

tion. There was the emasculation of the Company of Young Canadians when it became inconvenient to honour its mandate. There was the subtle attack by the former minister of finance who has now gone to that preserve for defeated Liberal politicians. There was the sudden attack on the independence and capacity of the Economic Council of Canada. There is the attitude which is evident in this House right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but he seems to be ranging somewhat further afield than the purposes which are being considered, namely the amendments to the Canada Elections Act and certain other acts.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): I can respect that comment, Mr. Speaker. The point I am trying to make is there has been consistent confusion in the minds of the Liberal party between the partisan politics of that party and the public interest of the nation. This bill, if it is to have any sensible effect and treat all parties in this country equally, cannot remain as silent as the draft which was introduced.

The omission of any reference to the abuse of power by the party in government was not accidental. It has to be seen in the context of the way this government has acted in recent years. There has been the change in rules which has seriously limited the powers of parliament and the incident the other night when the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) frustrated the right of parliament to object to specific expenditures. It must be seen in the context of Information Canada with the simple and singular purpose of advancing the cause of the party in power. It must be seen in the context of the attitude of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), before his temporary repentant period, when he referred to members on this side of the House as nobodies.

This bill is one more weapon of the Liberal party against democracy. It limits the capacity of other parties to compete, leaving their own party and their own capacity to campaign untouched. This is the major weakness in a bill which is good in principle and which has several useful reforms which members of my party have advocated over the years. However, it has several flaws. We clearly need to give it detailed and careful consideration in committee.

This matter will not come back before us again. We must deal completely with it now. We must not deal with only half a bill such as the government has brought forward, which serves its own interest and leaves its own greatest weapon unhampered; we must deal with a bill that includes the reforms we intend to propose which will place real limits on the capacity for abuse by a party in power of the prerogatives of office. We are willing to prepare positive amendments to make it a good bill. I hope there is a general disposition in this House to support them in committee.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Peel South): Mr. Speaker, some of the proposals before this House tonight have been proposals of this party since prior to 1967. It is clear this party has been on record for a great period of time as favouring action to control expenses at the time of elections.

Election Expenses

I was interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) who paid tribute to the former member for Peel South. I, too, pay tribute to his efforts during the last parliament in attempting to produce legislation that would somehow control expenses. The government refused to pay attention to that legislation. It went to the country in October making sure there was no legislation that would in any way control election expenses, even though there was ample time in the four and one half years of misrule to do something about it.

The hon. member for Algoma suggested that one of the reasons people do not enter politics or political campaigns is the cost. To some extent that may be true. However, with respect to the major political parties I suggest that is largely nonsense. In many parts of Canada political candidates pay no money whatsoever out of their own pocket to run for office. The major discouragement is not the cost of the campaign but the cost when you come here at the end of the campaign.

Perhaps this is a bit off the topic, but in answer to the hon. member for Algoma I say it is about time members of parliament were paid salaries and allowances equal to a high school teacher, high school principal, a court clerk, junior provincial judge or some of the 10,000 civil servants who work for this government. One of the major problems in getting people of consequence and ability to run for political office is the enormous cost to them and their families to come to Ottawa and represent their area in the parliament of this country. Nevertheless, I must compliment the government for at last bringing forward a bill which will in some ways control election expenses.

This bill has been wanted by Canadians for a long time. It has been wanted by politicians for a long time. A great many of us are tired of the situation where we have to get in a spending rat race at the time of an election. With a limit on that spending rat race, it will be a lot easier for all of us.

This bill must go to committee as soon as possible. It should be studied by the committee during the summer recess so that the committee can examine evidence from across Canada, if necessary. The committee can report this bill back to the House immediately after vacation to be adopted and put into law as soon as possible. I do not want to see this whole matter dilly around in committee and have this parliament face another election without some control on elevation costs.

I want to set out some of the concerns I have which I hope the committee will consider when this matter is before them. One concern is the limitation of expenses where the limitation unduly loads the dice in favour of present members of parliament.

● (2110)

Does this limitation not mitigate against people who are attempting to gain office, trying to oust a sitting member or having a realistic crack at it? My own personal expenses in the last election amounted to some six or seven thousand dollars over and above the limit which would be allowed on the basis of population under this bill. I might not have had to spend that money had I been a little wiser or a little more experienced. But getting known in an urban area is difficult; it may be difficult in a