

Electoral Boundaries Commission

That is, what is in the bill now.

—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.

Now, sir, I have been asked for my opinion, but I thought it would be wrong to give it in light of that statement until I had heard all the arguments. I have been sitting here the whole time and listening most attentively to the arguments made. Some have been very interesting and persuasive, particularly that of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, who talked very eloquently, I thought, about parliament in words with which in the main I could not disagree. But I have not been convinced by the arguments that have been made that my authorship is in fact as good as the amendment that is being suggested, although I think it is pretty good.

An hon. Member: We prefer yours.

Mr. Pickersgill: If the house decided to accept the bill in its present form I would not waste any tears on the amendment. In fact, I would have a certain amount of satisfaction, but I really do believe we would have a better act with this amendment. Because all those in the country are not Liberals and Conservatives, because all those in the country perhaps have not got the same highminded view of the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister as those of us in the house have, I think there would be a greater degree of general confidence in the commissions if we were to accept the amendment that has been proposed than if we were to take the bill in its present form. For that reason I am disposed to support the amendment.

Mr. Nowlan: May I ask the minister a question in order to keep the historical record correct? He referred to the bill brought in by the preceding government and pointed out that the appointments were to be made by order in council. Was it not stated in the house that on second reading of the bill there would be a statement made as to the nominees proposed to be appointed by the government, so that it would not be a matter of blind appointments by the cabinet but rather a matter of record before the house?

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not think there was any intention on the part of the previous government to put anything over at all, but I think the hon. gentleman by his contribution has just illustrated the point that I think has been illustrated by the debate this

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

afternoon. Once in a while we have had a little fun, but most of the time it has been as good and as serious a debate as I have heard in the house for quite a long time. I think this illustrates very well what the Minister of Justice said, that we can be proud that when we are in committee on an important question like this we do bend our minds to it, that we do try, if we can, to improve the legislation and that we are not hidebound and we do not think that what we put in a bill is the last word.

Sometimes there are matters of policy on which a government must stand or fall, but I have made it very clear from the beginning and the Leader of the Opposition commended me for it, that the only thing that was sacrosanct to the government in the bill was that we should establish impartial commissions outside of parliament to do this job, but that the detail, the organization, the arrangements, depended on the house and did not and were not going to depend on the government. That is the position I have taken throughout and that is the position I intend to take throughout. I do thank the committee and I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for not seeing the clock.

Mr. Nielsen: I wonder whether I might be permitted one quick question? Since there is an obvious division among all members of the house as to their views on the bill, can the minister say whether the members of his party are going to be permitted a free vote on the matter?

Mr. Pickersgill: We are all free people in a free country and thank God for that.

Progress reported.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being five o'clock the house will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely public bills, private bills.

CRIMINAL CODE

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR PROVINCIAL LOTTERIES

Mr. Georges Valade (St. Mary) moved the second reading of Bill No. C-22, to amend the Criminal Code (provincial lotteries).

[Translation]

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce a bill to amend the Criminal Code so as to allow the provinces that might wish to do so to establish a system of provincial lotteries designed to assist hospitals and social