

Government Orders

The reality is that a large number of employees work for Inco, Hudson's Bay Mining and Smelting—pardon me, take back Hudson's Bay Mining and Smelting. It does fall under federal legislation. Many large industries fall under provincial legislation.

If we are going to guarantee people who work under the Canada Labour Code the right to run for election, then surely we should say that all employees across this land must be given the same right. That is only equitable.

How do you explain the situation where you have two people working in the same hallway? Perhaps one works for a corporation that comes under federal regulation. That person is allowed to run. Somebody else working for a larger corporation but one that comes under provincial legislation does not have that same right.

The royal commission spent \$16 million to \$20 million of Canadian taxpayers' money. One of its recommendations was that all Canadians be granted leave for the purpose of seeking election.

In a similar matter, for the federal government's own employees we believe it is not only important that they have the right to run for election and be granted leave to run but the present rules are restrictive. It means that once they are nominated they must immediately take a leave of absence, even if that election is not held for another year or a year and a half. That is completely ludicrous.

• (2020)

Right now someone who is the janitor in a federal government building and received a nomination now would immediately have to go on a leave of absence. That person is not in a policy-making position. That person is not representing the federal government in such a way that his position is incompatible with that of being a candidate for a political party. We should certainly change our own laws to make sure that candidates can maintain their present positions until the election is finally called.

There are a number of other changes that we would like to see made. When we go into committee on this over the next couple of days the New Democratic Party caucus will be making a number of amendments and

hopefully the government and the government backbenchers will support us on them.

The important thing is that this is just the first stage. We know that the most controversial issues are still yet to come from committee. We saw the reaction when we put a very small limit on third party advertising and restricted groups and individuals to spending \$1,000 if they are promoting or opposing a particular party or a candidate.

I recognize my time is running out. I will try to get through all these items quickly but they are very important items.

We saw the reaction. We saw the reaction from the newspapers, the broadcasters, and the National Citizens' Coalition. We had people in front of the House of Commons committee saying this is a restriction on their freedom of expression.

It was quite ironic that the spokesperson from the daily newspapers and the spokesperson from the weeklies were both from the province of Quebec. They were ranting and raving and said that even this limit is too much and we are really restricting freedom of expression.

They had to be reminded that in the province in which they live, in which they have lived for many years, there is a complete prohibition on third parties, special interests or others advertising in any way, shape or form. This great threat to freedom of expression is something they have lived with for 20 years, something they had not complained about and had forgotten about.

They were asked a subsequent question. I asked them: Was there a great public outcry in Quebec? Were they saying that their rights, their freedoms, and their right to express themselves were being completely hampered by Quebec law? They both had to admit that does not seem to be the problem in Quebec. There is not a great outcry. The publishers had forgotten the rules they were living under and obviously the public itself did not feel that it was unduly restricted.

Some people will say that people cannot buy an election. That might be true to a degree. However if we take a look, as the royal commission did and others have done, at the various referendums that have been held in