

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

As the minister says, there are two avenues which we could travel on this road. The former government of the Leader of the Opposition (right hon. Mr. Diefenbaker) brought forward a bill which proposed one commission. This present bill follows very closely the principles which we laid down, except that in place of one commission it proposes a commission for each province. Arguments can be made for either course.

The argument in favour of one commission is that you would have a higher degree of uniformity than by having ten separate commissions, and the principles applied in one province would have effect in all provinces, whereas with ten individual commissions you might have differences arising between the provinces. As against that you have the argument that one commission would take more time to carry out its work than ten commissions. Further, and this is both the strength and the weakness of the proposal, ten individual commissions will be able to apply their knowledge of the conditions in each province in bringing forward a report which would be perhaps more acceptable to an individual province than would be the case if there was only one general commission.

Against that you might have differences of approach, and differences in application of principles which would create confusion. The one guard against that is the fact that we have the representation commissioner on each of the ten commissions, and with his knowledge and experience we would probably get a high degree of uniformity in the commissions' application of principles. Though I would have preferred only one commission, I am not going to quarrel very strongly at this time with the proposal to have ten individual commissions.

There needs to be a great deal of explanation given in connection with this matter. We have had some misunderstanding in the house as to the effect of the bill and as to the effect of the British North America Act regarding the proportion of provincial seats. Unfortunately there will be a reduction in the membership of the house elected by some provinces, provinces which would naturally resent the fact that they are going to lose members. The province from which I come is going to lose one member. At one time in our history that province had a solid 18 Liberal members but that, of course, is a memory it would like to forget. Its membership will now be reduced to 11 and if the senatorial floor were to go, which one hon. member tried to remove the other day, its membership might go down to less than that in the future. In any event, there is a great deal of explanation which needs to be given when we discuss the bill in greater detail.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

I do not intend to deal with the principle of this measure any further at this time. I presume other hon. members will wish to speak briefly on the first clause. I agree with the minister that we should get on with the consideration of these clauses—not rapidly but giving them careful scrutiny—and I think the Canadian people will look upon the passage of this bill when it is finally passed, as I am sure it will be, with a great deal of pride and satisfaction.

There has been a good deal of complaint about this institution recently. Parliament it has been said, is going to the dogs. We have had commentators who could hardly find their way to the House of Commons if they arrived in Ottawa with a map and compass, pointing out to us the error of our ways. It is true we have had our difficulties—and we shall have them again. But this is what parliament is for. Most of these commentators forget that the word "parliament" is derived from the word "talk". It may be we talk too much—and perhaps I am doing that at this very moment—but we must never forget that members are sent here to express their views. When the time comes, it will be found that parliament gets along fairly well, and when members of the House of Commons are prepared to change the course which has been followed for a century as far as representation is concerned and leave the representation of their constituencies and the boundaries of those constituencies to be determined by an independent commission over which they would have no control, except to approve the findings or send them back for review in certain circumstances, I think it speaks well for the Canadian parliament and that the Canadian people can derive some satisfaction that we have achieved such a high degree of unanimity on this matter.

As far as we on this side are concerned, we will give full support to the general principle of the bill. We ourselves brought in a bill which, apart from the number of commissions envisaged, was almost the same as the measure now before us. This has been a fundamental principle with us for a long while, as it has been for the government, and I am glad to see that we have finally got the bill through second reading and are at the committee stage.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to echo the sentiments of the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings. I do not often get the opportunity to be an echo to him, so when the opportunity does come I grab it.

I think it is fair to say that the attitude shown toward this legislation is a credit to the House of Commons. As the hon. gentleman has indicated, we do not often get