

Electoral Boundaries Commission

I will not support the amendment because I see in it a pitfall and an opening for criticism of the judiciary.

Another reason for my opposition to the amendment is that in spite of the good intentions of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, I have no knowledge of the feelings of the public with regard to the present provisions of the bill, and that they will have doubts if the commission is not removed from politics. The hon. member has produced no evidence to that effect, and I believe this is a figment of his imagination that suits his own purpose.

I decry the innuendo and insinuation contained in what has been said in support of the amendment, and in the amendment itself, that here in the highest tribunal in the land there is an implied reflection that the prime minister and the leader of the opposition, acting in a responsible manner as officers of the house, would not do a proper job. I do not have any of these doubts. They deserve our respect, and we should not do anything that would add to the widespread criticism of the operations of parliament.

I read the speech which the Minister of Transport made outside the house and I say this kindly, that I think he became a party to the widespread criticism of the house. Yet he usually is one who is most busy in the debates, hurling charges back and forth, and appears to take a delight in them. When I came in here as a new member I was surprised to look across the aisle and see mature members of the house acting in a manner which I would not choose to follow. If I did, I do not think I would gain much respect from my constituency, the country and the house.

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member permit a question? Did I hear correctly that he referred to the Minister of Transport as the spiritual leader of the house?

Mr. More: Well, he puts a lot of spirit into it. He is not always rising to speak, in fact sometimes he is sitting down. He started off rather unkindly in his reply to the hon. member for Bow River, but quickly caught himself, knowing that several times he himself has interrupted much more than the hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am not as good at it.

Mr. More: You are very good at it; I give you full credit. Nothing should be said in this debate that would reflect on the operations and the officers of the house, and we

should do nothing that would leave the way open for criticisms which would do injury to our courts of law. On this basis I am not prepared to support the amendment.

Mr. Pugh: After listening to the hon. member for Regina City I shall begin exactly the same way and say I definitely am not in favour of the amendment. My reasons run parallel to those of other hon. members who have expressed themselves against it. There seems to be a lot of worry about imposing this extra work on the chief justice, but I do not think it is a question of work. It is a straight political matter that should not be put in any chief justice's hand. If he were choosing among his own justices for one appointment, that is all right. I would go so far as to agree with that; but when he is going to step down and choose from other categories of people, that is going too far. No chief justice should be put in that position. Any chief justice could exercise the power properly and do the job admirably, but I still maintain he should not be placed in that position.

The amendment outlines the categories of people and says the choice must be made from:

(a) the chief electoral officer, the surveyor-general or the registrar of vital statistics of the province or the holder of any similar office in the province;

Then there is an additional category. But why pick out these people? They are no doubt good civil servants, but in every province, as between one province and another, there is bound to be divergence. The point has also been made, and I think it is well taken, that in any of the provinces there might be a restriction imposed. I do not believe any government would really want its people to be placed in the position contemplated by the amendment. Then we have university presidents from among whom the selection may be made and, after that, anyone in a number of positions. It is here, it occurs to me, we would run into real trouble, because in many of the provinces members of the commission would be chosen from that last category. If a chief justice had to pull someone out of a hat he could do it admirably, no doubt, but I do not think he should be put into that position.

It is somewhat extraordinary to me that the Liberals should consider accepting the suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to change the methods of the appointments. The suggestion behind the amendment is that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are two