

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 10, 1963

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

RAILWAYS, AIR LINES AND SHIPPING

CONCURRENCE IN THIRD REPORT—WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN SECOND REPORT

[Translation]

Mr. J. T. Richard (Ottawa East) presented the third report of the sessional committee on railways, air lines and shipping and moved that the motion appearing on today's order paper concerning concurrence in second report of the sessional committee on railways, air lines and shipping presented on December 5, be withdrawn.

Motion agreed to.

[Text]

REDISTRIBUTION

PROVISION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONS AND READJUST- MENT OF REPRESENTATION

On the order: Introduction of bills.

The Secretary of State—Bill intituled: An act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions to report upon the readjustment of the representation of the provinces in the House of Commons and to provide for the readjustment of such representation in accordance therewith.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Secretary of State):

Mr. Speaker, I think there was an understanding which was set out by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition last Friday that this bill would simply be introduced so it would be visible to the public and, in accord with the suggestion made by the Prime Minister and agreed to by the Leader of the Opposition, would be available for discussion among the various parties and groups during the session. It was also clearly understood that the bill simply set out a method; that it was subject to all the qualifications I set out at an earlier stage; that in any respect except the fundamental principle of an impartial non-partisan redistribution it would be open to amendment from any quarter of the house in accord with the views of the majority of hon. members.

I should perhaps say one more thing. There is one point upon which I would not want to be thought to have misled the house. I gave an answer during the course of the debate

to the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka about the suggested method the government had in mind in its legislation of setting up the commissions and appointing the commissioners. In the light of the debate that particular suggestion has been changed, and the change will be seen in the bill. The provision there is not as I explained it to the hon. gentleman because it seemed to me that several hon. members made certain arguments that deserved consideration, and I did not want even to put forward the suggestion that was originally intended because it seemed to me there was a better suggestion than that to put forward. But it, of course, is open to discussion and amendment, and the government has no intention of proceeding with the measure in its present form beyond first reading.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if I might be allowed to reply to the minister, my understanding, and I may have been mistaken, was that there would be no introduction of the bill but that there would be discussion among representatives of the various parties during the period of the Christmas recess or between this session and the next one.

I must say that in my opinion even first reading at this time will not bring about that measure of agreement that all of us desire. I would hope that the minister would consider holding it back rather than having first reading at this time, because introduction of this bill can only increase very considerably the discussion on the bill respecting the appointment of the official. I feel that the bill should not be given first reading at this time.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I am only too happy to comply with the suggestion of the right hon. gentleman. There was only one reason the government thought it would be desirable to introduce a bill indicating a method. It was thought that this might facilitate certain public discussion outside the house, and at the same time we would have a document that would be available in the house. But the main concern of the government in this matter, which concerns all of us, is to achieve the utmost harmony; and certainly if the right hon. gentleman did not understand we were to follow the procedure which I thought had been agreed to I would