

*Electoral Boundaries Commissions*

ment which extended this in any way whatsoever.

**Mr. Knowles:** May I then proceed one step further. If this discretion is being given only to the two commissions, we must remember that these commissions operate independently. It is true there is one man who is on all of them, but what happens if one commission, say the commission for Prince Edward Island, decides on a two member seat for Queens but the commission for Nova Scotia decides on a single member seat for Halifax?

**Mr. Pickersgill:** That situation would present no problem, because they would have an option, as the senior member for Queens just indicated.

**Mr. Knowles:** The minister suggests this would present no problem, but I think those who are on the opposite side of the decision might think it presented a problem.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** It would not be a legal problem.

**Mr. Knowles:** The other point I wished to touch upon is the issue raised by the two members for Queens when they made a point of their desire not to have serious changes in something which has been a fact of history. May I point out to them that the members and people across this country are going to receive the shock of their lives when the boundaries of the constituencies are drawn in light of the rules that we are laying down. I suspect the constituency which is now the constituency of Queens, although it will be divided as a result of this legislation into two parts, will probably be geographically closer to the present constituency of Queens than 90 per cent of ridings.

The hon. member for Port Arthur started to say a moment ago, when the Minister of Transport told him to write it in his column, that hon. members did not realize the enormity of changes which will take place under this legislation. I do not think what will happen to the constituencies of Halifax and Queens, if these areas are divided into single area ridings, will be anything compared to the enormity of change which will take place generally.

Whatever does take place, Mr. Chairman, I think this decision should be made by parliament, and we should not leave legislative decisions of this kind to the commissions.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Mr. Chairman, I am afraid I am getting into bad company and becoming argumentative. Neither the senior member for Queens nor myself has been arguing that

the status quo be preserved, but if it should happen that the commission in any province finds that a certain constituency should remain unchanged, surely the commission should have that right. We are asking that the commissions not be prevented from deciding, suggesting or recommending something which happens to coincide with an existing fact, namely the existence of dual ridings. That is all we are asking, and I am quite confident that the commissions can deal with this matter. Although conservative, I am not an unrelenting champion of the status quo. I am trying to look for the maximum efficiency for a commission as it deals with these problems, which I know is going to be saddled with some difficulty.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Chairman, in this connection I think it should be pointed out that in the constituency of Halifax there are established traditions and principles which have been in effect for many, many years, whereby a dual constituency has been maintained. More than the usual geographical problems would be presented if that constituency should be changed now, because there have been very easy relationships and working arrangements established throughout the years. There can be no question whatsoever raised as to representation. If a commission should decide to divide that constituency, and perhaps make some additions, into two watertight compartments, it would have to draw a line through established principles which have been maintained for over half a century. I think the course followed by the cow which Laura Secord drove through the woods at the time of the war of 1812 could be considered a surveyor's line compared to any line drawn by a commission which attempted to do so.

Mr. Chairman, I think there is some merit to the suggestion that we should leave to the commission the right or responsibility of making a decision in those cases where dual constituencies have been established heretofore, Queens and Halifax. The commission should be allowed, if it so determined, to maintain dual constituencies rather than create two single constituencies. Personally I have had experience in another theatre of a dual constituency, and I would not wish that kind of experience on my worst enemy, because it involves a very difficult task. There are many entrenched problems associated with this question, particularly in Halifax, and I should like to see something