

Election Expenses

However, I think one is drawing a totally wrong analogy if one tries to compare the contributions made by Canadian men and women who work and are members of unions and who make contributions by voting at their local union meetings, or through a vote of the local executive, with the contribution of a corporation made by an officer of the corporation, since that contribution is often made without consulting the shareholders and in some cases without even consulting the board of directors. Comparing those two things makes no sense at all.

Undoubtedly, the New Democratic Party has been much more inclined, and I hope will continue to be so inclined, to be more in tune with the working people of this country, organized or unorganized, than with the corporations of this country. I have no hesitation in saying, Mr. Speaker, that speaking for myself I have a great deal more affinity in my thinking and feelings with the organized worker, the organized fisherman and the organized farmer than with the corporations of this country. That will continue to be the case.

What I have said about other parties holds equally true for the NDP. I believe that we ought to be required by law to disclose the source of our funds, so that the people of Canada can make their judgment about us in the same way as they ought to be able to make a judgment about the other parties represented in this House and in this country. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, without seeking to be self-righteous—

An hon. Member: Good heavens.

Mr. Lewis: —that we have already given such disclosure. If any members of this House want to visit our federal convention which will take place in Vancouver next week starting on the nineteenth, one week from today, they will find distributed to the delegates and media representatives at that convention audited financial statements dealing not only with the operations of the New Democratic Party between elections but also with the source of funds and the expenditures made by the federal office of this party during the election last fall.

That information will be open, and always has been open, for anybody who wants to see it. It will not be a statement made by the secretary. It will be an audited statement. If all the information that people are interested in is not contained in that statement—I do not know what it contains, not having seen it yet—a media spokesman or anybody else present at the convention or, indeed, any person in Ottawa has merely to apply to the federal secretary, Mr. Cliff Scotton, and all the details as to where the money came from for the election fought last fall and for the operation of our party during the two years since the last convention will be made available.

Of that difference I am proud, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we regard the provisions of this bill favourably. The three reasons why all people concerned with the democratic process have demanded bills of this sort are, first, that there ought to be a limit on the buying of votes. I use that phrase not in any illegal sense but in the legal sense. There ought to be a limit on the buying of votes as a result of large expenditures by parties. Second, candidates without much money and who cannot raise much money ought to be able to function in an election in Canada. Third, disclo-

[Mr. Lewis.]

sure is necessary so that the members of the public will know the source of the funds of those who claim to represent them.

I have said to reporters who have interviewed me from time to time, and this is probably true of those who run for office, that it is necessary for those who think they have the nerve and the capacity to represent the people of York South, or Winnipeg North Centre, or anywhere else, to have a certain degree of self-assurance. I suppose that those who think they have the capacity to lead a party must have an ever greater degree of self-assurance. That self-assurance is necessary. It is necessary for those who are candidates for office to feel the assurance that they can serve intelligently and with integrity the people they represent and the party they support. That is necessary, but it ought to be available to all Canadians without regard to their financial situation or the financial situation of their friends.

● (1640)

We welcome this bill because it goes a very considerable distance in the right direction. I have no doubt that the reason this bill is so much superior to the bill we had in the last parliament is because of the composition of this House of Commons. I think I can say without boastfulness that the fact that my party, my colleagues and myself stand for certain things in the realm of election expenses had some influence on the contents of the bill now before the House.

I want to deal with a few broad areas the bill presents and say a few words about each of them. I am concerned, as are one or two other members, that as long as there is a level below which disclosure is not necessary, you open up a large loophole. Whether the ceiling is \$50, \$100 or \$150, this opens up a loophole. There are people who do not want it to be known they have made a contribution to a given political party. This is particularly true of corporations that have made contributions to both the Liberals and the Conservatives. They may not want this to be known, or they may not want to be known the precise proportions in which they have divided the goodies between the two old-line parties. I understand it has usually been 60 per cent to the governing party and 40 per cent to the official opposition. The corporations may not want it to be known there is this kind of division.

A contributor can get around the provisions in the act quite legally, and to some extent not seriously improperly, by making 200 or 250 individual contributions of \$100 or less to each candidate of a party across the country. Although that would not violate the law, it would violate the spirit of the law. I believe the law ought to provide for full disclosure regardless of the contribution made by any individual, union, corporation or association.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I have no doubt that in the first election to which this kind of law will apply, some people who made contributions previously will not do so. I am certain that some contributors to my campaign in York South would not contribute if their contributions would have to be made public. They may not be supporters of the New Democratic Party or of its leader as the leader of that