

Election Expenses

vagueness. Some hon. members did not see how they could support such an amendment. The members of the Conservative Party said it is a good amendment, they endorse it, they embrace it, they are Canadian, but they do not see how they can support this good amendment because it is too vague and they do not understand it.

I tried to explain to the hon. member in committee and to the hon. member for Hamilton West and others in the House last night that the original phrasing of the amendment was based on advice from lawyers who were schooled in the area of drafting legislation. However, they persisted in saying it was too vague and needed some points of clarification, expansion and interpretation. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), in consultation with other members, tried to spell out what was meant by the phrase "Canadian sources". The subamendment spells out as clearly as possible what is meant by "Canadian sources". The Conservative Party spokesmen say that is a good idea, but they do not think they can support it because it is not clear enough. They say it was better the way it was previously. In other words, we should not have moved the subamendment. They cannot have it both ways.

● (1750)

The indication is that hon. gentlemen in the Conservative Party are using a spurious element of ignorance, confusion and misunderstanding to cover up the fact that they wish to continue to get their funds from outside this country. They wish to continue to have their bagmen pick up Yankee dollars as in the past, but they do not want the general public to know this. So they take two stances. The amendment was good, but they could not support it because it was not clear enough. The subamendment was good but, again, they could not support it because it was too clear. We know where the Conservative Party gets its funds; they get them to the extent of about \$4 million collected for the last national campaign—

Mr. Crouse: By voluntary contributions.

Mr. Howard: By voluntary contributions, that is right; and that is exactly the position with respect to the NDP.

Mr. Crouse: No way. You use coercion.

Mr. Howard: I always know when the truth bites home: the Tories start to chatter like magpies, especially the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse). But it is documented. Corporate industry and the financial community centred in Toronto is the principal source of Conservative Party funds. However, the party has the benefit of considerable help from donors in the province of Alberta. This does not surprise us, because Alberta has these links with Gulf Oil, Shell Oil, Imperial Oil, Texasgulf, and so on. Then again, the party receives some assistance from Nova Scotia, not to speak of monetary assistance from corporations in Hamilton, London and Montreal. The bagmen have moved from oil capital to insurance and trust company capital.

Conservative candidates have filed returns of election expenditures under the Elections Act. The name of one trust company comes to mind, the Victoria and Grey Trust Company, as having made a contribution to the Conservative Party. The Victoria and Grey Trust Company denied that they had made a contribution. However, the Conservative candidate, who was subsequently elected to parliament, filed a declaration saying the Victoria and Grey Trust Company had contributed to his campaign fund, and surely we must accept his statement.

The point was made clearly in an intervention by my hon. friend from Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) when the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Blenkarn) was talking about campaign funds from international unions and international corporations. He indicated we would not have to worry about that in future because in this bill we are embarking on a process of putting our hands into the public till and considering the payment of election expenses out of the public treasury. We are demanding that the taxpayers subsidize political parties and candidates, though not paying the whole shot, not preventing anyone else from contributing. This is the source of funds about which the Conservative Party is concerned, funds which have their origin in the United States. Those who donate these funds will now be too embarrassed to disclose them. Either the money will come in through the back door—

An hon. Member: It will to your party, through the international unions.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. member had listened to me last night, he might have some understanding of the position. I am talking about the party to which the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) belongs. That is the party which has set itself up as Mr. Clean in this debate.

An hon. Member: The only one.

Mr. Howard: The money will still come in through the back door, or it will not come in at all and the shortfall will be made up by the taxpayer. Further on in the bill there is a provision we have to consider, in terms of funds to pay 50 per cent of the shot for national advertising, national television, national radio.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock!

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I first express to the government House leader and his party the fondest hope that they have a successful Christmas party tonight, as we did a short time ago. May I ask a not unrelated question? What will we be doing tomorrow?

Mr. MacEachen: I thank the hon. member for his good wishes. Maybe he will turn up; we shall be glad to see him. Tomorrow we shall continue with the same item, election expenses.

Mr. Howard: Good.

At six o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.