

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Mr. Chairman, I feel that to have four commissions instead of ten would be more economical and that it would not delay by any means the fixing of electoral boundaries. On the other hand, the work would probably be more efficiently done since it would be concentrated in the hands of four commissions instead of ten.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chairman, there is another point which was not raised by the hon. member who spoke before me.

Throughout the debate which preceded examination of this bill, in committee, it was said that a member of parliament should represent people and not mountains, lakes, rivers or so many square miles of territory.

Consequently, according to the same principle, the proposed commissions should represent people rather than mountains, rivers or other water courses.

That is why I say that four commissions would represent people rather than square miles of territory.

[Text]

The Chairman: Is the house ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Amendment (Mr. Rondeau) negatived: Yeas, 7; nays, 81.

The Chairman: I declare the amendment lost.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, this clause has been the subject of much debate in the house, some favouring one general commission as against ten, and we have just disposed of another variation. The Minister of Transport seems to be of the opinion that with 10 commissions the work will be done much more speedily than if it is arranged in some other way. He appears to be contemplating a period of 12 months for the completion of this task. I suggest there is a real danger of this objective not being achieved with 10 commissions, because if you look further along in the bill you discover that one of the members of each of these 10 commissions is to be the representation commissioner. So in actual practice it may well be that the work of the 10 commissions will be retarded because the representation commissioner has to be present at the meetings of each of these 10 commissions. He is only one man and he has to attend these meetings in 10 provinces. I think this is a matter which should really be reconsidered.

It is for that reason that some of us had in mind the setting up of one main commission of which the representation commissioner would be a member, and the work of that commission might be sublet to

subcommittees in the provinces. I think that would tend to speed up the work rather than the present proposal doing so. I think the work should be done within a year, of course, and perhaps it can be done in a shorter time if the work is pursued expeditiously.

There is another reason why I like the idea of one general commission with subcommittees by provinces working under it. That reason is that the application of the act, the interpretation of the sections and the general method of approach to problems which arise will be determined by a senior body, a commission which has supervision over the whole country. I would expect that with 10 separate commissions we might have 10 varieties of solutions to the major problem which will affect each province, the closing of the gap between various constituencies. It is just possible that if there are a number of commissions operating within the provinces we will have considerable discontent and discussions which might well be avoided, whereas if there was one general plan and that general plan was applied by the subcommittees in each province the picture as a whole would be more complete. That is one of the dangers I see in the suggestion of 10 commissions.

I mentioned earlier that with 10 commissions there may very well be delay. I now say that in addition there may be 10 varieties of solutions to the problems that will be drawn to the attention of these commissions. Is this what we want to do? Here we are setting up a method to be followed on the basis of the last census and which will be followed in the future after subsequent censuses.

At the resolution stage and on second reading the Minister of Transport said that the government is not unalterably committed to anything in the bill, that suggestions will be seriously considered and might even be welcomed, and that modification of the bill might be acceptable after due consideration. I put this before him now. He weighed in his mind the idea of four commissions for four areas and then came out in favour of 10 commissions because he thought it would expedite the work, but I doubt that he weighed carefully the two factors I have just mentioned. Will he now put his mind to these points and let us see if we cannot come up jointly with an alteration here that will do a better job for us? Frankly, I do not see the work being done within the time limit the minister has put before us and I am a little dubious about the separate activities of 10 commissions.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, since the hon. gentleman has put the point directly