

Private Members' Business

In this proposed amendment a party or an individual can certainly enter into the political process, which was mentioned a minute ago as not being the case. The fact is that they can, but they must be obliged to offer up their ideas to a majority of Canadians if they wish to be supported by the taxpayers' money as well as receive all the benefits of the House of Commons.

This bill proposes that if a group applies for party status in an election and cannot fulfil the requirements as stipulated under the amendment, then that said group cannot enter into the House of Commons as an official party and subsequently will not receive the rights and privileges normally ascribed to official parties. That does not preclude the fact that parties can begin.

In summary, we have to ask: Can regional parties be permitted to dominate a national Parliament? Can our country remain united if the presence of single issue parties grows in size and consequently further hinders the chance for effective consensus? Finally, can the government continue to afford the money it provides through political taxation deductions to those parties which fail to provide a national platform?

I am glad to have had the opportunity to speak in favour of this bill. I believe these are changes that will benefit our national process and better the value of government to the people of Canada.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am rather amazed at some of the commentary I have heard today and the great naivety of some of the members opposite when they talk about starting off with a full-blown political party that can go out and do battle from sea yea unto shining sea.

I worked for seven years trying to build a party. We started with a few hundred members and pulled it up to 120,000. If we had the type of legislation that is proposed in this bill, the Reform Party would not exist. It is just absolutely impossible. It is not physically within the realm of possibility to do this.

I am also a little surprised at the rather tenuous grip on Canadian history which is held by members opposite. All of the parties in this country, save the two old parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, grew out of small beginnings, usually because people felt disenfranchised and angry in small areas of the country.

I could cite first the Progressive Party, which was at one time by the way the official opposition here and was founded under those principles. There are also the CCF, Social Credit and of course Reform. None of this could ever possibly have happened if this bill had been in place 40, 50, 60 years ago, depending on the particular political movement we are looking at. It is absolutely out of the question.

Finally, I am sorry that the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain has left because I did want to comment specifically—

• (1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I want to remind colleagues of the practice of not mentioning the absence of members. Each one of us recognizes the demands on our time, of course, whether here on duty or from interest.

Given all the other demands on our time, we do not reflect or make mention of the absence of members. I want to make sure we are all cognizant of that.

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I assure you there was no pejorative intent. It is just that I wanted to speak to my opponent, if you will.

One of the justifications for this bill, if I understand correctly, is that taxpayers' money is handed out to officially recognized political parties and candidates of officially recognized political parties.

To me, the solution is quite obvious and quite simple. We do not kill the democratic process. We do not do away with the parties. We do away with the grants. We do not have to use federal money to support politicians. Let each support his own. Let 10,000 flowers bloom, if you will, but if a political party does not have the stature to get people, to give them money to pay for their election expenses, then it does not deserve to exist.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Not seeing other members wishing to speak there has been an indication from the mover of this private member's bill that he wishes to speak. I recognize him to close off debate.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to respond to some of the questions and points put forward by the opposition members.

First of all, the member from the Bloc Quebecois says the bill is not democratic. I do not understand what his definition of democracy means. If he means democracy is decided by 25 per cent of the population, certainly he is right. Democracy for me means the majority of the population.

He also accuses this bill of being Draconian. I wonder which is more Draconian, the bill itself or the intention of the opposition party here today to separate Quebec from Canada. The answer is very simple. All you have to do is walk around the country and find out how Canadians feel.

My colleague from the Reform Party said that the bill restricts individuals from running for any political office. That is not true. You can run for a political party or a political office, whatever you want. Nobody can take that away from you. That is in the charter. What I am saying in this bill is you cannot be recognized as an official party during the campaign.