

• (1345)

With respect to the issues raised in the course of the previous debate, I note that in presenting his motion the hon. member claimed that the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, known as the Lortie commission, hardly touched on the question of party financing.

It is important to set the record straight. The Lortie commission did look into all the issues raised in election financing. It looked into the question of financing registered political parties, limits on election expenses, public funding of election participants, disclosure of political contributions, political contributions and undue influence.

Three in depth studies were commissioned and published entitled "Money in Politics", "Provincial Party and Election Finance in Canada" and "Comparative Issues in Party and Election Finance".

The Lortie commission, therefore, was very well informed when it made the following recommendations: first, that there be no ban on political contributions from business, trade unions or other organizations except for political contributions from foreign sources.

In arriving at this conclusion the commission paid particular attention to the historical significance and importance of organizations such as unions and business in Canadian politics and to the danger of diverting funds from political parties to third parties. We have seen in previous elections where vast expenses were made by non-political parties in the political process.

Second, it pointed to the possible problem of charter challenges to such restrictions.

Third, the Lortie commission recommended that there be no limits on the size of contributions to registered political parties. In deciding this the Lortie commission found that there was "an absence of any compelling evidence that the number and value of large contributions to federal parties and candidates raise serious concerns about undue influence".

I listened with interest to the remarks of the member for Surrey North. I am sure she was inspired by a sincere desire and interest in the political system. However, I suggest that a thorough examination of this subject by an independent inquiry looked into the matter and found there was no suggestion of the influence that seemed to trouble the last speaker in the House. Further, the Lortie commission concluded that it would be very difficult to enforce such limits.

We have seen other jurisdictions where such unenforceable or difficult to enforce limits run into problems and bring the whole of the political system into disrepute.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

I am sure that Bloc members are aware of the problem in France arising from the funding of political parties. Limits were set, but no pertinent regulations were adopted. It is very important to analyse limits on contributions to ensure they are practical and applicable to individual cases.

[English]

During the last Parliament a special committee on electoral reform was struck to consider the Lortie commission's proposals. In the end the committee did not recommend limits on who could make donations and the maximum amount of such donations. I agree with the final decisions of the Lortie commission and the special committee.

The Canada Elections Act, as it stands, provides the necessary mechanisms to ensure that our electoral system is fair and equitable. Notably there are controls on election expenditures. The transparency of political donations is assured in that registered political parties must provide an annual report setting out the amount of money received and the name of each donor who contributed more than \$100.

I am of the view that these measures are more than sufficient to protect the integrity of the electoral system. We have a saying that it does no good to throw the baby out with the dirty bath water. There is no question there are problems with electoral financing as there are problems with every aspect of the electoral system of the country.

These problems deserve careful, mature examination and reflection before coming to conclusions. I find that the conclusions in the Lortie commission respect those criteria. It is for that reason I cannot support the motion before the House.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Pélouin (Brome—Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue the debate in this House this afternoon on the motion of my hon. colleague from Richelieu concerning financial contributions to political parties.

Mr. Speaker, we all know how important the financing of political parties is when elections come. Clearly, an election campaign takes money. But do we really have to let just anyone or anything finance our political parties? Canada's electoral system has serious shortcomings that allow multinationals, even American ones, to meddle in Canadian public affairs. If this electoral system does not soon acquire strict rules on the financing of political parties, it is in great danger of no longer being representative.

The Bloc Québécois, which applied Quebec's rules on public financing during the last election campaign, is the only federal political party represented in this House which can boast that its election expenses were financed solely by individuals and that