

Private Members' Business

east coast. The way it is, this right is denied to the citizens of this land.

Two opposition parties is the way it is today. One of them is headquartered in Quebec City claiming to be a national party. The other party is headquartered in Calgary again claiming to be a national party. If a national party is to be in this House of Commons, their headquarters should be located in the nation's capital in order to facilitate their activities.

Seventy-five per cent of Canadians did not participate in choosing this opposition party. It is only fair that we would also be asked. Twenty-five per cent of the population in this case should not decide the opposition party of this House.

• (1755)

When I was campaigning in the 1993 election campaign I saw a big sign, 4 by 8, in front of the Reform Party candidate's headquarters which said: "We will run the country the way we run the campaign". The Reform Party ran the campaign without Quebec.

I am very happy that Reformers are thinking of expanding into Quebec. This is very good and I commend them for it. I also hope that with the changes I am proposing in this bill the Bloc Quebecois will have a chance to run candidates in other provinces, in other regions, next time around. I am sure they are going to be here and I hope to be here so we can have constructive discussion about the future of our country.

I return to the point I made about the 15 political parties that ran in this election. One of the benefits of being a national party is that you get reimbursement from the federal government.

For example the Conservative Party spent \$10,398,101. They received \$2,339,752.72. The Canada Party had the lowest expenditures in the last election campaign and had 56 candidates. They spent \$172.72.

Surely today's opposition party spent more than \$172. Surely it can spend more than that in order to have a proper opposition, a good opposition in this House, so the system can work and function.

Without implementing these changes I think we will lose the unity of this country.

I want to conclude my remarks for the time being, but pick up again toward the end. If we intend to have strong central government we have to change the law in order to achieve it. When we change the law we can achieve a united, indivisible Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-229, which would amend the Canada Elections Act with respect to registration of political parties.

This bill, which would oblige a political party to put forward candidates in a minimum of seven Canadian provinces that have, in the aggregate, 50 per cent of the population of all the provinces, is, in our opinion, undemocratic and contrary to one of the provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act.

The least that can be said about Bill C-229, introduced by the hon. member for Don Valley North, is that it targets the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party, among others. In our opinion, it is an insult to democracy, as it denies Quebec, a distinct society, the right to its own representatives in the House of Commons. It must be pointed out that the people of Quebec are true believers in democracy.

The hon. member for Don Valley North, in introducing such a bill, shows a very poor knowledge indeed of the Canadian political scene and of its diversity. The social, economic and cultural make-up of Toronto, where the member hails from, does not apply to every part of Canada, to Quebec in particular. It must be pointed out that Quebecers do not, any longer, feel comfortable with the old national parties, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, whose policies always sought to champion the interests and pursue the objectives of a mythical Canadian nation, with a total disregard for regional specificity.

Quebec chose to be represented by the Bloc Quebecois, and it is certainly not a member from the Toronto region who is going to stand in the way of the political representation of one fifth of the citizens and taxpayers of Canada in the House of Commons.

• (1800)

This bill is completely inconsistent and does not respect Canadian political tradition. Since the passage of the new Canada Elections Act in 1970, there has been provision for the registration of political parties. However, the multi-party system appeared in Canada well before then. As early as 1920, members of other parties began to be elected to the House of Commons in sufficient numbers and with sufficient support and credibility to influence the system.

I would remind the members that, in the 1930s, Social Credit and the Commonwealth Co-operative Federation represented very special interests, with demands and hopes that were not at all national in scope. They were movements formed by Western producers to protest the excessive taxation authority of a highly centralizing federal government. None of them were represented in seven provinces or by a total of 50 per cent of the population of Canada. This is an important point to remember.