

party. They may be merely supporters of the individual who is running. They may be well known as supporters of some other party. But they may be prepared to make a contribution to my campaign as long as it does not become public. However, they may not be prepared to do so if it does become public.

That is a loss any member of this House and any candidate of any party across the country ought to be willing to accept as the price to be paid for real disclosure of contributions to political parties and candidates. Further, I am certain that after one election the people of Canada will get used to the notion that their contributions will be public. They may hesitate the first time, but once it becomes the tradition of the electoral process in this country, the Canadian people, corporations and unions will live by that tradition. If the loss is to be considered at all, and in my view it ought not to be, it will be shortlived; maybe one election and no more. I believe the people of Canada will recognize the value of disclosure to them and to the honesty and the integrity of the political process. After an initial hesitation they will be prepared to have their name disclosed as well as the amount.

Since I am the leader of my party I have to make this clear. I am not making this a condition of our support of the present bill because we believe it goes a long way and ought to become law as quickly as possible. However, I hope the committee which studies this bill, and the President of the Privy Council, will seriously consider the suggestion I make on behalf of my party, namely, that the bill should provide for full disclosure, the name and amount of contribution by any person, association, corporation, trade union, and so on, regardless of whether the amount is \$100 or less or more than \$100.

The second point on which I wish to say a few words relates to a contribution to candidates out of the public treasury. Reservations and concerns have been expressed by some members of my party about the provision that the public treasury help finance the election of candidates in this country. I have no hesitation in supporting the principle. It is one of the best ways of making certain the relatively poor person can be a candidate, and the relatively poor political party can do a job for the people of Canada during an election. Therefore, I think it is a good provision in principle.

I do not know why the members of the Liberal and Conservative parties insisted, in the committee which sat about a year ago, that the cut-off of a candidate's entitlement to any payment out of the public treasury be as high as 25 per cent or 30 per cent. They finally agreed to 20 per cent. I do not see why they should insist on a relatively high level—I hope I am not doing them an injustice by saying this—except that they want to make it as tough as possible for parties that are not yet as strong and well organized across the country as those two parties. If that is their reason for insisting on so high a level for a candidate before he can be paid out of the public treasury, I suggest it is a shabby and undemocratic reason. It is a self-serving reason that has no place in any genuine democratic consideration of this subject. The only justification for any floor of support before money is paid out of the public treasury is to keep out freak candidates, nuisance candidates and the like.

Election Expenses

● (1650)

Mr. Reilly: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Some of them got elected.

Mr. Lewis: I was about to say that. There are freak and nuisance candidates connected with political parties, and if some of my Conservative friends continue to make cracks I will draw attention to some of the freak and nuisance candidates in this House.

The only logical and moral justification for saying that not every candidate is entitled to this privilege is to keep out men and women who are not serious candidates—perhaps that is the best and least offensive description—people who are candidates only because they want to get their names into a newspaper or their names on a ballot, something like that. That is the only justification for the floor. If money is to be paid out of the public treasury, every serious candidate running for election should be in the same position as any other serious candidate. He should not be penalized merely because he does not get as many votes as some other candidate.

I suggest, therefore, that 10 per cent should be the figure. My hon. friend from Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) suggested 5 per cent, and I do not quarrel with that. But it seems to me that 10 per cent is surely sufficient. Let me tell hon. members why I say it is sufficient. Every one of our constituencies in the urban centres, and most of those in the rural areas, contains 40,000 or 50,000 voters. A total of between 30,000 and 40,000 votes will be cast in most of the constituencies represented in this House—more in some cases. Ten per cent of 30,000 or 40,000 votes amounts to 3,000 or 4,000 votes, and I maintain that any candidate who gets the support of several thousand voters in a constituency is a serious candidate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: It is the person who only gets 500 or so votes, say 1,500 at most, who might from one or other point of view be regarded as not being a serious candidate. We in this party have been represented by candidates—and no doubt this would be the case in the future for some little time—who have received only a few hundred votes. And still they are serious candidates in the opinion of the New Democratic Party, doing what we believe to be an important job of bringing to the electors, to the extent they can, the message which we want to bring to the voters of certain constituencies. This is our right. However, it is true that in the context of the particular constituency, leaving aside the opinions of the party, they are not serious candidates. If they poll only a few hundred votes, I am not arguing they should get any contributions from the treasury toward the campaign. But to require that they should get 6,000, 7,000 or 8,000 votes before they can obtain payment from the treasury is to my mind a totally unreasonable and undemocratic requirement. It cannot be justified except that the majority in this House, Liberals and Conservatives, insist on making it more difficult for the NDP and for the Social Credit party or, for that matter, for any new party which might arise, to carry out its work in accordance with the judgment and the conscience of those