

through the requirement that details of sources of donations must be revealed. It will allow every Canadian the opportunity to look over the shoulders of the backroom boys as they go about their often misunderstood task of raising the money necessary to convey the message of a party and its candidates. It will compel disclosure of exactly who gives what to whom. Long-held suspicions will then either be confirmed or put to rest.

Further, the bill takes steps long overdue to reduce the rapidly escalating cost of elections. Strict limitation of the amounts which may be spent by parties and candidates will ensure less waste, a more carefully budgeted and planned campaign, less inundation of the average Canadian with repetitious messages and material. Above all, these limitations will reduce the discriminatory effect of wealth on the system. The wealthy man or woman will not be permitted to spend his or her way into office, nor will he or she enjoy the substantial advantage that money formerly held over the less well-to-do candidate. This end is further advanced by a system of partial reimbursement to parties and candidates from the public treasury of the costs of a campaign. Both the expenditure limits and the reimbursement amounts are geared to the number of voters that the candidate or party is attempting to reach. Allowances are made for the additional travel costs involved in schedule III and other geographically large ridings in our far northern areas.

● (1650)

A calculated attempt is made, through the disclosure of donations requirements and through amendments to the Income Tax Act, to broaden the base of financial support for our system. Donors to parties and candidates will enjoy the generous tax credit provisions proposed as changes to the Income Tax Act. We believe that, in principle, the best way to finance the system is by means of a freely given private donation. That is, it is preferable to fund candidates for public office voluntarily, rather than to require all of us to support all candidates through our tax dollars. We do, however, recognize the necessity to give everyone, regardless of wealth and financial ability, an opportunity to convey his or her message to the people of Canada.

Thus we have the combination of incentives to give voluntarily, combined with some degree of public reimbursement of expenses of candidates and parties. We suggest the discriminatory effect of tax credits, as opposed to tax deductions, on the other usual recipients of voluntary donations such as churches, charitable organizations, and so forth, which permit only a tax deduction, not a credit, can be remedied by a thorough study and possible amendment of the tax laws which affect them.

The bill is not perfect, Mr. Speaker. The government recognizes this fact by the inclusion of a provision that would refer certain sections back to a parliamentary committee, presumably the privileges and elections committee, for review after the first election held following the bill's coming into effect. But it is the result of nearly ten years of study, first by a royal commission, the Barbeau commission, then by three parliamentary committees, including one special committee and a plethora of academic and public studies. Reform is vitally necessary at this time even if not given additional impetus by the odious activi-

ties of many of those involved in the American political system. I urge all members of the House to accept the work of the committee so that the bill become law as soon as possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I will not try to achieve the feat that the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) has managed this afternoon, that is to speak on a motion for 40 minutes.

I would simply summarize the position that our group has taken during the debate on Bill C-203.

If you consider the number of amendments on the order paper, you realize that the bill now before us, although representing a necessary stage in the revision of the Canada Elections Act, is far from being perfect.

Unfortunately, through consideration in committee, not only could we make the government aware of the various problems but we also managed to improve the bill. Unfortunately, we have realized that the object of the bill is to guarantee to the individual the best opportunity to be well informed and to vote freely.

Reference has been made to broadcasting and to the media while the expenses of parties are allowed or restricted and some refund can be obtained from the government, all this to let the individual know what to think, how to judge such or such a proposal during an election campaign.

We also realize that Bill C-203 does not directly protect the individual by providing, for example, a fair control over information. Expenses are restricted and refunds to the various political parties are limited, but in no case is the individual allowed to obtain adequate information on the political choices which can be offered during an election campaign.

Unfortunately, in Bill C-203 one is not told how choices are made as regards television broadcasting. They are willing to say "subject to an agreement between parties", but one realizes that it has always been the same thing, that those agreements do not really represent the current election, but elections held two, three or four years ago.

We come to the discussion of the allocation of time between political parties. Nowadays, according to the new election legislation, the organization of an election campaign involves registration of parties, which respect the provisions of the law and get together in a committee meeting for the allocation of broadcasting time or of other media. Such an allocation is always done according to the number of members in each party before dissolution of Parliament.

In Bill C-203 there is no corrective measure to such irregularity as concerns the people because during an election it is not the number of elected members in the House that counts, but the number of candidates in each party.

One realizes also that expenses allowed under Bill C-203 are the result of a computation to complicate a procedure that could be quite simple. It was simply suggested, at the beginning of discussions on Bill C-203, that the government should pay the representatives of each registered party in the polls as well as the scrutineers.