5 1 2-4,6
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>¹⁰ Special categories of cited documents :</p> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p> </div> </div>		
IV. CERTIFICATION		
Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search	Date of Mailing of this International Search Report	
12 NOVEMBER 1991	25 NOV 1991	
International Searching Authority	Signature of Authorized Officer	
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**ANNEX TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO. GB 9101298
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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US-A-1673769		None	
FR-A-1315104		None	
CA-A-1118734	23-02-82	None	
FR-A-1045451		None	
US-A-4160496	10-07-79	None	
FR-A-1174502		None	

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