

Electoral Boundaries Commission

In 1872 the redistribution act was passed on June 14. In those days they were not in any hurry about elections. The voting started on July 20 and concluded on October 12.

In 1882 the redistribution act was passed on May 17 and the election was held on June 20. There had been a Liberal government intervene which fixed elections on a single day, instead of running them over a period of three months as was previously done.

In 1911 the census was not completed when the election was called. I did not have time to look up the actual date of the calling of the election, but the election was held on September 21, so one would assume it was called sometime in July, and it is quite obvious that the census would not have been completed at that time. In 1872 and in 1882 the redistribution was done before there was an election. Communications are much better today than they were in those years. There would have been no difficulty whatever about having the redistribution this year. It could have been in progress now if the government had taken the course that it should have taken, the course recommended by the hon. member for Port Arthur in every session of parliament, to the best of my recollection, since we have been here.

The government did not need to wait for the census in order to provide for the commission. If the government had been serious about carrying out its promise, this measure would have been brought in in 1960. It would have been left on the table for a year so that it could be studied by all hon. members and other interested persons, as is usually done with legislation of this fundamental importance. In 1961 it could have been reintroduced with whatever improvements commended themselves, and passed. The commission could have been in existence from last October. It could have got everything organized so that the moment the census returns were available it could have started to work the next day.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The census is not yet completed.

Mr. Pickersgill: It does not matter whether or not the census is completed. The commission could have been set up. I predict that under the course we are following the actual business of redrawing the boundaries will not begin for two years at the very least. I have very good reason for making that statement. Mr. Harris in 1951 discussed this matter with a good many authorities on the subject including the chief electoral officer. The difficulties in the way of doing this by independent commission are very formidable and

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

the time required is very great. If the government had been genuinely anxious to carry out this promise which was made at Carman, Manitoba, on May 15, 1957 by the Prime Minister this legislation would have been brought into the house in 1960, at the latest, and there is no reason on earth why it should not have been done, except that this government is never able to do anything when it should be done.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is going to be able to do something very shortly.

Mr. Pickersgill: I observe that Your Honour is on his feet. I understood, sir, the committee was going to be good enough to allow me a few extra minutes.

The Deputy Chairman: It being ten o'clock shall I rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again at the next sitting of the house?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Progress reported.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, in the light of the questions that were asked earlier on the orders of the day, I hope the house leader will now outline to the house what the business will be for the rest of the week. More particularly, I should like to ask him the following questions: What will be the business tomorrow prior to eight o'clock? What will be the business on Wednesday? Earlier today the house leader indicated that he would announce the business for Wednesday. What opportunity will there be to discuss the budget? And finally, when will the further supplementary estimates be called?

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, the great difficulty in dealing with the business of the house is to know what progress is going to be made from day to day. On Friday when I outlined in the house nine items of legislation, it was only reasonable to expect that some of those items would be passed through the house today. However, we have had only third reading of one bill. This makes the situation very difficult indeed. However, our intention tomorrow is to proceed with the study of this resolution, and until it is passed we cannot have a bill in front of us. That will be followed by the bill respecting the amendment to the British North America Act with regard to the Senate, which is eagerly awaited. Then we shall take the other legislative items that I outlined on Friday including the Veterans' Land Act, The Canada Grain Act and so on.

Mr. Chevrier: In that order?