

Private Members' Business

I heard a Conservative senator who used to be a Liberal, Senator Rivest, if I may give his name, Mr. Speaker, say in an interview on political party funding: "It is quite remarkable that since this legislation was passed in Quebec, no significant case of patronage linked to corporate or other contributions has come to light either in the Parti Québécois government or the Liberal government".

So the results speak for themselves and clearly demonstrate that individual financing of political parties has improved our political ethics. That is what we want to bring in at the federal level.

• (1420)

I will conclude because I am told that I have about a minute left. When the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead waged this fierce battle for popular financing within his own party, he obtained an agreement from the leader of the government at that time, Prime Minister Mulroney, who made a formal commitment before the 1988 election to present a bill on the financing of political parties once the House returned, which he never did, as everyone knows. We know what happened to that government, which is represented here in this House by just a captain and one foot soldier.

Mr. Speaker, there is a message in that for the government opposite, an important message, and I say that without partisanship. We must start work now on passing a bill on the financing of political parties along the lines of the motion of the member for Richelieu.

Mr. Speaker, I also say, and this is a point that was raised by the former member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, that such legislation must be completely non-partisan. It must have the unanimous agreement of members of this House. Through the motion of the member for Richelieu, we in the Bloc Québécois reach out to the government and say to it that we are ready to proceed as soon as possible.

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, briefly, I must say that I have great sympathy with this motion. However, it is a little disconcerting that the members opposite assume that someone like myself had large corporate donations to my campaign. I would like to set the record straight.

My total personal election spending contributions totalled \$17,000. The largest contribution I received was \$1,000. I received absolutely no money from the Liberal Party, it was all obtained from individuals. Also all the money was obtained during the election campaign. They were donations from individuals. I held a barbecue and did the customary things.

I find myself in sympathy because I feel it is right and proper that MPs who represent the people should be supported primarily by the people rather than by corporations. I want the members opposite to know that the Bloc and the Reform have no monopoly on receiving donations only from individuals rather than from large corporations. I did not enjoy that either.

I support the amendment, however, because the total amount of donations that I received only amounted to \$17,000. If I had received a donation of \$5,000 it would have been significant, almost one-third of what I had available to spend. I would be afraid in such a situation that the person giving me the \$5,000 donation, whether an individual or corporation would expect some sort of favour in return. They certainly would have expected some sort of influence.

I find that the original motion has a weakness in stipulating a sum as high as \$5,000. By supporting the amendment I believe we offer the government an alternative. The motion is flawed not because of any lack of proper motive on the part of those who have moved the motion but because it is something that requires very careful consideration by the government.

If I have a minute or two more, I would like to add to the debate an anecdote which may be of interest to members. When I was campaigning I had the pleasure of being accompanied at one point by an American television crew from the "MacNeil-Lehrer Show". They had come up to my riding of Hamilton—Wentworth because it was seen as a bellwether riding in the election. It had been a Tory riding for 22 years and they were very interested to see what would happen. The camera crew followed me as I went from door to door, as I am sure all members of this House did during the election. I would knock on the door, shake hands and go on.

• (1425)

Driving back at the end of the day the producer of this crew asked me how much I expected to spend in total in the election. I said I thought it would be at best about \$30,000. I was counting the amount of money I had raised by donations and the matching money that would come as a consequence. He said: "That is just amazing because in the United States a congressman running for election would expect to spend at least \$180,000". When I asked why he said it was because they would have to spend money on radio and television advertising and that kind of thing.

I hate to say this but he told me that is one of the reasons American politics has such difficulty with corruption and influence peddling. It is because the average individual cannot possibly run for Congress without substantial financial support from corporations and special interest groups.

I asked why they needed all that money. He said: "Because we as Americans cannot do what you as Canadians can do. We cannot go door to door as we saw you doing today. The simple