

*Election Expenses*

this bill. Therefore, anybody who disagrees with that position is somehow suspect.

I thought I would put on the record my view about these matters for the benefit of the hon. member for Halton. This is the first time in this parliament I have seen a member of the official opposition formally become an executive assistant to the President of the Privy Council and try to put a bill through the House.

**An hon. Member:** He is practising to take over.

**Mr. Howard:** If he does not have any more integrity about other matters than he has about this bill he should not take over.

**Mr. O'Connor:** I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member has been trading jibes with me and I with him during the course of the debate this evening. Now, he has allowed me to get under his skin and accuses me of a lack of integrity. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. I have been consistent in my view and attitude in respect of this bill. I think he should be asked by you, Mr. Speaker, to withdraw such a charge or substantiate the statement he has made.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Is the hon. member rising to speak on the point of order?

**Mr. Howard:** No, Mr. Speaker.

**An hon. Member:** He should.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. So far as I am concerned it is my impression, although the feelings of the hon. member might be hurt, that this is more a question of debate than anything else. Perhaps I should take this opportunity to remind hon. members, and the hon. member who has the floor, of the view expressed by Mr. Speaker this afternoon and the direction given by him at the time of the decision to suspend the first motion and go on to the other motions. He invited hon. members to be more specific. I think the House has an opportunity on these four amendments which are before us at this time to engage in enough general discussion of the principle of this bill, so I think we should refrain as much as possible from making third reading speeches at the second reading stage. I would ask hon. members for their co-operation, and I would ask the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) to come as quickly as possible to the subject matter of the motion at this time.

**Mr. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, I was sure you would not find a question of privilege in that statement. In any event, may I say that I did not mean to cast any aspersions against the hon. member for Halton. Perhaps the words "question his integrity" were beyond what should be the decorum for debate in this House. I apologize to him for having let those words escape my lips. He is certainly guilty, however, of an indignity. He and his party certainly are guilty of an indignity, and that is their subservience to the government in legislative matters of this kind without obtaining anything in return. Perhaps they might even lose the title "official opposition" which the House Leader of the Official Opposition took solely to himself the other day.

[Mr. Howard.]

The amendments before us, which I have been leading up to in my preliminary remarks, to me at least touch upon the very core and substance of parliamentary democracy in Canada. They relate to the structure of parliamentary democracy as it pertains to a constituency and to a community. These are the amendments which would set the pattern in respect of whether or not we are to have a politically organized element in this nation, and whether or not the people in the constituencies and communities will have a say in what takes place in their political organizations.

That is the fundamental question involved in the set of amendments before us now. Some years ago this Parliament embarked upon the question of organizing more tightly the position of parties at the federal level, and the placing of the political party in a more prominent position in relation to that of the individual candidate. The very question of deciding to place the name of the political party on the ballot, which was done some years ago, was a move in that direction. It was a move in the direction of saying that a political party shall have a larger say in what happens in a constituency.

● (2030)

I think it was in 1970 that we made amendments to the Canada Elections Act to set up the mechanism in section 13 for the registration and authentication of political parties. This provision enabled political parties to organize themselves at the national level in such a way that they could make an application to the Chief Electoral Officer to become registered and put on his list of registered parties. If a party is not on that list maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer, then it has no position within the political spectrum in Canada in an organized way.

We are now moving from those provisions that were enacted in 1970 about registered parties in the direction of saying, in effect, that only registered political parties can run candidates and can spend money, and that an amalgam of people who may want to get together to form a new political party will not be able to run candidates and to spend any money in the conduct of the election unless they meet certain criteria, one of which is to have a certain number of members in this House. That would not apply to a new party becoming established. For that party to become an established registered party and to move against the force of the state—which is what is involved in the bill—it would have to nominate 50 candidates by the thirtieth day before election day.

This is what we are talking about in these amendments, and there are four of them in number. They seek to establish a position within the registered parties' structure for an electoral district agent, specifically named as such with a specific orientation to the home town structure, because under the bill a registered party must have a chief agent and he and others can be called registered agents. It is only through registered agents that contributions can be made to a registered political party. The only channel for campaign fund contributions or administration contributions for the party is through a chief agent who is also a registered agent.

Under the bill it becomes the prerogative of the registered party at its national headquarters, of the chief agent