

Government Orders

the various states in the United States by and large the groups that spent the most money won the day.

As well, in the American tradition incumbents tend to spend the most money and they also tend to win. Incumbents in the U.S. tend to stay on for a very long time even though at the congressional level they only serve two-year terms. Money does make a difference.

We have accepted in this country since the 1973 legislation that there be severe limits on candidates and severe limits on parties. That is part of the Canadian way.

• (2025)

We also say that we must have disclosure of our sources of income. Those are the things that we have accepted for 20 years in this country. For the most part it has helped to balance out and make Canadians feel that they have a fair and honest balance in terms of what the parties can spend and do during election campaigns.

For anybody to suggest that non-party groups can spend whatever they want, in some cases more than candidates and in some cases more than parties, on what might be only one issue means that we have created a complete imbalance in the whole political spending process.

Canadians by and large would reject a system of no limits whatsoever. They believe in a balanced approach. However part of that balance has to mean that there are restrictions on what others can spend during an election campaign. If I am limited to \$50,000 for all the things I have to do in an election campaign then it would be completely unreasonable if one, two, three or four businesses in my riding could spend more than that on a single issue. The same thing would apply on the federal level.

We cannot have a situation in which the Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats as political parties may each spend on the order of \$9 million on a national campaign—and that is for the leader's tour, polling, advertising, organizational work, literature and all the things that we do in a campaign—and then find out that some group that supports NAFTA, the North American free trade agreement, decides it is going to spend not the \$4.5 million it spent last time but two, three or four times that amount. In other words, it could spend more than

the political parties on only one issue and would not have the same responsibilities of political parties.

As others in the House who have spoken before me have said, it is ironic that some of the very groups that speak out against politicians and against restrictions on third party advertising are the same groups, the National Citizens' Coalition being the most obvious, that will not provide any public disclosure whatsoever as to how they are spending their money, who is raising their money and who is profiting from their campaigns.

Canadians want a fair, honest and up-to-date election act. We have moved a long way in that direction with C-114. Let us move the rest of the way. Let us make sure that we do more to bring in women, natives, people of colour and handicapped Canadians. Let us make sure that we bring in and cover a lot of the other issues that are not covered by our present election act. Leadership campaigns are one of the most obvious areas that we have to work on. Let us also make those other reforms on election expenses and financing that are really necessary to improve our democratic system.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I saw my colleague on the other side rising and I thank you for recognizing me first.

I would just like to make a couple of comments and start with the closing comments of my colleague opposite. I am in complete agreement that the examination of expenditures, rebates, limits and in particular the inclusion of the notion of indirect is a phase two activity. I would hope that within the next week or two the committee can reach its conclusions and present them to the House. The sooner we get them into the public domain so others can have a look at them and question or applaud our wisdom, whichever way it turns out, the better. I think we are both looking forward to that public examination. I am in complete agreement with him on that.

I would say to my colleague from the Liberal Party, in passing, that the issue of reimbursement for women or men or candidates of any persuasion is also part of the phase two package. We have not dealt in phase one with any of the reimbursement issues and we intend to deal with them all in phase two. I may have misheard him in terms of thinking that it would be a phase one issue. I think it is a phase two.