

of that party or the leader of that party, in other words the top level portion of the registered party, to decide who will be the registered agents. What could occur in such an instance? For argument sake, let us consider that the Progressive Conservative party which is well organized in Ontario decides, if the bill passes, that it is in the best interests of that party to appoint, say, three people in Ontario as registered agents. Those three people would be the only three people in that province who would be able to collect funds for that party, organized and directed toward the top.

The party to which I belong may find it advantageous to choose one person in the province of British Columbia and, say, that person will be the registered agent of that party in B.C. for the purposes of collecting funds and for the purpose of being a registered official or designated agent of the party in the province.

The Liberals may do something else in the province of Quebec, and the constituency organizations of a particular political party will have no say whatever in the choosing of registered agents, except when there is a candidate, either declared or nominated in the official way. Then, the candidate can appoint an official agent, which he does now, and the official agent becomes the person in that constituency through whom all money is channeled for the conduct of the election in that constituency. Only during that very short period of time, not exceeding 58 days or something of that sort, can this take place.

There is a compressed minimum of time between dissolution of parliament, the issuance of the writ, and election day. Only in that period of time does the candidate of a party have the opportunity to become involved in the machinery of the party itself in terms of campaign fund contributions. Apart from that period this can only be done at the level of the national headquarters, the level of the chief agent, the level of the national leader, the level of the national president, or at whatever level is determined by the political party.

I think this is wrong in substance in relation to our sense of political values. What the amendments seek to do in one case is to say that members of a particular party in an electoral district can choose one or more people who will be called electoral district agents who are designated that way because they have only the authority to work within the electoral district which chooses them. Also, pursuant to the provisions of the bill, they will be called registered agents. There is an amendment to change the definition of registered agents to say that it shall also include, for more precision, a person who is called an electoral district agent.

It seems to me that this has nothing to do whatever with political philosophies or with the ideologies of parties. It has to do with the totality of what we want to see happen in our political institutions. If we want to see the consolidation of authority at the top and the centralization of authority in the national headquarters office, then we should go along with the concepts in the bill. If we want to see some countervailing force to that, some opportunity for people in communities and constituencies to have some involvement in a formal and direct way rather than having to rest their case upon the generosity or lack of generosity of the leader of a party or of the officers at the

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national level of parties or of the chief agent of the party or on the very tenuous relationship that exists sometimes between a constituency and the national office, we should accept the amendment. In other words, this responsibility should rest in the fundamental area at home, in the community consisting of members of the party who actually do the work at election time, who knock on doors, distribute literature, drive the cars and do the scrutineering.

A moment ago the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) said that the NDP was the most centralized of parties. Immediately, I asked some of my colleagues whether they belonged to that party because I do not belong to that kind of party. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said to me as an aside that if he had relied upon a political party, the CCF at that time, to get him elected, he would only have been elected once. The number of times he was elected following that were the result of his own activity and the activities of the members of that party in Winnipeg North Centre.

● (2040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, without endorsing the comments of my colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party with regard to this bill, namely, the hon. member for Halton (Mr. O'Connor) and the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick), I am at a loss to try to follow the reasoning of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) who intends to repeat the motions that were tabled at the committee stage.

[*Translation*]

It is absolutely beyond me to understand this desire to propose new amendments which have been debated at the committee stage, for very obvious reasons at the time, and among others precisely because each party was seeking control over those allowed to submit their candidacy.

Since this legislation is aimed first at limiting expenditures of the parties and candidates and second at refunding parts of those expenses, surely each duly registered party represented by an official agent will want that the expenditures incurred by its representatives and the funds collected be spent in an acceptable manner.

The parties are entitled, at least mine is, to control the candidates which will represent it at a general election, mainly for the reasons just expressed by the hon. member and namely because of the tax deductions some adventurers might be interested in thrusting themselves forward and declaring their candidacy not for a marginal party but for a well-established party such as mine. If you consider History, you will find that in Quebec candidates have run at the provincial level under the Liberal banner and were elected by a strong majority. But a few years later they ran under another banner or as independents and were totally defeated.

Those are good reasons why the party must absolutely keep on choosing its own candidates, and controlling those