

*Election Expenses Bill*

hon. member proposes are amendments to the Canada Elections Act, rather than to the bill which is before us, Bill C-211. That, to my mind, is the basic weakness of the proposed amendment.

In essence, the hon. member's suggested reasoned amendment is not declaratory of any proposition adverse to, or differing from, the principle of the bill before us. For those reasons I cannot accept the amendment. May I be permitted, however, to add in conclusion that I hope hon. members will understand, if the Chair has spent more time than it should have on the arguments made, that it did so in the hope that soon in the coming months hon. members will have an opportunity to look again at the question of reasoned amendments. Regardless of the decision rendered now, I invite hon. members to look at this question at other times rather than in relation to an amendment which is before the House on a specific bill. Again, as I have said, so far as the amendment is concerned the Chair cannot accept it. This ruling is mainly based on the present rules and practices of the House, on the precedents and on the previous decisions which have been taken. This is the only way, unless the rules of the House are changed, in which we can preserve this institution.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matte:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Kaplan) would like to speak for four or five minutes. I would agree to lend him my allotted time, provided I am permitted to speak at two o'clock.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert P. Kaplan (Don Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I endorse this bill and welcome it. Having been through a campaign in 1968 that was too expensive, I can tell hon. members from the lessons I have learned that a campaign does not have to be so expensive to succeed. With careful planning and more concern for costs, I know that my last campaign could be duplicated today for about half the cost. Nevertheless, a campaign does cost money and this is a fact that the public and the press seem to find hard to accept. For example, in my own riding which is the fifth most populous in Canada, sending a letter to each voter costs \$7,200 just for postage stamps. The bill before us would permit \$37,000 to be spent lawfully on the items specified. I say this limit is more than enough for anyone to make himself known and put his message across. I make no apology for the cost of my 1968 campaign. I broke no rules or customs. My accounting was complete. The money came from personal supporters, from Liberals in the riding and from the party. No contributor has held me to account. I do not even know them all.

But big campaign bills reflect on the system. They encourage the false belief that politics is a rich man's game. Hon. members know how many of us in this Chamber are rich in the normal sense. The charge of rich man's game is false. But big campaign bills tend to discredit the truth. I do not know whether this bill will be applicable to the next election. I hope it will because the right of partial reimbursement and of tax credits for contributors would be desirable. I have risen in my place today to state that, whether or not the bill is law at the time of the next election, I will abide by the provisions relating to spending limits, to disclosure and to auditing, provided that my

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel).]

Conservative opponent also does so. I believe that this is a constructive step, one which will be welcomed by Don Valley voters and one which should be welcomed by my opponent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matte:** Mr. Speaker, may I call it one o'clock?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

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**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

• (1410)

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, while listening yesterday to the speech of the hon. minister who is piloting this bill, I felt a glimmer of hope because he seemed to have adopted a more flexible attitude that was open to the suggestions and amendments which would eventually be brought in during the debate on this bill. Relying on the minister's straightforwardness, I think we should accept some necessary suggestions and amendments regarding this legislation.

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) has spoken of forthcoming general election and the impossibility for this bill to be in any way effective before then.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's statement, I wonder whether we should not have further considered the amendment moved yesterday by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). Indeed, if there is no particular urgency to adopt this legislation which will not be implemented before the next general election, why not delay its consideration so that it may be improved still more and more specifically analysed to avoid once again the necessity of constant review.

Mr. Speaker, a legislation which purports to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act in regard to election expenses has a direct bearing on the basic problem of democratization of elections, that is to say on democracy itself since elections are the springboard of democracy. If such a bill is so drafted as to relate to an actual democratization, it should rest on the principle that an equal opportunity should be offered all political parties and candidates to submit their views.

This equal opportunity is essential, Mr. Speaker, if we want democracy to operate better in this country, because experience has shown us that loud and intensive publicity may warp the opinions of the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, here are a few concrete examples; we very well know that, because of repeated advertising on television, on radio or in the newspapers, or a particular brand of soap for the dishes, all the women go out and buy that brand, simply because they have very often heard the name or seen the advertisement. Does that mean that this soap is better? Not always, Mr. Speaker.