

Canada Elections Act

Saanich (Mr. Munro) that if the Hon. Member for Spadina wants to be irreverent, he is entirely free to do so. Irrelevance, however, is a matter that concerns the Chair.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, if that is the best that the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich can do with either grammar, spelling or humour, I hope he will wait until another Hon. Member speaks before trying it again.

The point that I make is quite relevant to the point at issue. The point that I am making is that the ability of a candidate to spare \$2,000, as one of the previous speakers said, in fact the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) said, is partly related to the wealth of his friends. If he has not got it, he can get it from his friends. These are the friends of the Conservative candidate.

I will come to the friends of the Liberal candidate. They can provide that \$2,000 very readily, and when people donate as they do to the Liberal Party, not locally but nationally, in the range \$15,000, \$20,000, or \$50,000, that provides no end of \$2,000 deposits. It can provide \$5,000 deposits.

An Hon. Member: What about the unions?

Mr. Heap: My point is that the ability of a few corporations to fund candidates goes against the principle of equality.

Somebody opposite asked about the unions. You can look through the NDP lists and you will not find such large contributions from any one union as you have from the Bank of Montreal, Canada Packers, Canadian Pacific, and so on, to the Liberal Party, which are the ones that I have just read.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that to make money qualification the basis for excluding certain candidates means that the candidates with rich friends get in and candidates without rich friends are severely hindered. If what had been proposed was an increase in the number of nominators, I would look at the matter much differently. As our ridings have grown, both urban and rural, the number of electors in each has grown, and if it were argued that a candidate, to validate his seriousness, should have more than 25 names, I think most Members of the House would be willing to give that serious consideration. However, it seems that even if this subject is referred to the committee, that will not be the subject matter of consideration. Only the money qualification, as I understand it, would be the subject matter of consideration.

Considering the seriousness and the gravity of the restriction that is being proposed here in this motion, I think it is quite out of proportion as a remedy to the problem that is alleged to exist. I have been in ridings where there were several small candidates, you can call them nuisance candidates, you could call them fun candidates. I think the Rhino has often saved an otherwise tiresome all-candidates meeting from being completely boring. I think it provides a little bit of fun and lightness. In the old days, the fun and lightness in an election campaign were carried on in different ways, the sort of thing that Stephen Leacock wrote about in "Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town". Right now it is done quite well sometimes by the fun candidates. There are other candidates who know that they

will not be elected but they think they have something to say, not by spoiling a ballot but by speaking to interested electors. I think they should have a chance. I do not think they should be excluded on the grounds that neither they nor their friends have \$2,000 to lose. Therefore, I and my colleagues will be voting against this Bill.

I was asked, prior to this debate, whether I would favour withdrawal, but that is not what has been put before us now. What has been put before us now is referral. That is a horse of a different colour, and I think it would be best simply to put the matter to a vote.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In view of the Hon. Member's remarks, if he wishes to move an amendment to the Bill, taking out the deposit and substituting the number of signatories on the nomination papers instead, I will be glad to second his amendment.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, I wish this suggestion had been made a little earlier. I am not prepared to say, just out of thin air, X number of voters. I think a matter as serious as this deserves more than 30 seconds' consideration. I would be interested to hear a discussion of this subject but I am not prepared at the present time to state a figure in a motion for amendment.

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity of speaking on this Private Members' Bill. I intend to speak for only a very few minutes.

I agree with the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) and I agree with the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), with one exception. I agree with the \$2,000 fee, but I cannot agree with the figure of 500 that the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi threw out for the number of people to sign the nomination papers, because in my riding of Malpeque there are 32,000 people. In other ridings across the country there are as many as 130,000 people. It would be very difficult, in smaller ridings with smaller numbers of people, to come up with 500 names on the list for nomination. I would suggest possibly a percentage of the number of electors on the previous voters' list, let us say 10 per cent. Even that is too high for my riding, when I stop to think about it. But a percentage of the number of people on the electors' list should be required to sign nomination papers, rather than a specified figure of 500 people. As I said earlier, in a small riding 500 names are very difficult to obtain, but in a large riding of 130,000, 500 is a very insignificant number.

Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this matter has been up for debate on a number of occasions in the House. I guess the first Bill that I have knowledge of is the one put forward by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), which is Bill C-583. Now we have Bill C-335, which is virtually the same Bill. I guess it is exactly the same Bill, it is couched in the same terms.