

used in the subclause is "for the use of Candidates". I have been looking rather carefully at that question. When I say that there may be confusion rather than clarification, I must say that when one thinks of what is meant by the expression "for the use of candidates" in the election, one is led to wonder exactly what it does mean. It does not say for expenditure by the candidates. It does not say that that money is to form part of the money put in the hands of the official agent of a candidate. It does not say if party X makes a contribution of \$10,000 to a candidate that that \$10,000 must be spent as part of the election campaign of that candidate in that constituency. In fact, it does not say that the candidate would have to spend all of it, or any of it.

● (1220)

So, Mr. Speaker, if one considers this proposed subsection in relation to existing section 62 of the Elections Act in its present form, it must be realized that certainly the latter is of long standing in that act. This section is one which is very well understood by anyone who has been involved in elections because it is the section which has to do with the appointment, by a candidate, of an official agent, and the official agent's duties. It further sets out the requirement that payments made before, during or after an election by a candidate, or on behalf of a candidate, with certain exceptions, must be channeled through the official agent.

One must also look at this proposal and its import in relation to proposed section 61(1) of the Elections Act, which would be inserted immediately before section 62 if it passes. This provision relates to the amount of money that may be spent for a candidate's campaign. Mr. Speaker, when I try to put all these things together, and try to understand what the effect of this exempting proposal, which was inserted by the committee, would be, I must say that they all do not seem to go together very well.

The ceiling which is proposed of 30 cents per elector, as has been pointed out in previous discussion, makes provision for a sum of money running into a number of millions of dollars, certainly far beyond any kind of money which my political party has had at its disposal in an election. If the reports quoted and the statements made by earlier speakers in this debate are correct, it is a sum that approximates the maximum kind of expenditures that the Liberal party and the Conservative party have been able to make in past elections. When you consider the figure of \$4 million or \$5 million, whatever it may be, in relation to this proposed amendment, then it really appears that this proposed subclause as it stands is an escape hatch. I think it can be argued that it completely removes the ceiling from the amounts that a political party can raise and can dish out during an election. I submit that that is not in accordance with what some people have suggested is an objective of this bill, namely, to place some reasonable limit on the kind of money that Canadian citizens, directly and indirectly, are to be called upon to put forth during the conduct of an election.

The whole rationale of the debate that developed in this parliament, and in the country, about the limitation to a reasonable size of election expenses, is a recognition of the danger that if we allow a situation to continue in which elections are simply won by money rather than by the

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espousal of political ideas to gain the confidence of Canadian electors, then we are really striking pretty hard at the roots of democracy. So, Mr. Speaker, it is in that light that I have looked at this proposal which would exempt moneys given to candidates for their use. It is because I feel that the idea that they should not be included in the total which a political party is allowed to spend is wrong that I have put this amendment on the order paper.

Different parties have different methods of running elections. I do not think the House should seek to pass an Elections Act which would run counter to the particular arrangements which various political parties have worked out over a period of time for the conduct of elections, such as the way in which their candidates should be supported or, for that matter, the way in which they have decided that the funds necessary for the conduct of an election are to be raised and distributed. So, I am not prepared to quarrel with the inclusion of this clause, because if a political party wants to provide certain funds from its central body to candidates in constituencies X, Y and Z, my inclination is to say that that is its business.

In my constituency, we usually get a statement saying that we are expected to raise a certain quota of funds to assist the central agency of the party to carry on the general campaign across the country, so that the flow of funds has always been the other way. But if a political party chooses to have its structure so organized, and its fund raising so set up that it wants to send money from a central pot to candidates in constituencies, then so far as I am concerned I am prepared to allow it to continue to operate in that fashion. But if we are talking about a ceiling on election expenses, for the life of me I cannot see why that kind of money, spent by a political party, should be any more exempt from the general ceiling than any other kind of expenditure by that political party. That is why the removal of the word "not" would, in my opinion, be an improvement to the bill.

● (1230)

I noted, Mr. Speaker, that some points of order were raised at the outset of the discussion on this amendment when it was moved on my behalf by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), to the effect that the simple way to deal with the matter, if one does not like this section, rather than remove the word "not", was to vote against it. I was quite pleased that this was not considered a valid point of order. That was not the question at all. It is not a matter of voting for or against the total proposition that is involved. What we have before us through my amendment is not the question of whether a party should send funds to candidates but the simple proposition that those funds should be part of a total allowable ceiling of expenditures of a political party in the country. I think this is a valid question and that the House should consider it.

The ambiguity lies in the phrase "for the use of candidates". I would not make an issue of this if the House would agree to put the amount so contributed within the total ceiling. In other words, if the party chooses a person to run as a candidate in a constituency who cannot take time off to devote himself to a campaign, I suppose there is nothing immoral in a political party sending him \$10,000 so that he can devote himself to it. As the act stands now,