

Electoral Boundaries Commissions

done whereby the commission would have some latitude in reaching its decision.

Mr. Lambert: Mr. Chairman, I should also like to add a few words by way of support. We are dealing here with exceptional cases, but I think in many instances an exceptional case removes us from the blandness of a purely uniform and mathematical formula. After all, Prince Edward Island already has a constitutional floor, and this proposal is not going to impose any burden on the representation from that province. The numbers are not going to change. I do not think anyone is going to suffer any injustice. I would say that the same applies in Nova Scotia.

To me there is no compelling argument to make the change. There may be pros and cons, but none of them is of sufficient weight to justify a change. Under these circumstances I think we should provide the commissions for these two provinces with the opportunity of choice in this regard. We are not asking for it elsewhere in the country.

I should like to refer to what is perhaps a similar situation. When the city of Edmonton decided to number its streets and avenues it adopted a very monotonous, rectangular, mathematical plan of streets and avenues north and south and east and west and gave them numbers. I say thank goodness that somebody was instrumental in retaining Jasper avenue, running right through the middle of the city.

I would say the same thing in this connection. This exception does not hurt the rule. There is also a strong historical background, and I do not see why we should destroy history in so far as these two provinces are concerned. If the province of Newfoundland had had some historic dual ridings at the time it entered confederation I am sure this would have commended itself to the Minister of Transport, and that he would have found compelling arguments to retain that right to individuality rather than ruling it out absolutely by the stroke of a pen or by the printed word as we are proposing to do today. Therefore I heartily recommend that hon. members should support any amendment put forward on behalf of the members for Queens and Halifax.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, obviously I do not want to prolong this debate, but may I say I do not feel I could propose such an amendment. On the other hand, I have one drafted here that is slightly different from the one shown me by the hon. member for Queens, who was good enough to send me the one

[Mr. Nowlan.]

about which he was thinking. I would think that the one I have here would be preferable if this is going to be done, because the only real difference between the two is that in the one case it just says that the commission "may" and in the other case it says "may if it sees fit to do so".

In view of the queer interpretations sometimes placed on the word "may", if that additional phrase was not included I think there might be a suggestion that parliament's inclination was to have it done. My own inclination is not to have it done. I say that quite frankly. I really feel about this matter, and it is going to be very difficult for me to vote. I have been thinking I might do something that I thought only members of the N.D.P. did, sit on my hands, if there is a vote.

I have not made up my mind yet, but I certainly do not want to influence the judgment of any other member of the committee. Particularly because of the objection reiterated by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre I do not feel it is fair to impose upon the commission the making of another decision which in my bones I feel we ought to make ourselves if it is to be made at all. I think it would be very hard for me to vote for this. On the other hand I am rather impressed by the argument put forward. I want to reiterate, however, that these historic constituencies will not survive anyway. Halifax county is far too big to be one constituency, so we will not be preserving the historical situation there and probably not in Queens either. However, if the hon. gentleman wishes to do so I think the simplest way would be for him to move his amendment in order to test the committee on it and get the agony over with.

Mr. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Chairman, I think this is certainly fair enough. In my opinion the minister's suggestion as to an amendment is an improvement on the one I had in mind. For the information of members of the committee who are not familiar with the maritimes I might say that this is not an anomaly in the maritime setting. In the legislatures of the maritime provinces, unlike other provinces, virtually all the constituencies are multiple constituencies. In New Brunswick some of them have as many as four or five members. In Prince Edward Island they are all dual constituencies, and in Nova Scotia there is a similar situation. I do not know whether it is necessary for me to read this amendment.