

Election Expenses

arithmetic, it is easy to see that in the average Canadian riding today a candidate is limited to spending \$26,250.

Mr. Speaker, anyone in this House who has been a candidate knows that limit is far too high. If a candidate spends that much money in a general election, even though he or she receives a contribution from the party—as we all do—even though the candidate's committee is able to collect a reasonable amount of money from well wishers within the riding, and even though the government contributes toward the candidate's expenses in the way this bill proposes, a candidate who spends the limit placed on expenditure by this bill, namely \$26,250, will incur a personal debt which may take many years to pay off. Every member knows that is a fact. Many members of this House today are struggling to pay off debts they incurred in the last election, and some are still paying off debts they incurred in the 1968 election.

● (1520)

Mr. Dinsdale: At very high and inflated interest rates.

Mr. Hees: In Great Britain, where they have been running elections far, far longer than we have and where they are much more sophisticated in this regard, they faced this problem right after the end of the Second World War and attacked it by imposing the following restrictions on what each candidate could spend in a general election. Each candidate is allowed to spend a basic £750; in addition, each candidate can spend five pence for every six voters on the voters' list. So, imposing that limitation on our average riding of 50,000 voters per voters' list, if the British candidate were running he would be limited to an expenditure of \$3,033 in a general election. In addition to this allowance each candidate may send to the voters one mailing piece free of postal charge provided the mailing piece does not weigh more than two ounces.

I had the privilege of covering a British election a number of years ago and worked with candidates in various types of ridings all over England. I asked if it was possible for them to police the expenditures of their opponents, and they said it was very possible and very easy to do. They said that each candidate or his committee knows the cost of various types of advertising. They know what the mailing cost is and what it costs to produce the mailing pieces. They know what television costs, what radio costs and what every kind of advertising costs. Each candidate checks his or her opponents very carefully indeed because if the winner of the riding can be shown to have exceeded the allowable expenditure his or her election is nullified. So they check each other very carefully indeed and this is done effectively.

Having talked to these candidates in England, I learned of the great advantages of this kind of limit. This kind of limit on advertising expenses does three important things. First, it requires that the candidate shall do a great deal of personal campaigning door to door. They can be asked important questions by individual electors. Also, it requires them to attend a great many small meetings and subject themselves to the questioning of the electorate. They must put forward their views on the important matters of the day. The limitation generally allows the voting public, as they say in merchandising circles, to sample the goods. They can see the candidate face to face,

[Mr. Hees.]

know exactly what kind of person he or she is, know exactly what the candidate's stand is on the questions that are of importance to each individual voter and, when the election comes, the voters know who and what they are voting for.

Second, it allows young people with considerable ability but with very limited means to run for parliament. Lack of funds in England is no deterrent to a good candidate presenting himself or herself for election to parliament. Third, and this is very important, it prevents the rich man trying to buy his way into parliament by using elaborate public relations presentations and generally taking advantage of money to defeat his opponents.

As I said, the limit under the English system, if applied to the riding of average size in this country, would limit the candidate in Canada to an expenditure of slightly over \$3,000 in a general election. I think, because of our costs, because of what we have done in the past and because of the present situation in Canada, that limit is too low to be practical. I believe that a limit of \$10,000 in expenses per candidate, in the average sized Canadian riding containing 50,000 voters on the voters' list, is very reasonable and desirable.

The limit should be imposed in the following way: I suggest that 30 cents per voter should be allowed for each of the first 15,000 voters on the voters' list, that 20 cents should be allowed for each of the next 20,000 voters on the voters' list, and that 10 cents per voter should be allowed for the remaining voters on the voters' list. In an average sized riding that kind of limitation would mean an expenditure of exactly \$10,000 in an election. That is a reasonable expenditure and would not put any candidate into debt. I say that because each candidate receives a certain amount of money from the party, and the committee can collect funds from well-wishers within the riding. As well, perhaps the government will make a contribution. However, if this limitation is applied to the expenditures of candidates I do not think it will be necessary for the government to make a contribution. It will not need to dip into the public purse to finance the campaigns of individual candidates. Therefore, I feel that an expenditure of \$10,000 could be handled without the involvement of public contributions. However, whether there is or is not a public contribution, the important thing to bear in mind is that the candidate when the election was over would be free of debt. That, I think, is very important.

There is a tremendous difference between a ceiling of \$26,250 per candidate and one of \$10,000. I think this is a very important change because it would enable the very best people in the country, particularly young people with great ability but limited means, to present themselves as candidates for parliament. Also, it would improve the type of campaign indulged in. It would require all candidates to campaign personally, to let the voters see them and assess them. The candidates would need to go from door to door, hold small meetings and generally let the voting public see who and what it is voting for. The situation would be different from that of today when so often the voters do not know one candidate from another. Often all they receive is a variety of mailing pieces, they hear the occasional radio address, and so on, and perhaps catch a fleeting glimpse of the candidate.