

Electoral Boundaries Commission

this debate and told me he thought he had found a method of doing this. He said that if he had, he intended to bring in an amendment at this time. As I said quite frankly on March 10, I was prepared, and I even went so far as to say the government was prepared—because we had had to take the responsibility for bringing in the bill as originally drafted—if a better method should be found, a method which would be less open to question, to consider it on its merits. That is the position and it is the only position I have ever taken. It is the position I still take with respect to this clause, as with respect to every other aspect of this measure.

I do not think it would be appropriate for me at this stage, until there has been some opportunity, as the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings rightly suggested last night—since this amendment was presented only shortly before ten o'clock last evening—I do not think it would be appropriate for me to indicate any attitude about this until I have had an opportunity of hearing some debate on it.

Mr. Churchill: Give us your views on this. May I ask the minister a question. If the government intends to support this amendment let us know. If the government is not supporting it, let us vote the amendment down and get on with the business.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. gentleman is now proposing a course which seems to contradict the suggestion he made earlier, which was that we should give the most careful consideration to all aspects of the bill before us. I would feel I was acting in bad faith, and not in accordance with what I said as recorded on page 742—perhaps I might read what I said then—

Mr. Churchill: You do not need to read it.

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps I do not. However, I will not seek to restrain the hon. gentleman when he makes his argument, and I would appreciate it if he would also concede that I have the right to make my own argument in the house in my own way as well.

The most satisfactory suggestion we have been able to think of for arriving at the composition of these commissions is the one before the committee, but I hasten to say again that if anyone in any quarter of the house can produce a better method we have an open mind. It is, I say once more, not the special responsibility of the government but the responsibility of all of us to do this in the best possible way.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

In the light of the clear and unequivocal statement I made I do not think I should get up, without having heard any argument, without even having had an opportunity to confer with my colleagues, and take a definite attitude one way or the other. I think I could be accused of bad faith if I said at this moment that the government will accept the amendment or that it will not accept it. I think we should examine this proposal with an open mind. We should examine it to see whether there are any flaws in it and, if there are, we should reject it. And if, after giving it dispassionate and objective scrutiny such as the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre somewhat eloquently, I thought, recommended last night should be given to this measure as a whole, we decide it would be an improvement on the present proposed arrangements, we should accept it.

I must say I have no doubt that if we do accept the bill as it now stands the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition will make the kind of appointments to all these ten commissions which will commend themselves to all reasonable people. That is my opinion, but it is obviously not the opinion of every member of this house. At any rate, some doubts have been expressed about it in certain quarters.

Mr. Starr: Well, let us have a vote on it.

Mr. Pickersgill: If we could have all these doubts resolved in all quarters of the house it would undoubtedly be better, as it would with regard to all aspects of the bill. But before I decide what my own attitude should be I would like to hear the views of some of the other hon. members. I should like to hear them indicate whether they see any defects in this proposal or whether they see any advantages in retaining what is recommended in the original bill.

Mr. Nowlan: I have to leave in a little while and I shall not be here at one o'clock. I hope this matter will not be determined at that time if it comes to a vote, because I have strong feelings in the matter as I suggested last night.

I think the provision now in the bill is a good provision. It is not perfect, of course; nothing in this world is perfect, but it is as good a provision as could be incorporated in any bill dealing with such a contentious matter. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said last night that it savoured, perhaps, of politics which he was trying to avoid. He wanted to avoid political partisanship in