

Election Expenses

or two days before the election and tells him precisely where to vote. If one candidate does it, all others feel they should do it. These cards must be filled in and addressed by hand, with the polling station and address also penned by hand.

Even if the cards are prepared by volunteers, the cost of the printing and postage runs into a few thousand dollars. In a riding, with 80,000 voters, at 8 cents a letter the amount can be considerable—\$6,400. It would be proper for the returning officer in each constituency to send out cards telling people in the riding specifically where they are to vote. I believe early in the campaign, when the election lists are printed, they are sent out and contain information about the location of the polling subdivision, but this information is written in a style or description which is very difficult to follow. What is needed is a simple card with simple instructions and directions. I think the list the returning officer sends out could be incorporated with a "you vote at" card.

My fourth point is in respect of free television or radio time. I think this should be supplied as a public service over the public airways. I believe the way it is presented in the bill is reasonably fair. I have heard some of my colleagues who depend a great deal on radio and television to reach outlying areas complain that this legislation does not give them sufficient air time. Actually, it does not give sufficient time in the cities. I would be lumped in with the Toronto ridings in my campaign, and I believe it amounts to something like 20 seconds on television. In my case, I have a good face for radio so I do not mind it very much. We are not usually exposed to television very much, except to local cable television, in large urban areas.

• (1610)

The next point I wish to make concerns the questions of disclosure of contributions of \$100 or more. I hear people mention the sum of \$99.99. I think we should make \$100 the amount that can be contributed without disclosure. We should not play silly games with this sort of legislation. I also urge that the disclosure of funds in total be audited by a chartered accountant or certified public accountant and that this be sworn to before a judge. I do not think it would be very difficult; we all have access to judges. However, it puts a very important stamp on the whole process. It is important that this be sworn to in front of a judge or magistrate because before an accountant does that—the candidate swears to it as well—he will think very seriously about trying to bend the rules. I hope that the auditor will be the same for all candidates in a constituency, because I think it would ensure a certain degree of independence. Also, it will not be done lightly, because an auditor who can certify this sort of expenditure is risking his professional status. I think the committee should also look into this matter.

The final point, and the one on which I am still very keen, concerns the permanent voters' list. I am aware that this presents many problems and it is not perfect. Certainly our existing system is not perfect, but this provision could reduce substantially the length of election campaigns by the amount of time taken in the enumeration, which is done in a very loose way and with haste. It is done by well meaning people who, however, are not fully trained in the procedure and this caused difficulty. So we

[Mr. Danson.]

could eliminate the time that is taken in the enumeration and, we hope, most of the errors that occur.

This system is used in other places. They use it in the United Kingdom where they have a three-week election campaign. Friends in the British House of Commons to whom I have spoken told me that they usually spend in the order of £900 in their election campaigns and none of it is raised by them; it is all raised by the riding organizations. I believe they are limited to £50 a year to spend on their constituency organizations but are not allowed to spend any on the campaigns themselves. Of course, there the situation is different. The constituencies are smaller both in population and size. But we can still learn a great deal from them and I would rather learn more about that system than about the system in the country to our south which, as we see, is getting totally out of hand.

The voters' list may be expensive but it can be used by all levels of government in this day of computers, and we know how well computers operate in the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Department of National Revenue. You could take the federal voters, the provincial voters, the municipal voters and the separate and public school supporters all off the same list. The economy could be considerable. I commend the province of Quebec which has recently introduced permanent voters' lists. We will all want to see how well it works there.

I said that I had seven points to make and that the last one concerned the permanent voters' list. Another point I wanted to mention concerns signs. I do not know how one can control expenditure on signs. It is really tough. One of the things you could do—I have a formula for it—would be to allow a certain number of square feet of signs for every square mile of constituency. The candidate could have the choice of putting up 100 big signs or 1,000 small signs. I suspect that the policing of this system would be too difficult. So long as there is a limit on expenditure and it is adhered to rigidly, we could bring this into some sort of perspective.

I am convinced that this legislation will create a whole new thrust where election campaigns are concerned. There will still be many ways of getting around it, but there is a special onus on us all to make it work. I suggest that the procedure of auditing and declaring one's expenses before a judge is important because it would place an extra discipline on everybody to comply. I think the real discipline is not only our own wish but the desire and concern of the public to limit the vast amounts of money which are spent on election campaigns.

The pressure for disclosure will be very important to us all, I am sure, and it will bring a higher degree of political morality than has existed in isolated cases in the past. There will be great difficulties because we will have a really serious adjustment to make in the way we run our campaigns, particularly national campaigns, but I think it is an adjustment in the right direction and we will overcome the arguments of those who say that this provision will favour minor parties. I do not believe that is the case, any more than that it will favour the wealthy candidate. I think they are minor parties because they are minor people, and until they have national appeal—

Mr. Benjamin: Watch it.