

Supply—Secretary of State

First, I should like to ask who is responsible in respect of delimitation of the different counties when a redistribution is made? If hon. members are faced with problems as a result of a redistribution, should they present those problems to the chief electoral officer, or to parliament itself?

Mr. Churchill: To parliament.

Mr. Caron: If a redistribution has taken place, how then can individual members effect any change? Where do individual members of parliament present these problems?

Mr. Thrasher: Those problems should be presented to the committee when it is set up.

Mr. Caron: The difficulty I am suggesting is, following a redistribution, individual members of parliament can do nothing to effect a change, but must wait until a new redistribution is made to find a solution to the difficulties. There was a redistribution made in 1952, but the problems and difficulties arising as a result of that redistribution cannot now be dealt with. As a result of that situation, I should like to be informed how to go about presenting these problems, and to whom they should be presented.

An hon. Member: They should be presented to the chief electoral officer.

Mr. Caron: There has to be a certain amount of latitude allowed in regard to a redistribution, but certain difficulties then arise. I should be the first to admit that our present chief electoral officer is the only expert in this field in Canada. If we are expected to go to him to find out something about redistribution, how can we make representations to him to change the delimitation in respect of the proposed redistribution? I realize we must apply to him, but how can the errors made during the last redistribution be corrected before a new redistribution?

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): Would the hon. member permit a question? Surely the hon. member does not expect any change in the delimitation of his district until after the census has been completed and the change in population is known?

Mr. Caron: The specific problem I am faced with results from the fact that the city of Hull, from a representation point of view, has a good deal of territory which lies in the Gatineau area, and I am wondering how this situation will be dealt with? How am I going to be able to prepare my suggestion regarding the correcting of the present delimitation before the new redistribution is made?

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): Mr. Chairman, perhaps in answer to the hon. member, I could be allowed to suggest that this will

[Mr. Caron.]

have to be done by an act of parliament and, therefore, it seems to me that the results of the census presently being carried out—which will take several months—must be acquired so that a committee can be set up to consider the whole question of redistribution. All matters connected with a redistribution will have to be considered by such a committee, which will in turn report to the House of Commons, following which a bill will be introduced to give effect to the law in this regard, as it is at present.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Chown): Order. I think I have heard enough now to allow me to decide this point of order.

Mr. Brunsten: Mr. Chairman, is the hon. member worried about losing his seat?

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Chown): Order. Is the hon. member for Medicine Hat rising on a point of order?

Mr. Brunsten: No, Mr. Chairman, I was just asking if the hon. member was worried about his seat in this house.

Mr. Caron: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no, not even if that hon. member was a candidate there.

Mr. Dorion: Mr. Chairman, I should like to answer the question asked by the hon. member for Hull, by indicating to him that the boundaries of the electoral district were set up by the Representation Act of 1952, and can only be changed by parliament itself.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Chown): The point of order is a little difficult because, in respect of item 1 of the estimates of any department, fairly broad scope is allowed in terms of the debate. However, I cannot help but consider the fact that the chief electoral officer is an officer of parliament who follows the instructions of his minister, and whose general administrative responsibility is the administration of the Canada Elections Act. His responsibilities, by and large, are confined to that narrow sphere. Historically, the consideration, in regard to redistribution following the taking of a census, is the responsibility of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, while the financing of elections is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. For those reasons, I feel that a discussion in respect of redistribution cannot be relevant to the consideration of the estimates now before us and, accordingly, I rule the hon. member for Port Arthur out of order and disallow any further discussion in this regard.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to quibble with your ruling, but I should like to draw the attention of this committee to the fact that on previous occasions there has