

Election Expenses

it would be up to the candidate to decide whether he turned all or part of those funds over to his official agent or whether he used them to replace income lost during the election campaign. I think that has been done in the past in respect of some candidates in some political parties. I am not going to quarrel with the disposition of the funds by a candidate, whether he spends them or puts them into his own pocket, as long as he abides by the provisions of section 62 of the act and does not spend more than \$2,000 of his own money for personal expenditures without going through the official agent. I suppose that can be considered to be the business of the candidate, and any transaction that involves funds which he does not so spend could be considered to be left as business between him and his particular central party organization.

To suggest that a political party can give \$5,000, \$10,000, \$50,000 or \$100,000 to a candidate which he does not have to spend, and which the party does not have to account for as part of their total allowable expenses in a campaign, is making a mockery of the avowed intent of putting a ceiling on expenditures of political parties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He could, of course, continue if there were unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent. The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters).

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the discussion that took place last night on this particular amendment. I was particularly impressed when my colleague who was discussing this matter, and another colleague who had sat on the election expenses committee, were asked for an explanation of the term "election expenses". Up to that point, I was not very sure what the discussion was all about, so I was pleased to learn I was not the only one who was confused about the amendment. I gather that the difficulty with that particular clause is not so evident if the clause is read in total, but the difficulty is rather that it cannot be read separately, in a vacuum. It must be read with clause 2 of the bill which sets out the meaning of election expenses. If we set out those election expenses, which the clause refers to as amounts not included in election expenses directly, it in fact fits into the category of allowable election expenses. If the clause is read in its entirety, it would appear that the word "not" should be inserted, but if it is read in conjunction with the election expenses section of the bill, which is the major section of the bill, then I agree that probably the wording is incorrect.

I presume, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a number of amendments to this bill, either in this place or in the other place. I am going to be very interested in the debates in the other place to see whether they make the decision as to what our election expenses will be, and how we conduct the business of running elections, since the members in that place are really in a preferred position in that regard.

[Mr. Barnett.]

I do believe that if the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) is right, and his explanation was fairly lucid, in saying that if, for the purposes of this section, the amount of the election expenses incurred by a registered party in respect of the conduct of an election there shall not be included any amount in respect of contributions made by or on behalf of the registered party for the use of candidates at the election—has a relationship to election expenses, then if you put the word "not" in it means that it will be included and it would make absolutely no sense.

● (1240)

The people in my area found it difficult to define election expenses. They do not quite know what should be classed as a receivable, and what should be classed as an item payable. I am sure that other members, other candidates, as well as official agents and other officials, have run into this problem. What about the contribution I make to myself as a candidate? For instance, I may provide myself with an automobile and other facilities. Most of the signs in my area are made by the silk screening process, and most of the silk screening is done on my premises. I have a large garage which can be used for that. Obviously, if someone else were to do this, it would be classed as an expense. As I do this myself, it really does not cost me much. I am providing the facilities for printing, which, in any event, I would not rent out or use for any other purpose. So, such signs might be classed as a gift. They would not be a contribution. In any event, it would be difficult to include that item under election expenses.

It is also difficult to include volunteer help under the heading of election expenses. I know that this bill does not require voluntary services to be included, but that applies to a certain limit. In my election campaigns at any rate, and this applies to many members of my party, voluntary services are more valuable than money contributions or gifts in kind. Often, without volunteer help we could not run elections. Without volunteer organizations there could be no political parties, because such organizations really are fundamental to the existence of our political parties.

Another difficulty that I have encountered, and this applies no doubt to other candidates, concerns contributions over which one has no control. I notice that there is still in the bill, under the election expenses part, a section relating to the provision of light refreshments and to the mailing of all types of promotional material and so on. The light refreshment question has caused many of my party difficulty. This applies equally to the Social Credit Party. For instance, when organizing election campaigns in New Brunswick, have they not run into the problem of seeing the other big parties passing out 26 ounce bottles on different corners of the street? It is well known that in a certain by-election, the people who came out of one polling booth were handed a bottle from a vehicle standing not far from the polling station. Those light refreshments became quite a factor in that election. Many members of my party, in contrast to voters, have not viewed with favour the consumption of alcoholic beverages. For that reason and, also because of lack of money, we have not provided beer, wine or liquor parties.

I have attended political meetings in an area where my party has no representation. Actually, political meetings there are community affairs. The people like to listen to