

Mr. Hamel replied:

No.

A few moments later the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville said:

I think that would be contrary to the spirit of the act, at least, but this legislation does not go that far. It might, however, be the model for further legislation . . .

Next we come to issue No. 44, for Tuesday, April 13, 1976. I have already indicated, this bill was reported unopposed by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections with agreement by the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville. At page 7 of issue No. 45 for April 29, there appears the following:

Your committee recommends that the government consider the advisability of introducing amendments to restrict the expenditures obtained under the Canada Elections Act to the activity of the Party in its federal capacity as referred to in Bill C-362.

In conclusion, I should indicate that this matter is dealt with in issue No. 2 at pages 18 and 19 for Tuesday, November 22, and in issue No. 3 at pages 8 and 9 on Wednesday, November 23.

If we do not close this loophole the next step will be up to the public of Canada which can call us to account in the years ahead. The people might say, "Look what those crooked politicians did. We thought they were being honest and cleaning up the election financing but all they did was sweep it under the rug."

Hon. Norman A. Cafik (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, in connection with motion No. 3 we have heard a great deal about the evils of the Elections Expenses Act which allows funds raised at the federal level through a tax credit to be used for other than federal purposes. We have had political parties in this country for 100 years, Mr. Speaker, and I think they have behaved responsibly at the federal level. I do not think accusations or innuendoes about the activities of any political party in this country are warranted.

Political parties would have to answer to the public for taking funds raised at the federal level and using them at another level. There is no disposition in this bill to do that. I would point out, however, that discharge of this motion might lead to administrative nightmares in the application of the law. It is extremely difficult to accomplish what is proposed in this amendment. For that reason, and on the principle that laws that cannot be enforced are bad laws, many members may feel the motion should not pass.

Political parties in Canada, particularly the smaller ones, that operate on both the federal and provincial levels, often have joint offices in the provinces to look after both federal and provincial concerns. In some cases the division of manpower and resources is easily earmarked—the federal funding for federal purposes and provincial funding for provincial purposes. If this motion were adopted there would be the problem of determining how much of each person was working for whom and how that could be justified under the law.

In light of the fact that our political parties are responsible to their members and the people of this country, it is recog-

Canada Elections Act

nized that they must act in a responsible manner unless they want to answer at the polls.

For these reasons the government is not prepared to support the motion.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond briefly to the remarks of my colleague, the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick). At the outset I want to say to my friend that political parties are not just machines in some kind of corporate mechanism. Political parties consist of people.

● (2032)

Mr. Dick: That is right, in my party as well.

Mr. Benjamin: I am glad the hon. member said that, because it helps to rebut the arguments put forward by him as the sponsor of this motion.

Political parties are gatherings of people to bring about social and economic changes, as well as to promote ideas at the provincial, municipal and federal levels. The hon. member does not seem to be aware of the financing of his own party, let alone of the New Democratic or Liberal parties. I am slightly embarrassed to tell him of a banquet which was celebrated in honour of the eightieth birthday of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). That celebration was attended by approximately 2,500 people. As a matter of courtesy, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and myself paid \$50 each to the Progressive Conservative party in order to attend that banquet. In fact the former minister of finance, Mr. John Turner, attended as well. Several weeks later I received a receipt in the amount of \$36 for tax purposes.

Mr. Dick: Did you use it?

Mr. Benjamin: Yes. I wanted to get back from the Conservative party some of the money I spent, even if it was at the expense of the Liberal government. I am sure the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton would claim somehow that it was for federal party purposes. It was a legitimate operation, as far as I was concerned. The Conservatives were honouring one of their members, the right hon. member for Prince Albert. I think the sponsor of this motion should look more closely at how his party is financed and who is entitled to receipts for tax purposes. He mentioned only what the New Democratic and Liberal parties did, and forgot to mention the Progressive Conservative party.

A friend of mine, who is a Progressive Conservative, raises money for that party in the city of Regina. The people who give him money receive receipts for tax credits, which is not wrong. My party has published its financial reports every year since 1933. It is financed in the following manner: the great, overwhelming majority of its funds are raised by the provincial constituencies of our party. For example, the last year that I was provincial secretary for our party in Saskatchewan, we sent \$47,000 to the federal party in Ottawa as our share of the contribution toward national party operations, as did British