

Redistribution Commission

he is coming to, he can tell me. He has referred to the fact that each of these 10 commissions would consist of the representation commissioner and three others. Does the government have in mind that a pattern such as we now have in Manitoba, and which has worked out very well, might be the pattern to be followed? As the Secretary of State knows, in that province we have an independent commission consisting of the chief electoral officer of the province, the chief justice, and the president of the university.

Mr. Pickersgill: I think the hon. gentleman is trying to make my speech for me before I make it myself. While I represent a province other than Manitoba, I have spent over half of my life in Manitoba, I share his pride in the way things are done there and I will have something more to say about that in a moment. Because I have just reached it I should like to deal first with the point raised by the hon. member for Three Rivers, about the timetable envisaged on the assumption that this legislation would be acceptable before the end of this calendar year to the house, not necessarily in precisely the form in which it is presented but in a form that may and I feel sure will be somewhat amended by our collective wisdom.

If that were possible, and if it were possible, as I think it should be, to get the commissions set up by about the 1st of February, it would appear to me that under the procedures envisaged in this legislation the reports would be available early in 1965, that the necessary period for the kind of parliamentary approval envisaged in the legislation would be another two or three months and that, if we wanted, for other reasons, to have a general election, it would be possible to have it on the basis of redistribution in the autumn of 1965. But it does not appear to me that it would be practical at all to consider that any election held earlier than that could be held on the basis of any distribution of constituencies except the present one. Of course, this timetable would correspondingly have to be extended if for any reason the legislation did not prove acceptable and if we did not get it completed before the end of 1963. If we got the legislation enacted say by April or early May of 1964 I would not then envisage the possibility of its coming into operation so that an election could be held under it earlier than the spring of 1966.

I think this view is realistic. If we are going to do what I take it all of us are pledged to do, if we are going to have redistribution done by an impartial body, I do not think it is possible in any shorter period. I might

add that I believe, that once the pattern has been set, a second redistribution would not take nearly so long.

Once the pattern has been set the adjustment of boundaries in a future redistribution will be more a matter of taking account of the changes in population in a single decade which, although they can be quite explosive sometimes as we know, are not likely to be anything like as great as those which we will have to take into account this time, when this commission will be seeking to deal with situations that have persisted, in some cases, for the best part of a century. The first redistribution, therefore, under the new scheme, if and when it takes place, is going to be a much more difficult operation, I feel sure, than any subsequent redistribution will be.

Now, I come to Manitoba. I went to Winnipeg for a couple of days just before parliament resumed this session in September. Unfortunately, one of the three commissioners who performed the redistribution in Manitoba, the only complete redistribution by an impartial body that has been done in Canada as yet, is dead. I refer to the late Chief Justice Adamson. I had a most interesting conversation with the other two commissioners, the president of the university, Dr. Saunderson, the chief electoral officer, Mr. Prud'homme, lasting for almost two hours. I was impressed particularly by one thing. As they related their experience to me, I noted that the methods they followed, the procedures they used, were almost precisely the same, having in mind the great difference of circumstances, as those which the chief electoral officer described to me as having been followed in Australia. It did seem that almost any independent and impartial commission going about this task would have very little choice but to follow these methods. I was rather reassured to have this notion confirmed. From what I could learn, all parties in Manitoba regarded that as a most successful experience in that province.

Moreover, I should like to hope that this would be the kind of commission, if this legislation is adopted, that would be established in each of the provinces. It seems to me these are the kind of people one would naturally look to. Of course, this is a problem with which we will deal when we get farther along. In this opening statement today, I am merely trying to deal with the general principles.

The Deputy Chairman: Order; I must advise the hon. gentleman that his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am grateful to the committee because I think it would be preferable