

*Government Orders*

is a measure of transparency for those who want to spend over \$5,000.

Some people have suggested that maybe the limit should be \$20,000. I think that is too high. Some have suggested the limits be as low as \$1,000. That was one of the amendments put forward in the committee but we thought that was too low because although an ad in *The Cambridge Reporter* is relatively cheap, for a North York service club to buy a one-page ad in *The Toronto Star* would cost well over \$1,000 and then it would have to report. We do not want to take away from individual Canadians the opportunity to participate in their own way. If they get over \$5,000, again there are very tight restrictions as far as the reporting goes. We do not think that is taking away a person's freedom to express themselves, their freedom of speech, their freedom of association. All it does is provide a measure of transparency.

In the committee some people suggested that if you are going to spend over \$5,000 then you need to have 100 members in your committee. Again, you look at some service clubs that have 40 members in rural Canada operating under a charter for some 30 to 40 years suddenly having to go out and sign up extra people just so that they can be a referendum committee. The government members rightly voted that amendment down. It is common to have service clubs with under 100 members. We thought that would put undue restrictions on them.

Another concern was that some members opposite thought that we should make public funding available. I think constituents have to understand that during an election when one contributes to my campaign or if they contribute \$100 to any federal member's campaign, they get a \$75 tax credit on their income tax return. In the plebiscite or referendum campaign, if an individual contributes \$100, there is no tax credit. There is no public funding involved that way. Because there are no taxpayers' dollars going back, then indeed there should be greater freedom for the individual as to how they want to participate in the referendum.

One of the things that we really want to try to do with this is a precautionary measure. Right now the provinces, the federal government, the territories and other groups are sitting down and are getting close to, hopefully, a successful conclusion. If they reach that successful con-

clusion, there will be no need for this. Even if seven provinces with greater than 50 per cent of the population or even if there was total unanimity and everybody signed, one of the amendments from the opposition party said that we will go on with this referendum in any event. It is a non-binding referendum. It is non-binding because of the way the Canadian Constitution is written. Even if everybody signed and the Parliament of Canada, the Senate of Canada and all the provincial parliaments went through their procedure, the Liberal member thought we should have this non-binding referendum in any event.

I pointed out to him that the cost of doing a referendum is serious business. The cost is well over \$100 million. The government member said: "If we have an agreement and if everyone has agreed with it, why would we want to go on afterward and have a \$100 million poll for no purpose at all?" That is an amendment that was defeated.

I would like to sum up by saying that there are many elements in this plebiscite legislation. I think it is important that we not take away the right of individual Canadians in their small way for small expenses to express their view on how they feel about Canada. There are people who would put a \$1,000 ad into a newspaper and state their view. That would have a marginal impact. But if some like a Darryl Sittler or Jean Béliveau puts an ad in the paper that also costs \$1,000, that probably carries a lot more influence.

We struggle with the people who are talking about spending controls. How do you try and put a value on two different ads, one from an ordinary Canadian and one from a Canadian who has a high profile?

• (1810)

I see that my time is expiring and I want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this bill.

**Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and humility that I come before this House to speak on this bill because Bill C-81 is a very important bill.

I am speaking on behalf of my party, but particularly as a member from Quebec who sat on the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee for over seven months listening to people's views on referendums and listening to Canadians from coast to coast to coast telling us what they felt was