

Electoral Boundaries Commission

suggestion of political partisanship or partiality as far as we can. That has been my objective and it has been the objective of the government from the beginning.

I must confess I was a little shocked to hear the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre commend the method of appointment used in the United Kingdom, where one of the commissioners is appointed by the home secretary and one by the minister of housing, or whoever it is—his title has been changed since the original act was passed. But the appointments were made by two cabinet ministers. I can just imagine what would have happened had we brought in a bill suggesting that the secretary of state—as I then was—and the Minister of Justice should appoint two of the four commissioners. I can imagine the kind of speeches we would have heard. Yet the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre commended the British practice. I asked him specifically about this at one o'clock, because it did seem to me that we on this side of the house had bent over backwards to try and prevent any political interference, or interference by politicians, at any stage in this process.

A bill brought in by the previous administration had many admirable features, but it had one feature which was criticized very strongly, and that was that appointments were to be made by the governor in council. I used the phrase that we did not want to take redistribution out of parliament and put it in the cabinet, and that we have sought not to do.

I tried various suggestions. As hon. members know, when we first discussed this matter on the representation commissioner bill in 1963 I said that one of the possibilities we would explore was having these appointments made by the Speaker. Then when I looked at the experience of Australia, where they have one judge—or in some states they have one judge—the commonwealth electoral officer, the state chief electoral officer and the surveyor general, and when I looked at the experience of the only two Canadian provinces where this non-partisan process is carried out by three persons all divorced from politics, it seemed to me that if we were to find a method of doing this the weight of experience was in favour of designating the kind of persons who would have the requisite experience and positions in the community which would make them as little likely as any other people to be partisan, and as much likely as possible to be objective. I am sure that is why Mr.

Frost, when he recommended the establishment of the commission in Ontario, recommended that there should be a judge, the chief electoral officer and an eminent professor from Queen's University. We know what happened in Manitoba, where the law itself says who these people are to be.

When I spoke on March 10 I did not think that anyone could devise an amendment which would bring about the kind of situation which would enable parliament to prescribe the positions. Frankly I did not think it was possible.

Mr. Woolliams: When did you change your mind?

Mr. Pickersgill: I never changed my mind at all. My mind was made up on March 10 when I said that if we could find people who could be designated to do this task that would be the best way; but I said I did not see how we could do that unless, as the hon. member for Bow River said, we used federal civil servants. However, I knew what would be said if we tried to appoint federal civil servants. It would be said at once that they are under the control of their ministers.

I ask myself, if the bill is accepted in its present form and the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition make these appointments, what classes of persons are going to be appointed? I have talked to the Prime Minister about this. I have not talked to the Leader of the Opposition about it, but I know that the Prime Minister does not relish the prospect of making these appointments, and I would be very surprised if the Leader of the Opposition would relish it either. I am sure he would do it as a duty, and do it well and conscientiously; and I have no doubt about the Prime Minister on that score. But I do not think it would be a tragedy—in fact, I would be quite content and would think we had done a pretty good job—if we were to pass this clause in its present form. Nevertheless I am bound to say that in my opinion the objections I raised on March 10, as reported at page 742 of *Hansard* and to which I referred this morning, to the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre are in fact met by the proposed amendment, and for that reason I think the proposed amendment does fulfil precisely what I said was required on March 10. Perhaps I can read the words again:

Frankly, sir, up to now this is the most satisfactory suggestion we have been able to think of for arriving at the composition of these commissions—