

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will try.

Mr. Abbott: I just want to be clear. Does the hon. member regard the two principal objections, the indexation and the question of anonymous gifts, as the totality of his objection? I wonder whether he raises a third one as well. I happen to share his view about the anonymous donation part. I wonder if he considers the indexation provisions in equal fashion, as a betrayal of the principles of the bill, or is he speaking mainly of the anonymous donation provision as being a betrayal of the principles that he feels the bill raises?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. gentleman's question. I regard the anonymous donation provision as a betrayal of the original intent and purpose of the legislation. As far as indexing is concerned, I regard that as a betrayal of the government's position with regard to restraint. The government has asked Canadians to tighten their belts and do a host of other things, yet in terms of political parties which are at the heart and centre of our political system and the system in this House of Commons, they are prepared to go outside the work of the committee and suddenly index to the cost of living the election expenses. The government betrays itself there.

To answer the minister's question fully, by adding those two provisions without consultation with the other parties, and after the considerations of the all-party committee, it has betrayed that committee and betrayed the spirit, intent and co-operation that was to have existed in the House. I know the minister's feelings. I am pleased with his interjection. I do not say that in any partisan way. I say that the government of which he is a member should withdraw the bill as it now stands. They should review the proceedings of the all-party committee and consult the Chief Electoral Officer to see whether this bill is in keeping with the intent of the committee. The minister and the government should satisfy themselves. They should realize there is disappointment in the community about this bill.

There is general support in the community for the Election Expenses Act which provides less opportunity for those who are not well-intentioned to misuse it. It is really in that sense that I entered the debate. I noticed the minister was listening very carefully to what I was saying, and I appreciate that very much. I appreciate the minister's expression of support at least for the deletion of anonymous donations provision. I do not presume to try to affect his thinking in terms of other matters. He, as a minister, has to examine the philosophy and approach of his government to spending by government, and see how that equates to the principle of indexing in this bill. I really do not think it does.

It would be absolutely unconscionable for any minister of the Crown to talk—and it seems to me it has been confirmed as loose talk—about freezing, changing or in any way affecting social benefits without at the same time, and almost in the same breath, certainly from the same treasury benches, talking about unfreezing political benefits. That is the essence of it. It

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was in that sense I raised the question of their using the President of the Treasury Board. I hope that the interest of the minister in this instance will cause him to speak to his colleagues, the Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Cafik), the deputy House leader, and consult with the Deputy Prime Minister, the leader of the government in the House, in whose name Bill C-5 stands and, indeed, with the Prime Minister, to see whether it is appropriate. Subject to a review of that kind by the standing committee, I would think passage of a bill containing those offending provisions would be very difficult to achieve. However, that is subject to a review by the committee, over which he and I have no control.

That is our general approach to the legislation. We regard it as a very significant bill, for the positive things which it does. However, we think it is a retrograde step in that it offends the original sense of openness with which we all approached this legislation, and it offends the policy of restraint which has been the preaching hallmark, certainly not the factual hallmark, of this government. May I call it five o'clock?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions and public bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

SUGGESTED ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION SCHOOL

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of establishing in the National Capital Region, a national administration school for its public servants, which would be a first step toward the creation of an agency responsible for everything in the field of training and development of public servants.

● (1702)

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We were served notice a little while ago, before orders of the day, that the motion we would be debating today was the one standing in the name of the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert), motion No. 6, concerning the advisability of establishing an office of education. It was on that basis that preparations were made for today's private members' hour. That is the word which I had from the government.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, if I may explain, the motion standing in my name on the order paper is one which I presented in the last session of parliament. With the dying of the order paper in that session, my motion also died. It had been accepted unanimously by the House and referred to the miscellaneous estimates committee for study.