

minister the debate could not have taken place today or tomorrow. I would inquire whether there is unanimous consent to have the debate on the basis suggested by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, we would be quite prepared to do so. We consider it an emergency as long as the Minister of Justice is dealing with the issue.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, obviously, since we have already indicated our agreement, we stand by that. But on a point of privilege—and I call it a point of privilege because of the reactions that have come from the other side—it was not our request that this matter be put off until Monday. The request came from the minister responsible for the Wheat Board. If there is any criticism from that side about it, we would be prepared to have the debate take place tonight, or right now if the minister would agree.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege, the substance of the point made on this subject as first put to Your Honour included the need for an announcement on the subject matter. I would just like to add that at least I have the support of the Premier of Saskatchewan in not making that announcement immediately.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We should not have the debate now.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, our party was consulted about the need for such an emergency debate and we agree with the Chair that if there is any urgency, the debate should be held as soon as possible, that is today.

We will be pleased to co-operate so that hon. members from the west may get justice. We want to take this opportunity to point out to them that when we ask, as we have already done, for an emergency debate on a policy concerning the east, we would like them to extend the same courtesy to us.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before I recognize the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe perhaps I might inquire whether there is unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe.

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker, this question is to the government House leader. Just in case he does not read *Hansard*, I wonder if he would pay attention to the fact that the Minister of National Health and Welfare said he would introduce the bill on family allowances on Monday. Would he confirm that?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare proposes to have the bill on the order paper very shortly, hopefully on Monday.

Election Expenses

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTION EXPENSES

PROVISION OF PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PARTIES FOR CERTAIN BROADCASTING TIME

The House resumed, from Wednesday, July 11, consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen that Bill C-203, to amend the Canada Elections Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Income Tax Act in respect of election expenses, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I rise to deal with that part of the bill which is concerned with the limitation of expenditures to be made by individual candidates in a general election. I do so because I believe, after very considerable experience in this regard, that if this matter is handled in a better way than it is at present or is proposed in this bill, we stand a much better chance of obtaining the best possible people in the country to present themselves for election to this House of Commons.

Today, in a general election a candidate usually ends up spending far more than he had any intention of spending when he accepted the nomination. When the election is called, the candidate and his committee sit down to work out a budget which they think is satisfactory to elect the candidate and which they believe is a reasonable expenditure of funds which they intend to seek during the election campaign. As the election progresses, the various candidates in the ridings try to outdo each other with elaborate mailing pieces, radio presentation, television presentation and other forms of advertising to further their candidature. As one puts forward one presentation, the others counter and try to do a little better and things mount as the campaign goes along.

The result is that when the election is over, the candidate usually finds that he or she has spent twice or three times the amount of money that was planned when the election was called, and they end up with a very serious debt which they personally have to pay off. It may take them very many years to pay off that debt.

Mr. Speaker, the knowledge that this sort of thing very often happens in a riding campaign is what deters excellent potential candidates who have considerable ability, but rather limited finances, from offering themselves for election to parliament. When that happens, the country loses. I believe the only way we can effectively remedy this situation is to set strict limits on the amount of money which a candidate is allowed to spend during an election campaign.

I suggest that we now consider what the bill proposes in this regard. The bill proposes limits as follows: \$1 each for the first 15,000 voters on the voters' list, 50 cents each for the next 10,000 voters on the voters' list, and 25 cents each for all remaining voters. In order to find out what this would amount to in the average riding in Canada, I spoke to the Chief Electoral Officer and was advised that the average number of voters on the voters' list in the average riding in Canada today is almost exactly 50,000. By simple