

Electoral Boundaries Commission

the former prime minister (Mr. St. Laurent) had paid attention to it, so there was a change made.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am not seeking to quarrel with the hon. gentleman. I was seeking to agree with him. Outside of the house I nearly always agree with him about everything. He is one of those members, and I wish we had more colleagues over there, with whom it is rather hard to disagree even in the house.

The point I was making is one which I made before, namely that we are going into committee in a very few minutes on this bill and I want to emphasize once more the position which has been taken by me and by my colleagues on the treasury benches. This bill, although in form it has to be a government measure under our rules, is one for which the government feels it has no more responsibility than any other member. Any improvements that can be made to it from any quarter of the house will not be cast aside without a hearing. I hope that if we do make any changes they will not be described as somersaults or referred to by some of the other descriptive phrases that are used in this house. I hope they will be accepted in the spirit in which we have approached this from the beginning.

I hope there will be in all quarters of the house an effort to make this measure fair and make it workable. Both things are important. A measure can be theoretically fair, but because it did not follow the proper, traditional geographical boundaries in this country, it may be quite unworkable and create anomalies. I agree with the hon. member for Regina City that, as far as possible, we want to avoid constituencies being half urban and half rural. This is not a very satisfactory situation, but it cannot always be avoided. Where it obviously can be avoided, it is certainly better because it is easier for a member to represent the specialized interests of his constituency. He can be just as good a Canadian if he represents Regina City as he can if he represents Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale.

There is one point I think I should like to make. I have listened carefully to the arguments that have been made by hon. gentlemen of the official opposition. They have suggested they would prefer to have one commission. I might say that if hon. gentlemen wish to move an amendment, of course we will not attempt to have it ruled out of order. However I do not believe I could vote for such an amendment, and I will tell you why. I do not believe I could vote for it because I do not believe the job could be done in the time that we feel it ought to be done, that is to say as nearly a year as possible, with one commission. It is felt this legislation should come into effect in 1966

[Mr. More.]

which is, after all, five full years after the census. The commission which was set up in Ontario nearly two years ago has so far only succeeded in dealing with metropolitan Toronto, according to reports I received. It is expected that this commission will take at least another year to complete its job. The commission now functioning would not have any more difficulties than our commission for Ontario would have. I believe this experience bears out what I have said.

I have also read recently about the latest efforts of the commission in the United Kingdom. There are four commissions there, one for England, one for Wales, one for Scotland and one for Northern Ireland. Of course the English commission has a much bigger job than the other three put together. There is no doubt that the commission in the United Kingdom was rather pressed for time because of the magnitude of the problem.

This is the reason we feel this job can be done better by ten commissions. There is no question but that we are very fortunate, and I say this without hesitation, because this and the other place put a stamp of approval upon Mr. Castonguay by legislating him as the representation commissioner. I feel we are very fortunate in having a man of his ability, background and experience to serve on all ten of these commissions. I think everybody understands he is not going to attempt to do the detailed work on any one of them. The reason we want him to be on all of them is to make sure they will be moving in step, that they will be following substantially the same rules.

Apart from the one point I have mentioned with regard to the ten commissions, and I think I would vote against any amendment to reduce the number, I would hope my views on this subject would commend themselves to a majority in the house. I would even hope that upon reflection they would commend themselves to virtually everyone in the house. Apart from that, any other suggestions for amendment to any other section of the bill, will be considered on their merits. I am speaking for myself, as sponsor of the bill, and I do not feel I should attempt to speak for anyone else in the house. I intend to look at these things dispassionately and if I think any amendment is an improvement, I am going to say I would vote for the amendment. I can do that because the Prime Minister, technically, is the sponsor of this bill. I am not sure I even have the right to be speaking now.

Mr. Nowlan: I did not want to raise the point.

Mr. Pickersgill: However, since I have started, it is too late to raise the point now.