

Election Expenses

included at page 23 of the amended bill. This is subclause (3)(7) where it is suggested that the auditor's report received by a returning officer from an official agent will be published at the expense of the Chief Electoral Officer. The amendment obviously intends to make it clear that the expenditure for the publication of these reports will be on the shoulders or the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Officer rather than the candidate.

My impression was that this amendment was intended to make clear the intent of the bill now before the House. Even if that is the case, the point of the hon. member might still be well taken in that additional expense, either provided by the amendment or the bill itself, does not appear to be covered by the recommendation. In this instance, it would not be the report of the committee or the bill as reported by the committee which would be at fault, but the recommendation which formed the basis of the original bill.

It may well be that some consideration should be given to a closer study of the recommendation to see whether it is large enough in scope to include this expense and, if not, whether with the consent of the House, I assume, an amendment might be obtained from His Excellency. I am not suggesting that is necessary, but it is a point which ought to be considered.

The second point raised by the hon. member is not quite as clear. He referred to a part of the bill at page 25 of the legislative proposal. Subclause (1)(b)(i) refers to the postal cost of mailing one item which is assumed to be eight cents under present regulations and (ii) eight cents for each of the first 25,000 names. That is a total of 16 cents under the present rules and regulations. The royal recommendation does refer to the fact there is 16 cents which is approved for payment by His Excellency.

The hon. member for Skeena suggests there may be a change in the postal rates. Perhaps next year it will be 10 cents and 20 years from now it will be 20 cents. At the same time, the hon. member will appreciate there is always the hope that instead of being eight cents next year, it will be six cents. I wonder whether it is not incumbent on the Chair, on the House, or on whoever drafts the recommendations in consultation with His Excellency to proceed on the basis of the law as it currently stands on the statute books.

● (1800)

At the same time, I repeat that in my view the point is interesting and well taken, though perhaps not as clear as the first one. If it were possible to change the recommendation to make sure that it covers not only the present situation but the situation as it might arise in the future, then such an amendment should be made. But I doubt that hon. members would wish to impose this very difficult task on His Excellency. I would think we should be content to look a little more closely at the first point to which I referred and consider whether it might not be possible to include a few words in the recommendation which would ease the hon. gentleman's procedural conscience so that we might go on to debate this bill and the amendments and motions related thereto in full knowledge that all the procedural niceties have been observed.

[Mr. Speaker.]

I thank the hon. member for having brought these points to the attention of the Chair. Perhaps they will be helpful not only in this present instance but in future instances when hon. members such as the hon. member for Skeena propose amendments which do not conform with His Excellency's recommendation.

It being five minutes past six o'clock, the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): When the House adjourned at six it was considering at the report stage motions Nos. 3 and 4 in the name of the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight), motion No. 5 in the name of the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), and motion No. 6 in the name of the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters).

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak very briefly on this matter before us. If I may make a few introductory remarks, I should like to say that the reason I became a member of the committee was that this bill was referred to it. I, personally, requested that I become a member of the committee because I thought that this bill was not appropriate for Canadians or in their best interest. I felt that the principle of the bill went against the human nature of the people of this country, their traditions and a number of the institutions that we have.

However, I became involved in the debates in the committee and I can indicate, as my colleague did, that there were 51 meetings in all. This committee sat three times a day every Tuesday and Thursday, with some additional meetings added, from November 15 until last Thursday. The committee sat from eleven o'clock in the morning virtually through until eight o'clock at night. It is correct to say that there were 19 experts on the committee for whom politics was the very essence of their existence. Since they had all been successfully elected, they felt that they knew best how to frame a bill dealing with electoral expenses.

● (2010)

I think it would be fair to say that anyone who has worked on the committee, or anyone who was interested in the committee and expressed a belief in the various possibilities of the measures included in this bill, could advance the argument that the bill, as originally presented, was dramatically altered. Suffice it to say that the original bill had 38 pages and some 150 amendments which, worked out mathematically, amount to some 101 amendments to the original bill. I think it would be appropriate to say that this bill was changed or it was suggested that it should be changed drastically by the committee.

During the committee stage, members of the NDP party introduced a number of amendments to the bill. During the meetings of the committee we had long and serious discussions about proposed amendments put forward by members of the NDP. We now have some 42 amendments