

Election Expenses

enforceable, it should certainly be true that the number and amount of donations a candidate or a party receives would be a reflection of the appeal of that candidate or party. Is not this the type of thing we would want to see reflected in a democratic political system?

The proposal we have before us would provide a limited amount of money to all candidates. It guarantees that these candidates will have an opportunity to have the putting forward of their views paid for by the public even though they may not be able to gain sufficient funds for themselves. I realize that it may be argued that any candidate who gets 20 per cent of the popular vote should be placed in that advantageous position, but I think it can also be argued that a person who is not able to attract enough paying supporters to enable him to put his case effectively before the public does not merit subsidization from the public purse.

I also have a small reservation which I telegraphed in advance in respect of the tax credit system. This is really an internal party matter and perhaps is one that cannot be controlled by legislation. What concerns me is that it may lead to greatly increased centralization within the parties. As I understand the proposal, during an election campaign a contribution could be made to the official agent of a candidate, and a tax receipt which would be valid to enable the donor to obtain a tax credit could be issued, but that in the interval between the elections the only body which could give such a tax receipt would be the national party. There could be authorizations at the provincial level, as my hon. friend suggests, but even this provides a considerable amount of centralization. Within the Liberal Party we are actually a federation of regional provincial associations.

● (1720)

I am somewhat concerned that along with the other provision which we enacted in the last year or so in the new Canada Elections Act, which allows the national parties to designate the candidates in various areas, this imposes another and perhaps undesirable force toward centralization within the parties. As I say, it may be that this cannot be dealt with by legislation, that it is a matter with which each party has to deal in its own internal constitution, but it is worth observing that this could be one of the possible results of this legislation.

There are also a number of small matters that undoubtedly my colleagues will want to clear up in the committee. I think that candidates would generally agree that they should be allowed to distribute small identification cards, for instance when they are calling on voters at their homes or on street corners during the first period of the election. Of course, there is no problem during the last four-week period of the election campaign because many forms of advertising are permitted, but it should be made clear that in the first stage of the campaign candidates can distribute identification cards. This is especially important for new candidates who are not known to the public. They should be assured that the identification card used as a kind of handout to the voters will not be an infringement of the act. Any other rule would be a very onerous burden on those who wish the public to become acquainted with them and the positions that they take.

[Mr. MacGuigan.]

In general, this bill represents a marked advance in legislated political democracy in Canada, and I believe will provide an incentive to further voluntary democratization within the Canadian political parties.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to participate in a debate in which one of the speakers is the hon. member for York North (Mr. Danson), who unfortunately has left the chamber. I was going to comment on the fact that I had looked forward to hearing him explain how he spent so much money during the last election campaign. I understand it amounted to around \$60,000, which is about the total amount spent by the four successful candidates in Vancouver Island. This would indicate to me that, to add to its other advantages, Vancouver Island got a better bargain politically as well.

The fact is that in Canada we have had to date in our history relatively clean politics. I think the last scandal was back in 1930 or around that time. There was an investigation afterward, and I always thought that one of the best quotes on political morality in Canada was made when John Aird Junion, president of the Beauharnois Corporation, was giving evidence and said:

Gratefulness is always regarded as an important factor in dealing with democratic governments.

We are here for the second time this week considering a bill relating to our electoral processes. So that we do not underestimate the importance of these bills, let us recall that it is this very electoral process which is the defining characteristic of our democratic form of government. Either in examining whether the vote of each Canadian should carry equal weight through representation by population, or in looking at accountability and choice by examining electioneering methods, we must remember that we are dealing with basic democratic values, for democracy at its simplest is, as has often been said, giving the people a chance to throw the rascals out.

An integral part of elections, and the part with which this bill is concerned, is the campaign. To begin, then, what purpose does the campaign serve? For the candidate, the answer is simple: his objective is to get elected, and campaigning is the way in which he hopes to gain votes. Let us, however, ask this question for the country at large and for the individual voter. The purpose of the campaign for them is, surely, to afford them the opportunity to decide which representatives and which party can best serve the interests of the country and of the various constituencies. In order for this to occur, the voters must be able to obtain enough information to make a rational choice based on the current platform and the past performance of parties and individuals. Particularly the voters should be enabled to gather this information on any serious candidate or party, and by serious I mean a candidate who offers a viable political alternative and who can gain significant support in his riding.

The electorate should also have another right with respect to the campaign process, that is, the process itself should not bar anyone from running as a prospective candidate whom the electorate wishes to support. In other words, the campaign process should not preclude capable men because of the expenses involved. This I count among the rights of the voters, as it is they who are deprived of the representation they may wish.