

Electoral Boundaries Commission

in the determination of the representation in this house. The surveyor general of the registrar of vital statistics are again provincial officials. They may or may not exist under those titles, but there are holders of similar offices. But a further point arises. If a province refuses to let any of these officials act in this regard then the chief justice may pick anyone.

In any event, I come back to the argument put forward so ably by my colleague, the hon. member for Bow River. The Minister of Justice has referred to the chief justice of the province, the associate chief justice—I think he has the province of Quebec in mind—and the acting chief justice. Why pitchfork them into the arena of the representation of the House of Commons? This is not a duty envisaged in the appointment of a chief justice. All too often we have heard that the role of the judges of this country should be limited more and more to the courts. When the Conservatives were in power I recall hearing hon. members on the opposite side saying that we were adding more and more to the duties of justices. It will be interesting to see how they justify this departure from the principle they insisted on before.

In the event that there is inability on the part of the chief justice of the province to complete nominating the representatives of the commission, then we bring in the chief justice of Canada. I must say that I find it somewhat strange that the chief justice, the senior puisne judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, should be ultimately in the position of naming anyone he may wish. This is what is envisaged in this legislation as a possibility, and if you are going to provide for it as a possibility you must accept it as a justifiable one. I suggest to hon. members that this should not be the case.

Turning to the qualifications of the third member I find the clause reads,

(b) the president or other similar officer of or a member of the faculty of, a university, college—

What is meant by “college”? Is it a junior college?

—or other educational institutions providing courses at a post-secondary school level in the province;

Does this mean an instructor, an assistant professor or some minor member of the staff? After all, the provision is there. We know very well that a number of people on the staffs of universities do hold strong, vocal political views. This clause of so-called political purity, as advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, therefore falls to the ground if he seeks to justify the amendment he is

making by removing any question of partisanship by changing the provisions of the legislation in connection with nomination by the Prime Minister.

I would say to the Minister of Justice that in discussing the qualifications, capabilities or impartiality of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition, one must not consider the personalities of the right hon. gentlemen who are now occupying those positions. If you do this, you may be merely legislating for the next five years. One must consider the impartiality and responsibility of the holder of the office. I feel, therefore, that his rather passionate exhortation on the responsibility, ability and so forth of the present Prime Minister was not really germane to the discussion we are having today.

I did not have the privilege of hearing the Minister of Transport say why he had now changed his mind. He had been most eloquent, most persuasive. The Minister of Transport seemed to be in a very conciliatory mood during the previous session of parliament when he was discussing the proposed legislation. I thought at the time I might suggest other types of nominees, but there were certain difficulties. I did not agree with the idea of ten provincial commissions because I thought one commission divided into subcommittees could do the job just as well, and we would not have nearly all this difficulty. At that time the minister was in a very conciliatory mood, and I would suggest this is one more proof that when he adopts this attitude we must be more than ever on our guard because we will have a quick reversal of position. Perhaps since he has become Minister of Transport he has learned to shift gears very rapidly and can go into reverse gear very quickly. This is certainly a case where the Minister of Transport, if he now accepts the proposed amendment by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre—

Mr. Pickersgill: North Centre.

Mr. Churchill: I see no similarity between the two members.

Mr. Lambert: —North Centre, will have made a quick shift. I do find it extremely difficult to see any logic in the arguments that are said to be advanced by the Minister of Transport when he shifts from one position to the other. After all, the government must take its responsibility, not lightly, when it advances a bill. They should not say, “All right, here is our bill; we will amend it here, there and everywhere.” As the minister knows, there are limitations to the amendments to bills. Are we to get into a position