

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Mr. Woolliams: In my personal association with him I have always found him very co-operative, whether in correspondence or in personal discussion. But let us remember—and this goes to the root of the amendment and of the bill itself—that if we give too much authority to one person in such a matter as this we could arrive at the rule of people, not the rule of law. As long as we have the services of the gentleman in question we have, probably, built-in safeguards. But I pose this question to the Liberals—and I know they would not want this to happen: Supposing there were a Conservative government in power in the future, and supposing in the near future there was to be a redistribution, and supposing the chief electoral officer was newly appointed, and supposing there was some lobbying between a Conservative minister and that chief electoral officer, what position would they take? I know no Conservative minister would engage in such a thing, but my point remains that we must always remember we are preparing law for the future.

I say that in this bill—and the amendment makes it worse—we are putting too much responsibility on one man. The minister said yesterday that if there were any difficulty we could refer it to the chief electoral officer of Canada. That is how we were to have the same procedure in each of the ten commissions. I am still not satisfied, and the position is only made worse by the amendment. Who is the boss of these ten commissions? I hope the minister keeps an open mind on that, too. Even though a number of sections have been passed very quickly—and the hon. gentleman's supporters said "carried", "carried" let us not hurry too quickly in this regard because we are dealing with something which will affect the future; and once law and precedent have been established they are most difficult to undo, it seems, even through parliament.

I certainly feel we are placing too much responsibility in the hands of the chief justice. As to the categories of people named in the amendment, I have nothing against the staffs of universities. But this proposal forces a chief justice to say: I must choose someone from a particular staff. I think that when we are dealing with a federal redistribution of constituencies we should look for personnel who are on a Canadian, a federal level. We should not now set up a commission on which we have provincial representatives, such as the provincial electoral officer, whoever he may be. To my mind his job is

[Mr. Woolliams.]

to look after the constituencies in a provincial matter. Why bring him into the picture on a federal redistribution; why make him an officer? We are supposed to be setting up an independent body, and I do not think this gentleman, whoever he may be, could be considered to be independent. There may be cases where it will work very well, but there could be the exception to the rule and, once again, you may be having the rule of people and not the rule of law. The only protection we have in so far as concerns making this an independent body is that we can spell out in the law what we are going to do; otherwise people in the future, or people now, may cause a miscarriage of justice.

I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said something this morning to the effect that justice must seem to be done. I do not think justice should seem to be done; justice should be done. This is important. You cannot have an independent body unless the law is such that the jurisdiction is spelled out very carefully so there will not be any miscarriage of justice.

The second point I want to deal with is this. I may be getting into a field of some sensitivity here. I do not think I have ever been one of those, and I hope I never will be, to hurl reproaches or recriminations at any one person; but I say frankly to the minister that if he had been really fair this morning—I was going to use the word "honest", but that would probably be unparliamentary because it would impute motives—he would have told us that as early as last night he had made up his mind that he was going to accept the amendment of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. In fact, I sometimes wonder as I see the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre sparring away with the minister, why they just spar here in the debating chamber, because they are really sleeping in the same bed when it comes to negotiating on this sort of thing.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Woolliams: I am not so sure that I haven't hit the nail right on the head, because listening to the minister this morning you never heard so much padding in your life. There is only one other minister who can speak like that, and now we have two of them in the house who talk in this way. When I asked a question he said, "You are interrupting and putting me off my remarks". He did everything but answer the question. This morning the minister was padding away, in order to change his mind, and so he could