

*Supply—Secretary of State*

**The Acting Chairman (Mr. Chown):** It is very difficult for the Chair to decide whether or not the hon. member for Port Arthur is in order until he has progressed to the point he is trying to make.

**Mr. Fisher:** We are now dealing with the office of the chief electoral officer and if this is not when we can talk about elections I do not know when we can.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** They are going to abolish elections.

**Mr. Fisher:** I imagine there is always that tendency. I continue with the report:

The Senator's statement confirms Ottawa reports that the Prime Minister is satisfied the recent Conservative by-election victories indicate widespread approval of this policy and he sees no reason to go to the polls this year. The government has completed three years of a five-year term. The latest Gallup poll, on May 31, also indicates Conservative popularity is on the rise.

For the benefit of the hon. member for Medicine Hat, here is the relevant point. If we are not going to have an election this year, then we need to do something about redistribution and how we handle redistribution. This matter comes very much under the chief electoral officer. Even though the actual task of carrying out redistribution has been performed by a parliamentary committee, the point remains that he is the adviser. He is the gentleman who provides all the information, background and history to the parliamentary committee. I have a number of questions I want to raise concerning redistribution. I must say I was stunned that Senator Thorvaldson would come out with a statement like this.

**An hon. Member:** You were stunned by the election results.

**Mr. Fisher:** No, I was not stunned by them. If the hon. member wants to know, I think that if there was an election soon the government would be returned to power. That is why I cannot understand why Senator Thorvaldson, who does not have to contest a seat in an election, should be sounding off and saying there is not going to be one. He is certainly seeming to limit the authority of the Prime Minister. The situation is, however, that we are not likely to have an election if we believe Senator Thorvaldson. As anyone knows, redistribution is based upon—

**Mr. Churchill:** On a point of order. I think it is important to settle this point at once. We are on an estimate with reference to the chief electoral officer under the Department of the Secretary of State. However, the chief electoral officer has nothing whatever to do with redistribution. That is not within his field. If the hon. member wishes to discuss a question of this kind he had better

[Mr. Brunsdon.]

do it when some other motion is before this house, not on an item of this branch of the Department of the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Fisher:** On the point of order, I know I am correct in saying that the chief electoral officer is the adviser to the government on all matters relating to redistribution. He is the man who has the information and the background concerning the whole set up in Canada. If the minister is denying that he is called in when redistribution takes place, if he is denying that he gives advice—

**Mr. Churchill:** I am denying it. He is not asked to do any of those things. He is asked to supply statistical information but not to give advice to the government. The hon. member is wrong.

**Mr. Fisher:** I was not suggesting he gives advice as to how the redistribution was to be done. I said he advises the parliamentary committee about the background, the position and the statistics. If I am not correct about that I am completely haywire, because I have followed the topic of redistribution for a long time. To say that the issue of redistribution is not related to the functions of the chief electoral officer is almost silly. Is this not the No. 1 item at elections—

**Mr. Churchill:** I think this has to be settled, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member for Port Arthur is going to insist on discussing this subject of redistribution, and he is making statements which are entirely incorrect. The chief electoral officer does not advise the government with regard to redistribution. He is only asked to supply statistical information. Nor does he advise the parliamentary committee with regard to redistribution. I am asking, Mr. Chairman, for your consideration of this point of order. We are dealing now with the estimate relating to the chief electoral officer, a branch within the Department of the Secretary of State, and those estimates have nothing whatever to do with the question of the redistribution of constituencies.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I wish to say a word on this point of order because, unlike the hon. member who raised it, I have had some experience in this field. I was once secretary of state. I belonged to a government which did not seek by constantly raising points of order to restrict debates in a committee on estimates. This seems to be a systematic policy.

**Mr. Pallett:** Tell us about closure.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I will tell the hon. gentleman about closure, whether closure of mines or closure of debate. I did not interrupt the