

the southern parts of my constituency—but the problem still exists in the north. I am sure my hon. friend from Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuck), whom I believe will enter this debate, will agree with what I say.

Finally, I want to bring once more to the attention of the House the very eloquent and reasoned comments of my hon. friend from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) whose amendment has been ruled out of order but who, nevertheless, made a certain proposition which he would have used as a basis of support for his amendment had it been accepted. I shall not go into the detail of the bill itself; the hon. member for Hillsborough did that to some extent.

There is no doubt that all of us as practical, seasoned people involved in public life will recognize that no matter what this statute may say, ways and means will be found, not of evading it but of avoiding it. There are a variety of ways, such as committees formed of friends of a party, or friends of a candidate who will be free to seek out means by which what is proposed in the bill, the real pith and substance of the bill, can be set aside to a large extent.

• (1520)

No doubt if loopholes are discovered, they may be plugged later. But I suggest that what I hope hon. members had in mind, what I think the Barbeau committee had in mind and what I am sure the House of Commons committee had in mind, was some real and honest way of limiting and controlling election expenses. While this is a modest beginning in that direction, I am convinced it will be found that when legislation is put into effect at the next election, so many loopholes will be found in it that in many respects it will be, not a farce but almost a nullity.

For this reason, while this consideration takes place—and this is a continuing process which may take ten years to be astute, vigilant and alert enough to find out what those loopholes are and to plug them—I suggest to the House and to the country that the proposal made by the hon. member for Hillsborough to shorten the period of election campaigning is a sensible and logical course to undertake, not as an alternative but as an additional means of limiting and controlling campaign expenses.

There is another reason as well. Today, the people of Canada are well served by the various communications media. They are well served by members of parliament on all sides of the House who through the use of these media and frequent trips to their constituencies are able to keep the public of Canada well informed through the use of the adversary system. I would like to think that most people in Canada today are pretty well informed on many of the political and public issues dealing with our social and economic life. This being the case, I view with abhorrence, as I am sure a great many hon. members do, the length of campaigns of the sort which we have had in the past, lasting 2½ months or three months.

I say with all the strength at my command that this is not necessary and that three weeks or a month at the most is completely adequate to pinpoint the specific issues on which the parties divide and where there are conflicts—and then let the jury decide! When members of the legal profession address the jury in a murder trial or in civil action, we know that one can get to a point where one can lull the jury to sleep. You do not repeat your arguments

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ad nauseam; you make your case and then you shut up. This is the situation which should prevail with regard to election campaigns, and also with regard to answers by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin).

Mr. McBride: How about debates in the House of Commons?

Mr. Baldwin: If occasionally we could get intelligent contributions from the other side of the House, we could have a yardstick by which to judge.

I say with all sincerity that surely by now we have made a case for a shorter election campaign period. There may be problems in legislating to that effect, but I do not think so. If we were able to say that only during the period of 30 days prior to the election date expenses could be incurred, expenses within the meaning of this act, and only within that time expenses could be incurred which would be acceptable, this could be placed within the framework of the legislation.

The people of this country become nauseated by the continued expression of political diatribe during the course of a campaign of 2½ months. The leaders of our political parties have imposed upon them very severe strains. I do not think that national leaders should have to be exposed to election campaigns of this length. Our friends to the south find it even worse. In the Congress of the United States they have been seeking ways and means of shortening election campaigns. Their constitution, however, makes it very difficult for them to do so.

We have an opportunity now and a vehicle by which to achieve this, and I hope the committee will look at this proposal very seriously. I hope they will consider the extent to which television and radio are utilized during the course of an election campaign. I do not think it is necessary for people who would like to see "Sesame Street" or "Blood of Dracula" to view instead the Prime Minister.

I do not mean to make a joke of it, but I suggest that there is one way—and I do not eliminate the other methods—by which we can certainly limit and control campaign expenditures, and that is by ensuring that the length of the campaign is drastically shortened to no more than 30 days. A stipulation should be attached to the effect that expenses of any kind incurred before the 30 days will not be counted and cannot be considered as being official campaign expenses.

I make this plea and ask the committee to consider it. Perhaps they are not yet ready. We do not know when this legislation will be first used. We do not know when the Prime Minister will call an election and we do not know whether the legislation will be in effect when the election is called. There is some doubt as to when it will be effective and some suggestion that, apart from the question of six months, it can only come into effect at some period after January 1, 1973. I have not directed my attention to that but possibly the committee will. If it is feasible for the legislation to become applicable during the course of the next election, I would ask the committee to take a very serious look at this proposal as it has been advanced by the hon. member for Hillsborough and supported by myself.