

Having considered some of the purposes which should be served by the campaign process, let us now consider what details should be included in drafting any law regarding campaigning. First, it should be designed so that it will encourage that type of campaign which will allow the voters to make a rational assessment of the character and policies of the candidates. As a corollary to encouraging the candidates to present their policies clearly, ample opportunity should be given to the electorate for receiving and assessing the candidate's messages. Second, the law should be such that it promotes a relative equality among the different candidates' potential for delivering their message to the voters; that is, one candidate's message should not be allowed to overwhelm and swamp the electorate because of its volume and form. Of course, if any candidate is of such merit that his message overwhelms the people because of its content, he is to be admired and, I hope, elected.

Finally—and I regret that this is a necessity—the competence of the Canadian people in the political processes of the country must be strengthened. Over the past decades there has been a marked decline in the confidence and trust which the people of the country have had in their legislators and in the elective process. While it is true that this decline in the trust of Canadian voters may be the result of political practices in other countries—practices which seem to have reached their nadir in the current Watergate affair and may be totally unwarranted in the Canadian situation—nevertheless we have to face this situation.

I should like to mention again that the hon. member for York North spoke of the mighty neighbour to the south. I am still puzzling whether he meant constitutionally the United States or whether he meant York South where he does have a mighty neighbour. In fact, he is far mightier than I am sure the hon. member had ever anticipated. Elections do have strange results when a person from one party can be of such consequence in another party. However, the Watergate affair may be totally irrelevant when we look at Canadian politics. Nevertheless, we must try to restore Canada's justifiable and deserved trust in our political system.

Let us now consider the bill which is before the House. It seems to have the following primary objectives. First, the limitation of the cost of campaigns. Next, the limitation of the time for campaigns or, at least, of the time during which the press, radio and television can be used for advertising. Also, an assurance that radio and television time will be available to all candidates and registered parties. Also, a reimbursement to all candidates for some of the expenses incurred in the campaign. Next, a disclosure of campaign expenses and of the major contributors and, finally, the encouragement of campaign contributions by private individuals through the granting of tax deductions.

● (1730)

Our party supports and has supported these laudable objectives. As the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) demonstrated yesterday, the reason we do not have legislation limiting election expenses right now is that the government has procrastinated and hesitated on this topic. In fact, all of the major objectives of

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this bill were anticipated by the PC submission of November 10, 1970. Unfortunately, in our proposal our party did not go to the length of suggesting a draft bill. If the government is going to continue to rob our platform and expects us to do all the thinking, then perhaps we should write the bills as well. As a result of not letting us write the bills, particularly in this instance, the government left to its own devices in drafting the bill has created loopholes, ambiguities and uncertainties.

It is precisely because we wish to see the objectives of the bill successfully implemented as effective legislation that we wish to see the bill given reflective and detailed consideration in committee. Furthermore, if the Canadian public sees politicians able to circumvent the clear intention of the bill through loopholes resulting from lack of careful consideration and the difficulties of having effective enforcement, their confidence will be further eroded. That would be worse than no legislation at all.

Looking at the details of the bill, there are several aspects which concern me greatly—aspects of detail, not of principle. Firstly, with the increased responsibility for keeping account of campaign finances it will be difficult to continue the present system of having candidates police one another. As the hon. member for Frontenac-Lennox and Addington (Mr. Alkenbrack) mentioned, this business of candidates policing one another has got to the extent that it has rendered the old act almost unworkable. Candidates should not be expected to lay charges against each other in order to have the law enforced. Yet as a member of the privileges and elections committee who felt that the Chief Electoral Officer was obliged to see the law was enforced in these matters, I was surprised to discover that if a candidate broke the law he felt it was up to a private citizen to lay charges.

Would it not be better for the candidates and the public alike if a registrar of campaign finances were appointed to carry out a wide range of investigative duties? Not only would this relieve candidates of an unpleasant task but it would also help ensure effective enforcement of the legislation. And effective enforcement of fair legislation must be our concern as it is the best way to reinforce the justifiable pride which Canadians should take in their electoral processes.

Secondly, if we are to have as an objective the divulgence of the source of all major contributions, this bill appears to have several serious loopholes. As has been mentioned, there is nothing to prevent an organization which wishes to do so to contribute \$100 to each riding. However, there is a far more serious loophole with respect to secret contributions. There seems to be nothing to stop a bagman from collecting funds which could then be turned over to either a candidate or a party. Granted, the total of the sums given would be known, as well as the identity of the bagman. However, the identity of the donors, whether individuals or organizations, would remain secret.

It is just such loopholes as these which can lead to a flaunting of the clear intent of the bill and to disillusionment with the political process among the Canadian people. I expect that the tax provision with respect to individual donors might prevent this happening because they would all want individual receipts, but large corporations and unions could very easily contribute to a bagman,