

delayed until 1979. To a government which spends money like water, \$11 million might not seem much. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that to Canadians who want to see the exercise of some restraint in federal spending, \$11 million means a great deal.

I should like to make the point again that there is no mystery at all as to the reason for this measure being brought in. It is no secret at all that the party in office, simply through being in office, has a greater opportunity to raise national election funds than do parties on this side of the House. What the government party is doing here is trying to change the election law so that it can spend more money to influence the decisions of Canadian electors once an election is called. They are not prepared to rely simply on their record—we can understand that. What they are looking for now is an authorizing law that will allow them to spend more money to attempt to buy the support and the votes of the people of Canada. That, I must point out, comes from a government which took great pride two or three years ago in introducing the election expenses legislation. It argued then that it wanted to impose some sanity upon the excessive expenditures made in election campaigns in the past. Here we have the principle enunciated two or three years ago undermined and betrayed by the very government that took credit for it then.

● (1542)

The existing limits have been tested in by-elections in Canada and have been found satisfactory to all parties. The previous ceilings have never been tested in a general election. There is no evidence that they will be insufficient. There is every evidence that they will, in fact, have the effect of ensuring some fairness and sanity to election campaign expenditures. Despite that, the government of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, wants to use the law to raise the limit so that it can spend more money to attempt to buy the votes of the Canadian people.

That is the first matter. It is the first departure that we are not prepared to accept. We want it taken out of this bill before we are prepared to limit debate—I say that to the minister—and have the matter approved finally by the House of Commons.

The other matter is even more dangerous. That is the matter which relates to anonymous contributions. Again, some history from the all-party committee. The all-party committee wanted written into the law of Canada an amendment that would instruct that all anonymous contributions, whether to a party, candidate or organization representing a party, would be paid over to the Receiver General of Canada. In other words, anybody who came to the committee room of a political party with a little brown bag full of money would not be able to have that little brown bag go anonymously to that party. That money, in the view of the election law, would have to be properly contributed. It would go to the public revenue of Canada.

That was the recommendation of the all-party committee. It was the recommendation of Liberal members of parliament

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serving on that committee, as well as the officers of that party. It was the recommendation that went to cabinet and which cabinet struck down. The cabinet of Canada, for reasons we hope future speakers in this debate will elaborate on, wants to have a situation where it is possible for anonymous contributions to be made.

I want again to bring the House of Commons back to an understanding of the reasons we all supported so enthusiastically the reforms introduced some years ago to election expenses law. There were a number of aspects of that law. One was that it was going to make public party financing, which too often had been private before. Hand in hand with the principle of making party financing public and letting Canadians see what goes on in their political process. Provisions were brought in which would extend tax credits to Canadians who wanted to contribute to individual political parties, as well as provisions to provide for partial public financing of election campaigns.

What we have here is an indication that the Liberal party is quite prepared to accept public financing of election campaigns. It is quite prepared to have tax credits extended to people who contribute to political parties. However, it is not prepared to eliminate anonymous contributions, which have been the bane of our political system.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I go back to some of the statements made by the then, and again, President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) who piloted the original legislation through the House. On July 10, 1973, the President of the Privy Council said:

Among the major changes incorporated in the new bill are the requirement for full disclosure and the imposition of a ceiling on campaign spending by political parties.

That was one of the principles of the legislation spelled out by the man who guided it through the House of Commons. Now, that principle is being abandoned. There is not full disclosure when you have anonymous contributions. There is not full disclosure when the Liberal party brings into the Parliament of Canada a provision to allow shadowy figures carrying little brown bags of money to make those contributions to the Liberal party without their names being recorded. I want again to quote from the proposals of the then, and again, President of the Privy Council. He said:

These reform proposals—

As I recall the proposals, I believe he emphasized the word “reform”.

—will remove much of the secrecy from the financial affairs of political parties—

That was one of the principles of the legislation that has now been betrayed by this government which has struck down an amendment which would end once and for all the possibility of secrecy of these party affairs. Instead of the principle of open government, this government prefers a situation of anonymous contributors who can bring their money for whatever reason and not be noted or identified. That is a blot on