

a different tune, but the fact is there are not very many in that caucus and in percentage terms it is quite low.

The second aspect concerns third party advertising. There has been a lot of criticism in the press of the provisions dealing with third party advertising that were contained in the committee report in December. This criticism has particularly come from the National Citizens' Coalition. It has run advertisements, which I would call scare tactic advertisements, designed to make people think that somehow their rights are being trampled on as a result of the third party advertising provisions in this bill. I am pleased that the government has at least agreed with the very limited restrictions that have been proposed in the law that is before this House. I suspect that the reason we have not seen any National Citizens' Coalition ads since is because it realizes what a weak law the government has proposed in this case.

Let us look in detail at the restriction that is proposed. The law says no person or organization may engage in advertising during an election campaign where that organization or person spends more than \$1,000, and where the ad is either in favour of or opposed to a candidate or a political party. It must be a direct ad in support of or in opposition to. In other words, indirect advertisements that deal with issues other than candidates and parties, that deal with policy questions, for example, are still able to be advertised by anybody and in unlimited amounts. In other words, all the advertising that went on in the last campaign on free trade, which was such an abuse of our electoral system, would be allowed as long as no reference was made to a party or candidate.

This is not what the royal commission on electoral reform and party financing recommended. The \$20 million study that the government established, which is the basis of the work that we are doing, recommended a very severe restriction on third party advertising. It recommended a ban on third party advertising and a ban on expenditures by a third party of any campaign expense during an election campaign, except for \$1,000. The ban would apply to everything, not just advertising. It would apply to polling and every other kind of expense because it clearly intended that there be restrictions in place on electoral expenses.

The parties are subject to limits, both nationally and on a constituency basis. Those limits are in place and

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they are designed to ensure that the electoral process in Canada is fair. I think they are reasonable restrictions. I attended a seminar hosted by the royal commission at which some American congressmen and an American senator were in attendance. They were extremely jealous of the Canadian system of expenditure control in election campaigns. They do not have these controls in place in the United States. They told stories of how they had to spend their time, easily half their time, between elections raising money for the next campaign. It is a completely different system and it is not one that serves the public well.

Our system serves the public well. Politicians are restricted in what they can spend and the parties are restricted in what they can spend. As a result of that our campaigns are not easily bought by one party because no one can spend that much more than anyone else. That is a big help. Also, the level of expenditure ensures that you do not have to be a multimillionaire in order to be a candidate for political office in Canada. It is becoming increasingly difficult for someone who is not very well to do to seek elected office in the House of Representatives or in the Senate of the United States. That is not the difficulty in Canada.

• (1950)

The amazing thing is when reading these advertisements from the National Citizens' Coalition you never see mention of the fact that there are restrictions on Canada's political parties. You do not see any criticism of the fact that there are restrictions on the expenditures of Canadian political parties and there have been for many years in this country. It has not run full-page ads denouncing that part of the law. It is only when it sees the possibility of restrictions on its own advertising campaign that the National Citizens' Coalition chooses to take issue and run its national ads.

I want to say that the National Citizens' Coalition uses these ads and these scare tactics as a fund-raising gesture. It runs these ads and there is always a little blurb down at the bottom—some of my constituents send this material to me—saying if you would like to support the National Citizens' Coalition in its work, cut out the coupon and send in money. You have probably seen them, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to pose some questions to the National Citizens' Coalition to find out where the money goes. It makes a great issue of members of Parliament and the