

*Canada Elections Act*

The objective of the hon. member is to set a reasonable limit on election expenses. I am saying that expenses in this regard vary tremendously from riding to riding. I put it to the hon. member that the expenses of someone from a small city, such as the hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Benson) or the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Faulkner) would, of necessity, be much less because they would have the advantage of being in a centre where all the public media would be focused on them. As the hon. member knows, and as the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) behind him knows very well, in a large metropolitan area with 25 or 30 ridings, it is clearly impossible for a member to have an opportunity of this kind for the presentation of his views, or even to establish his identity as a local candidate.

Now, the hon. member has said that he feels with a limitation on expenses there could be a more intelligent assessment of the candidates and a more intelligent comparison of competing parties. I have a little difficulty reconciling the hon. member's remarks in that regard with the remarks of his leader, or the remarks attributed to his leader, early in the campaign. He was announcing triumphantly that the N.D.P. would have more money to spend this time. I have forgotten how many millions of dollars they were to have, but it was an increase from the election before. Surely, this means that basically the gripe seems to be, not that there is anything wrong with spending money on a campaign, but that at the moment that particular group has not had it. It appears their philosophy would be different if they did.

I do believe it is right that there should be an opportunity for someone to put his views before the public. I feel there are specific ways in which he could be assisted financially. I am sure hon. members are familiar with one of the suggestions in the brochure put out by the committee on election expenses to the effect that there should be free mailing facilities for candidates. Personally, I would endorse that to a limited degree. I agree it could be abused. I agree with the hon. member in his suggestion, and I would be prepared to support legislation which would provide for some part of election expenses being financed by the state. The problem there, of course, is a question of definition, of deciding who is to get a contribution from the state and who is not.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

● (5:30 p.m.)

The difficulty, as I see it, for a candidate, a difficulty which could apply, as far as I know, to rural as well as urban ridings—is that a candidate is not engaged in outshouting another, as much as he is engaged in trying to shout his presence into the attention of a society with facilities already geared to engage attention in many other things. Candidates are involved in trying to attract the attention of the electorate at the same time as exponents of sporting events and people talking in other areas of public affairs are seeking that attention; and people engaged in commercial activities are also trying to attract attention. What is necessary for a particular candidate is to be in a position to make such presentation to the public that can be recognized among the din of conflicting claims on their attention by other media.

I think that my principal comment on the hon. member's bill is that I do not think its terms are realistic enough. As far as I know, and I suspect as far as the hon. member for Greenwood knows, he has no real idea whether the limitation would be effective for, for example, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), or whether it would be effective in Port Arthur, or what effect it would have on the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange).

**Mr. Knowles:** Since the hon. member has mentioned my name would he permit a question?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** By all means; it is always a pleasure.

**Mr. Knowles:** Before he gets too near the end of his time would he comment on the essential point of my colleague's bill, namely that there should be publicity given to the source of election contributions?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Speaker, I would not like my time to run out without saying that I would share with the hon. member for Greenwood his concern not only for the individual candidate but also the party apparatus behind him. Here I am referring to an established political party, such as he and I respectively are both members of. It is important that the central apparatus should have to make its expenditures and its source of funds clear, just as it is important for the individual candidate to do so.

**Mr. Knowles:** Is that not the point of the bill?