

myself on record as saying: Had I voted I would have voted in favour of this proposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Montmorency): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak briefly about the motion moved by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Lloyd). In principle, I fully agree with the hon. member when he advocates that contributions made by voters to a political party be allowed as income tax deductions by the Minister of National Revenue.

Even if I agree with the principle of the motion, I will not go as far as recognizing that all the reasons he put forward to support his motion are justified. As a matter of fact, when he says that it will facilitate the workings of democracy, I feel that he is deceiving himself a little.

Of course, there would be some advantages if contributions to party funds were disclosed. I would not say this information should necessarily be made available to the general public, but at least the officials of the taxation division should be able to see that contributions have been made to the election fund of some political parties. I do not wish to question the honesty of civil servants, but I simply wish to point out that these figures are available to them, even if they remain confidential; it would be an advantage, since we do not enjoy that privilege at the present time.

In short, this means that contributions would be aboveboard instead of being surreptitious as at present. That is a good beginning, especially if one considers that the government is responsible for so much hypocrisy on the part of taxpayers. Besides, this would enable certain taxpayers to contribute to party funds without immediately becoming hypocrites, since they could declare their contributions to fiscal authorities.

The hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Lloyd) said that corporations unwilling to resort to publicity would not have to do so. That is obvious. As a matter of fact, as I said earlier, if those companies deduct their contributions from their income tax, only certain officials—and the minister, if he is curious enough—would know what big companies have contributed to the election funds of certain political parties.

In spite of all that, it must be recognized that, at the present time, big companies give money to political parties, do not claim it on their income tax returns and do not seem any the worse for it. As a matter of fact, it

seems that those companies use money which has not been declared for income tax purposes; therefore, they can give it away very easily, not by cheque but in cash; that is being done at the present time and companies do not seem to complain.

Of course, as pointed out by the hon. member, those companies must enter those amounts under operating costs. They are lucky to be able to add the money they give to political parties to their operating costs.

Of course, ordinary citizens who have contributed to the campaign fund of our party, for instance, and who have given not exactly everything they had but who nevertheless have made enormous sacrifices to support their political party, would benefit from this measure, since they are even denied the right to deduct in their income tax return the purchase price of their working tools and also the actual amount of their charitable donations, as certified by the receipts filed.

The hon. member is in favour of allowing at least a deduction concerning contributions to political parties; that would already be something. Personally, as I said a moment ago, I am entirely in favour of that principle.

I repeat though that we should not expect such a step to improve the functioning of democracy. If we did, we would be deceiving ourselves, because even if all the taxpayers' contributions were accepted, that would represent only a very small fraction of the money spent by the various parties on their election campaigns. That would not take into account either the money paid to election funds by foreign governments and companies. Indeed, it is always difficult to prove such things, but it was rumoured that during the last election campaign, our southern neighbours contributed to the fund of certain political parties, without the Canadian people even hearing about it.

As I say, even if the principle of the motion introduced by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Lloyd) were adopted—it provides for the publication of certain figures—we would still be in the dark as to the money supplied by foreign companies and individuals.

The hon. member also stated that such contributions would have to be made to registered political parties. I wonder how one goes about to define a registered political party. The privileges and elections committee was asked to consider the advisability of accepting a new political party; it took a decision concerning the specific case, but it did not establish a general policy nor did it define what a political party is. It did not say