

their decision as to which party should be given support at election time.

I was about to deal with the question of the reimbursement to candidates of some of their expenses. I have noted that not only the hon. member for Peel South but the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Forest) has taken exception to the formula that is in the bill before us which provides for a percentage reimbursement of certain kinds of expenses. Both those members took the view that we hold, namely, that the formula proposed by the committee over which the hon. member for Peel South presided was a much better one. It was to the effect that a certain minimum amount per voter should be made available to each candidate, at least to each candidate who can get a certain percentage of the vote, and the figure of 20 per cent is mentioned in the bill. At any rate, that kind of proposition has some element of fairness in it.

If there are 45,000 voters in a constituency and there are three or four parties running, and you give to each of those candidates a sufficient number of cents per voter so that the message can go out—as it were, enough cents to get out one piece of literature or what have you—at least you are providing some sort of equality among those three or four candidates. But when in place of that you say to the one who spent the most on a certain type of expenditure that he gets 25 per cent of it back, and to the fellow who did not have the money to spend that he gets little or nothing back, you are certainly not establishing any measure of equality among election candidates about which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) spoke.

Mr. Yewchuk: How is it not equal?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should have made his speech this afternoon. He is trying to make it on my time. He chose to move the adjournment of debate and lost his right to continue speaking. I think he should abide by the decision he took.

This formula for reimbursement, I suggest, is a terribly deficient one. I come back again to the fact that the two main purposes of this bill are supposed to be, first, to control election expenses and, second, to achieve some kind of equality among the candidates. The attempt to control expenses is completely vitiated by the first two deficiencies I have mentioned, and the attempt to achieve any kind of equality is completely missed by a formula based on a percentage proposition rather than on a formula that would provide equally for the various candidates in the field.

• (2030)

We think also, Mr. Speaker, that the failure of the bill to impose any kind of limitation or prohibition on foreign contributions—from foreign corporations, foreign trade unions, foreign individuals or what have you—is a weakness. This is a Canadian piece of legislation concerned about the election in Canada, by the people of Canada, of the Canadian parliament and we do not think that it should be possible for elections in this country to be influenced by money from abroad. Some of the studies that have led to this piece of legislation strongly recommend that there be a prohibition against the granting of

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income tax exemptions, and so on, for foreign contributions and we regret very much that this bill as it now stands has not implemented that recommendation.

For these four reasons as well as others, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that this bill is very deficient and that it ought not to be proceeded with at this time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have no hesitation in saying that it contains some things that are good. I think the attempt to provide some equality in terms of broadcasting is a good feature and I think the whole attempt to cope with the problem is good. There are a number of things in the bill that are good. But we have had to study the matter in depth, as is our responsibility, and when we look at the little bit of good and the tremendous amount of bad in the bill we feel that it would be better to have no election expenses bill at all than to be saddled with this one.

As I said, this bill has four main weaknesses, in that it does not control expenses because it places no limits on the parties, in that it does not provide for disclosure of contributions and thus leaves us open to all kinds of abuse; because it has the wrong formula for reimbursing candidates and because it places no limitations on contributions by foreign bodies or individuals. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we urge this House not to be fooled by a piece of legislation that is being paraded under its title, that is being sold to the country simply because it is called a bill to control election expenses when it does not do that at all.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We think it should be sent back to the drawing board and we call upon the government to do that. Toward that end, and as I indicated before five o'clock that I would do, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett):

That Bill C-211 be not now read a second time but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the government should give immediate consideration to the presenting of a bill that will provide effective control over election expenses, by establishing reasonable limitations on the amounts parties as well as candidates may spend, and by providing for the full disclosure of contributions to political candidates and parties both at the time of and between election campaigns.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will have more to say later about the substance of the hon. member's speech. I should like especially to speculate on why the New Democratic Party made a somersault on this bill over the weekend. What forces made the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) disown the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) who told us—

Mr. Lewis: Order. Just speak to your point of order and don't get into a speech.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Stick to your point of order, and stick to the truth.