

Private Members' Business

A combination of issues could cause problems that might cause non-federalists in a particular party or province to form a party, such as what happened in Quebec.

My discussions with the Bloc Québécois suggested that its biggest issues are the financial ruin of this country and its desire not to go down with the ship and the need for a province, the Bloc's, to have more say over policies and issues that affect it in a different way than it does other provinces.

Had the federal government addressed these genuine concerns which affect all provinces and the people in them, the Bloc may never have emerged. As members can see, it is not hard to create an environment in which the emergence of a single interest or regional party can happen.

There is another aspect to this bill that must also be examined. If passed, this bill would tend to ensure that no new parties ever got started again.

• (1830)

Given that the emergence of the Reform Party wiped out one old line party of the past and threatens to continue the existence of the one remaining party of the past, it is not too difficult to see the real reason for this bill. That is neither fair nor democratic. At any time if the party of the day loses touch with the people it is supposed to be serving, the capability of the system to give birth to a new political movement to replace outdated ones must not be suppressed.

There is yet another flaw in the drafting of this bill. The requirements for registration of a party include the number of provinces in which the party must nominate candidates, seven, and the need for those provinces to comprise at least 50 per cent of the Canadian population. It would be possible for a party to run in Ontario and east, including one of the territories, without any representation in any of the four western provinces. If that did not create regional alienation I do not know what would.

The hon. member from the government side of the House would be better to withdraw this bill. He should concentrate instead on getting his government to get on with addressing the real reasons for regional alienation and general dissatisfaction with the way the old line parties of the past have run this country into the ground.

The governments should deal with the pressing issues of runaway spending, out of touch immigration policies, an out of control criminal justice system, and social programs that are facing financial ruin. If it does not know how to do this, we do, and you know who we are. We are the party that started off as a regional party and grew to our current national status because the other regions were fed up with the old line parties just as the west was.

If the real needs and desires of the people of Canada were met there would be no reason for this bill to be discussed.

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay special tribute to my colleague from Don Valley North. I commend him in this House where we have members opposite with simplistic answers to some very difficult questions.

I hear the proposals they put forward, that there is no vision. The people of Canada spoke in the last election and they elected 175 Liberals. They asked us on behalf of all of Canada to come forth with a vision.

This private member's bill is there specifically to deal with the problem that has arisen in this House. Never in the history of Canada have we ever had the arrangement where the Leader of the Opposition did not want to be Prime Minister of this country.

We are reviewing this bill today, a bill that puts forth a challenge to our democratic process. However it does not challenge the definition of what constitutes a party in a federal election and the obligation that party carries to all Canadians.

Members opposite may say to be careful of regionalism. I say that perhaps we should challenge the definition of a party in a federal election. After all the taxpayers carry a heavy burden for the election and the benefits the official parties are allowed.

Presently the system allocates a spending level for parties which directly relates to the number of candidates in the field in any given election. If that party spends more than 10 per cent of its spending limit it is entitled to 22 per cent return.

Should the taxpayers pay for parties which either fail or refuse to represent themselves on a national scale? How can we ask the entire country to support a party that has no desire to represent the views of Canadians from coast to coast? Our Parliament assembled here in the House today strives to achieve the best for all Canadians, or at least that is how it is supposed to work.

It leads us to ask the question: What is an effective Parliament? Does an effective Parliament have an opposition that fails to effectively scrutinize the government's actions in the interests of the majority of Canadians? I would say no, no indeed. There is an important role to be played by the opposition to any government. The government needs to be asked tough questions and be made to answer them.

• (1835)

However what happens when the questions being asked are continually only for the benefit of one interest group and not in the interests of all Canadians? In that scenario I do not think the Canadian people get a fair bang for their buck.