

Oral Questions

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, in my question I made no allegations. I asked for clarification but all I can say is that I received evasion.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, may I say in answer to the hon. member that there is no need for clarification. The position was stated categorically by the government last year and there has been no change in policy. If there is any confusion, it is only in the hon. member's mind.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is again debate. During the question period there have been a number of alleged questions of privilege which were debates over alleged facts. I suggest to hon. members that this is not always helpful. I think the Chair should be allowed to call orders of the day. The hon. member for Scarborough West rises on a point of order.

Mr. Harney: Mr. Speaker, this morning, in answer to a question from the hon. member for Exquimault-Saanich (Mr. Munro), the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) stated that in so far as the matter being investigated by his department is concerned, the investigation was continuing. On November 29, as recorded on page 8250 of *Hansard*, the minister said, in a statement the investigation:

—I am confident that we have identified the person responsible for the leaks. That person is being informed. The long established procedures for dealing with such cases will now be followed.

My point of order is very simply this: Which of the two statements by the minister is the correct one?

Mr. Speaker: I would have difficulty in ruling that that is a legitimate point of order. I have to suggest to the hon. member that again that is debate. Orders of the day. The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my point of order is that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), in response to questions about drugs and the LeDain Commission—whether or not he knows it, and he should if he does not—is attempting to mislead the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Howard: I want to put on the record my reason for making that statement and why it should not be permitted. He made reference to a policy statement made last year. That policy statement was made by the former Minister of National Health and Welfare, now the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), and right alongside of him was the then Minister of Justice, now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), who repudiated that statement and said that it did not reflect cabinet policy. What the hell is cabinet policy?

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

[Mr. Speaker.]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTION EXPENSES

PROVISION OF PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PARTIES FOR CERTAIN BROADCASTING TIME

The House resumed, from Thursday, December 20, consideration of Bill C-203, to amend the Canada Elections Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Income Tax Act in respect of election expenses, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, and Motion No. 12 (Mr. Barnett).

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Cmox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, the House has under consideration motion No. 12 standing in my name which would remove one word from the proposed Clause 13.2(1.1) of the Canada Elections Act. It was moved on my behalf last night by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), who at that time explained to the House that I was serving at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development which was considering Bill S-4.

The hon. member for Skeena laid some of the groundwork for the consideration of this amendment, but I would like to make a few remarks on it today. The amendment does have an effect upon the whole question of what I have considered to be one of the objectives of the bill we have before us, namely, to bring some reasonable limitation on the amount of the expenditures that would be incurred in the conduct of general elections in Canada. The particular subclause which we have under consideration, as I understand it, was introduced to the committee at the instigation or on behalf of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen). If I understand him correctly, according to the mover, it was introduced for the purpose of clarifying to a certain extent what is involved in the actual definition of election expenses. Whether or not it does that, is in my view a debatable question.

I think one can argue fairly successfully that rather than clarify, it tends to confuse the whole matter of what are or are not legitimate election expenses and the whole question of at what maximum level those expenses should be set. The preceding subclause, which was in the original bill as it received second reading in the House, had to do with placing a limitation on the total expenses that a political party can incur in Canada, and in particular with reference to the period during which we have a general election. It purports to set the limit of those expenditures at a maximum of 30 cents multiplied by the number of names appearing on the preliminary lists of electors in the total number of constituencies in which that particular party is putting forward an official candidate. One can debate the question as to whether or not the 30 cents multiplied by the number of electors does, in fact, bring about a realistic attempt to reduce the total expenditures which have been escalating in recent years by leaps and bounds.

But leaving that question aside, this subclause which I am seeking to amend provides that the factor of 30 cents multiplied by the number of electors, does not apply to money contributed by a political party, and the phrase