

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

to me I should like to say it is almost exactly a year since I first began to give serious consideration to this matter. In fact, it will be a year next Wednesday. It was on the very first day that the government took office that I was entrusted by the Prime Minister with the task of trying to prepare this legislation. I do not think a day has passed in that time that I have not reflected on some aspect or other of this very difficult problem because I realize, as so many members have said, that this is a historic departure we are taking. I have given, I think, just as much consideration as my mind is capable of giving to this question and, as I indicated when I spoke just before second reading, it was the only point in the whole bill on which, so far as I was personally concerned, I felt I had reached a conclusion that this was the preferable way of doing it.

The suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is certainly not without its attractions. He suggests that there should be one over-all commission, a kind of appeal body, and ten subcommissions; but on balance it seems to me that would be a more complicated structure. It means that everything has got to be looked at twice and it seems to me that any advantage that arrangement would have is equally well fulfilled by the arrangement of having the representation commissioner as an ex officio member of each one of the ten commissions, and without the duplication of consideration that would be involved by having one commission with ten subcommissions.

As for the matter of time, it would certainly take far longer. It is not contemplated that the representation commissioner will attend all the meetings of all the commissions, and I think it would be a wasted effort if he did. He will undoubtedly exercise a co-ordinating function and will attend meetings from time to time. As the time required for these various commissions will obviously be different because of the difference in the magnitude of the problems, I do not think there will be much difficulty about his being able to go to some of the smaller provinces, where the job will obviously be done earlier, for their final meetings before some of the other provinces are ready for the final stage. So that on reflection I do not think I would conclude there is any real danger on this particular score.

As for variations, I have a couple of amendments I am going to propose that have been suggested by the debate on both sides of the house when we come to the relevant clauses, in order to try to ensure that the rules of procedure will be kept in line. But I am not sure that all those social, historical and traditional considerations that various

members have suggested in the course of the debate are not apt to have more account taken of them by commissions, in each case composed of three people resident in the province and conscious of the background and history of the province, than would be the case with an over-all commission on which, unless it was very large, there would not be the same local representation.

It may well be that, because of the different character of the different provinces the tolerance will be exercised, and ought to be exercised, in a somewhat different way in one province from another. As the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre rather indicated this afternoon, a rather rigid adherence to the representation by population principle will more likely come from a single centralized commission than from a series of ten commissions each familiar, because they would be composed of people living in the province, with these local considerations which are, I admit at once, very important.

I think one hon. member stated that as far as possible we ought to try where possible to have the new constituencies based on a nucleus of the existing constituencies. I agree with that and I think most members of the house agree with that. This, again, is something that will be provided better by three people resident within a province than by someone looking at it from outside the province, as would be the case with a single commission. I think we have gone over most of the arguments, one way or another, and after a lot of very careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that, while there is a lot to be said for both schemes, on balance I think the job would be done better and I am quite certain it would be done more expeditiously, if we had ten commissions instead of one.

**Mr. Churchill:** I am grateful to the minister for his comments, but I should like to ask him this question. Earlier in his remarks he mentioned that the representation commissioner would not be attending all the meetings of each provincial commission, but he would be a co-ordinator. Now, what does this mean? Is this the man to whom the provincial commissioners refer their problems when they are trying to make a decision? I am not expressing any lack of confidence in the representation commissioner; I know him quite well. Nevertheless, is it the representation commissioner who is going to be the chief adviser to each one of these provincial commissions?

He has knowledge of the constituencies. Obviously, he must be working in advance on the maps of the constituencies. Is his mind set along one particular line or another? We