

Electoral Boundaries Commission

An alternative to him is the surveyor general. I am not positive as to what exactly a surveyor general does. We do not have one in British Columbia; I presume we have a like officer, but I am not sure. However, I question whether he has any particular knowledge that he could bring to the consideration of redistribution that cannot already be brought to the subject by Mr. Castonguay himself.

In so far as the director of vital statistics is concerned, I really do not know of anything that he could contribute to the work of the commission. He is a civil servant charged with the responsibility of recording births, deaths and marriages, and I do not think he has any particular qualifications whatsoever to sit on such a commission. Then as the third member we have the president or member of a faculty of a university. I have every respect for Canada's university community, but I question what we are doing in this amendment. I suggest that we are possibly buying a pig in a poke and are completely unsure of what we are liable to end up with for a third member of the commission. The presidents themselves are extremely busy men; I suggest they have no time to devote to such a commission and they would appoint in their place, as an alternative, a member of their faculty. The members of their faculty, from my experience, run the whole gamut of abilities, interests and political leanings.

I for one do not think we can abdicate our responsibilities so completely as to leave the matter completely wide open on the question who might be the third member of the commission, which is exactly what we are asked to do. I know many members of university faculties who would fill this position admirably. On the other hand, I know a great many who know nothing at all about this subject or about politics, and who would have very little to contribute of a worth-while nature.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this bill be left as it is, and for a very important reason. While none of us wants to see the practice which used to be resorted to of gerrymandering, I think there is a real need to have someone on the commission with a knowledge of politics and political considerations. I suggest that for the very good reason that the commission will be determining the ridings from which each one of us will come, and it seems to me that in that determination it is important to have somebody who knows something about ridings, who knows something about the work of a member of

parliament, so that those ridings can best be worked out in order that the member of parliament once elected can best serve the area.

This is not so much a consideration in the city and urban ridings, where if you take one ten blocks as compared with another ten blocks it makes no real difference whether one member of parliament can serve the first ten blocks better than the second. I suggest, however, that it is a real consideration in the rural ridings and in the far northern ridings, where there must be someone on the commission who knows something about politics and the work of an M.P. In that case, in the drawing of the boundaries this matter is in the forefront of his mind and consideration is given as to how a member of parliament can most effectively serve the particular area or region. Therefore, for that reason I think this amendment should be defeated and the bill should go through as it is.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, first of all I should like to say that I appreciate in particular the statement made by the hon. member for Cariboo. In a very few, well chosen words he pinned down the issue very neatly. What we are concerned about in this amendment is not the integrity of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition, or of any future prime minister or leader of the opposition. What we are concerned about is the image of this legislation in the eyes of the Canadian people. It is not good enough just to have legislation which we think achieves impartiality; there must be the appearance of impartiality to the people of this country.

I am satisfied that it will not appear that way to the people of Canada if they know that two of the members of each of these ten commissions are going to be chosen by persons who happen to be the leader of two of Canada's political parties. I accept and underscore the statements of confidence in the holders of those positions which have been made by the Minister of Transport but as the hon. member for Cariboo said, that is not the issue. What we are doing in this piece of legislation as a whole is commendable; we are trying to take redistribution out of partisan politics and put it as far away from partisan politics as we possibly can. We have not done that if we still provide that two of the commissioners in each of the ten commissions are the nominees of the leaders of Canada's two largest political parties.

I suppose it was fair comment for the Minister of Transport to make, that the view