

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Mr. Knowles: I do not believe we should allow the Minister of Transport to carry on in sin, if that were the case. Actually, according to the order paper, we are resuming a debate on the motion of the Minister of Transport, so on this interesting and rare occasion he is in order.

Mr. Pickersgill: As a matter of fact, one always feels happier to be legitimate. I thank the hon. gentleman for rendering a judgment in this case.

I do say again, as I said earlier when introducing this bill and in referring to the bill we put through in the last session of parliament to set up the office of representation commissioner, I greatly appreciate the manner in which all parties and members in the house have approached this subject and I hope that we can now fairly quickly bring it to a conclusion in the same non-partisan way.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Lamoureux in the chair.

On clause 1—*Short title.*

The Chairman: Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. Pickersgill: Before we begin the discussion on this clause, Mr. Chairman, I have a suggestion to make to the committee. It is quite evident from the speeches made throughout the period of second reading, including those made today, that the most controversial clause in this bill is the one relating to the tolerance figure. We might make much better progress if we could agree, when we reach that clause, to allow it to stand, go on with the other clauses of the bill and later return to it.

The reason I make this suggestion is because occasionally, when a clause is very controversial, a lot of time is spent considering it, with the result that hon. members think they may have spent a lot of time considering the bill, and may not give the scrutiny they otherwise would to the other clauses. I think we would make better progress if we could agree to deal with all the other clauses first.

The Chairman: Is that agreed?

Mr. Nowlan: So long as it does not preclude anyone from making references to the quotas.

Mr. Pickersgill: Not at all.

The Chairman: Shall the clause carry?

Mr. Nowlan: No, I do not think anyone could expect clause 1 to go through without some discussion of the general features of the bill. I am sure the Minister of Transport has been pleasantly surprised this afternoon with the progress already made, and we would not

want to put too much of a strain on his emotional capacities by passing clause 1 so quickly.

As the minister has pointed out, there are some clauses of the bill which are more controversial than others that can be dealt with very quickly, and it is a matter of the record that we shall deal with the quota clause later on. That is an excellent suggestion and we should proceed on that basis.

It is also a very happy thing that apparently we have a high degree of unanimity on the fact that we are dealing with this matter in a non-political manner. Those of us who have been members for a long while and have gone through redistributions in bygone days, realize the difficulties a political committee has in trying to deal with this matter. One of the fundamental problems in trying to draft a bill such as this is to leave a substantial authority with parliament and, at the same time, not have the matters referred to a commission coming back to a parliamentary committee and there going through the log-rolling and the political mill which is inevitable.

I can speak with some feeling on this matter because I had something to do with trying to draft a bill in former years that would meet this requirement. I remember the heated discussions we had in various committees, and in other places which I am not reporting on at the moment, as to whether one could draft a bill which would maintain that parliamentary control and at the same time remove this from the parliamentary committee. This bill purports to do that in a rather ingenious way. It is, of course, bypassing parliament, once parliament approves it, to something like another place where they can debate or reject, but they cannot amend. Frankly I think this is the best solution that could be arrived at.

It is an absolutely impossible problem which is involved in the passage of a bill such as this, if you are going to take it out of the political arena and, at the same time, have any report that comes back referred to a parliamentary committee. There may be better solutions. The mind of man runs to great solutions when he is under enough pressure, but personally I am prepared to accept this solution as one that reasonably meets the situation.

I also want to join with the minister, as I have on other occasions, in his tribute to the representation commissioner. I think the House of Commons is very fortunate in having the gentleman who has been named take over this office. Speaking personally, and for all my colleagues, in fact I am sure for all hon. members, I think it augurs well for this bill that we have a gentleman of his experience, ability, character, and tradition of elections and political pressures accepting this office.