

Canada Elections Act

omnibus amendment bill on this particular act, we might briefly review some of the provisions of the act and what they were intended to do. We should then look at some other problems raised in Bill C-107 which could possibly be brought before the House by reference to the committee or by presentation of motions.

The bill requires, with respect to political parties, that they must disclose the source and application of their funds or, in more usual terminology, must indicate the source and amounts of all donations where the amounts are in excess of \$100, and must indicate their expenses on an annual basis whether they be expenses for an election year or a non-election year. Furthermore, with respect to political parties we have ascertained a limit of 30 cents per voter which would mean that the four major political parties in Canada cannot spend in excess of approximately \$4 million each per election. That is a very considerable restriction in view of the kind of expenditures we are familiar with in regard to some of the elections conducted by our neighbour to the south.

● (1620)

Secondly, we have attempted in this bill, and to a large extent have succeeded, although there are more problems to which I should like to refer later, to give the average individual citizen an opportunity to participate in federal politics in a manner never before available to him. If he chooses to make a donation of \$100 or less, he will remain anonymous and, in addition, \$75 of the \$100 will be deductible from his taxes owing. It is not a tax deduction in the usual sense. It is actually a tax credit. It is a direct contribution, if you like, to the federal government system and to parliamentary democracy.

Thirdly, we have to some measure made great strides in restricting expenses of candidates, although the point made by the hon. member for Rocky Mountain is that perhaps we have not gone far enough. I tend to favour a commissioner in the ridings. I suppose that means a policeman, although perhaps that is a nasty word. Whatever we may think of the matter, there certainly is no shortage of members of this House who are familiar with candidates who run some rather strange campaigns. Perhaps it would be a nice idea if we were all subject to the same scrutiny by a well organized commissioner.

We have succeeded in limiting expenditures to \$1 for each of the first 15,000 names on the voters' list, 50 cents for each of the next 10,000 names and, finally, 25 cents for every name after those first 25,000. In an average riding this would mean something in the order of \$25,000 or \$26,000 which the candidate can expend for election purposes. In addition to that—again I will refer back to these sections because there are more problems here—we have created a system by which such a candidate, so long as he obtains 15 per cent of the vote in his riding, will be compensated by the people's money through the federal government to the extent of something like eight cents for the first 25,000 names on the list and six cents for those thereafter. So we are looking, in an average riding of about 50,000 people, at something in the order of \$7,500 going back to the candidate who has succeeded in attracting at least 15 per cent of the population.

[Mr. Blaker.]

I might add the personal note that I think 15 per cent is still far too low. It should be higher because it seems to indicate the possibility of candidates who are attracted by the compensation factors of this act. It seems to me there is a very distinct possibility that some candidates may find it financially desirable to put their names on the list only to find themselves with, hopefully, 15 per cent of the vote having spent as little as \$5,000 and then to find themselves compensated by the federal government for \$7,000 or \$8,000 simply because they obtained the required percentage of the vote. For those who win, there are enough financial penalties in becoming a member of parliament without making it particularly attractive to candidates who lose to not win—if that grammar can be used.

In addition, we have provided for the facilities of an auditor. There are more problems in that section in respect of an auditor. I do not think we have defined this properly. However, the act does provide that the liabilities are to be shown. The whole subject of voluntary labour is brought under consideration in the sense that there has been a tendency in the past to use individuals, I think, on a form for compensation but without actually referring to them in the election returns and in the setting forth of the costs of the candidate's election.

There is the whole matter of commercial value. That is another problem which I think may require amendment as well, because there are the different features relating to the cost of an article or its commercial value which raises the matter of wholesale, retail, and so on. We have supplied a whole group of agents who come under the titles of chief agent, electoral district agent, registered agent, and official agent. I suggest that the public will become as confused as most members after they get through with the flock of agents who have been provided. But there they are, and presumably between the official agent for the candidate and the registered agent for the party there is some hope that disclosure of income and expenses can be enforced and, hopefully, we should be able to provide the Canadian public with a much better idea of who is running their elections, and why.

Perhaps at this time I might affirm again to the hon. member for Rocky Mountain the co-operation which existed in the committee during the meetings for hours on end and the picking away at one clause after another. If today the hon. member for Rocky Mountain were to find that his bill in fact is not referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, I certainly would want him to understand that it is with nothing but the greatest respect for the draftsmanship and intentions of his bill that this might happen. It is by coincidence that there seem to be so many other problems that it may be better procedurally to go by way of an omnibus amendment for many of the other areas about which we and others are concerned or, conversely, there may be a reference to the committee on privileges and elections and we can get back at the whole thing again, although I think most members of the committee would not be entirely delighted with that proposition.

I should like to refer simply, for the sake of the record, lest some of these thoughts get lost, to other areas which I think require reconsideration. On the question of the appointment of auditors, both sections 13.3(1) and 62.1(1)