

Electoral Boundaries Commission

One point that I touched on briefly and want to enlarge upon before concluding is this business of political experience. I favour the clause as it stands, because you have the chief justice appointing one member, you have the prime minister appointing another member and you have the leader of the official opposition appointing the third member. What men in this country are more fitted, by reason of their background, by reason of their political experience and by reason of their integrity—otherwise they would not find themselves in such positions—to appoint members to such a commission? Surely this counts for something. The prime minister, with his vast experience inside and outside parliament, and likewise the leader of the official opposition, with his own precious store of experience gained over many years of service in public life, are best qualified to make these selections; and surely no one in his right mind would suggest that any person who has attained the office of prime minister or leader of the opposition would exercise anything but the purest motives in selecting the members who are to serve on such a commission.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: I leave it at that, Mr. Chairman, and for those reasons I would again appeal to the ministers to give the lead to their own backbenchers, or to the backbenchers on the government side to rise and freely express their views, throw out this undesirable amendment and support the clause as it was when originally introduced by the government and which we were led to believe was going to be kept intact, as the Minister of Transport seemed to say on page 741 of *Hansard*.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, since I have been called into question and it has been suggested that I ought to say something about this matter, and I have kept silent all afternoon waiting for an opportunity—

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Transport. Since many of us in this house have some questions to ask, would the minister prefer to answer all the questions at one time, or answer some now and some later?

Mr. Pickersgill: I shall try to be very brief, so that if there were any questions before five o'clock—we are getting perilously close to it—I would be glad to answer them. But there are one or two points I should like to make clear, because several hon. members

[Mr. Nielsen.]

seem to know the content of my mind rather better than I do myself. I think I ought to start out by saying that in the whole course, not just of my public life but in the whole course of my life, I have never been paid such a compliment as I have been paid today, having people, starting with the old and experienced hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre—

Mr. Churchill: Did I make that mistake?

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. gentleman even went so far as to call me a gentleman, for which I am pathetically grateful. Every hon. member of what we call the official opposition in this house—and they do not very often do this on my behalf—has praised my authorship; they have suggested that I must have had almost divine guidance in drafting the original clause 6 in the bill, because they are so anxious to preserve it. They have suggested that they suspect my motives. I am not going to say that I suspect theirs, because I do not really believe in that kind of argument; but I do think, as I said when I moved the second reading of this bill on March 10, that this was the best method that so far the government had been able to devise and recommend, and that is why we put it in the bill.

But no one recognized more clearly than I that this method of appointment would be open to question. I knew why it would be open to question. One hon. member during the course of this debate—so many have spoken I am not sure I can recall who—asked what we were doing with this bill anyway. The answer is that we want to take redistribution out of politics. However, it seems to me that, however eminent the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, who are both officers of the house, they are nevertheless—and I honour them both for this—political leaders. Therefore, to give them the power to make these appointments does not completely take the matter out of politics. As I said on second reading, it would achieve impartiality if by impartiality is meant weighing one thing against the other. But that did not necessarily mean that every one of the ten commissioners appointed by each of them would be impartial. I do not care who appoints these commissioners or how they are appointed, you will not remove the human element.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill: The only consideration we should have in our minds is to remove any