

tion of the influence of corporations or unions has turned attention away from the more serious question of the abuse by a party in government, for partisan purposes, of the power of government.

This is a far more dangerous assault upon a free and equal electoral system than all the imagined influence of multinational corporations and international unions. Moreover, it is a danger which we know exists. There is evidence as recent as the advertising campaign of the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), who is a little bit responsible for multiculturalism, and as recent as the campaign for the re-election of the government of Manitoba, which campaign was so close in its results that the ambiguous use by the party in power of the advantages of office may very well have provided the narrow margin of victory.

**Mr. Lalonde:** What about Ontario?

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** I will specify later some of the practices of the party in power in Manitoba. I will refrain from references to the party in power in the province from which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) comes.

The abuses of the party in power in Manitoba are a textbook warning of the extent of abuse that a government party can engage in. But, Sir, the point I want to emphasize now is that the capacity for abuse and the reality of the abuse of office by a party in power is a subject on which this bill is completely silent.

**Mr. Baker:** Right.

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Only the naïve would consider that to be accidental, particularly when the bill stands in the name of the master strategist of the Liberal Party. It is no accident that the area of abuse left untouched is the area of abuse which, in federal politics, is most acceptable and most advantageous to the Liberal party.

The President of the Privy Council has said that he will welcome amendments, and we will give them to him. If the NDP is serious about wanting to control abuses, they will support our efforts to limit or eliminate the capacity of a party in power to use public funds for advertising, use of aircraft and other facilities to advance a partisan cause, to frustrate the system and to attack the spirit of free and equal elections.

I recognize that it will not be easy to spell out the distinction between partisan and legitimate uses, but it would be utterly irresponsible for parliament to let this bill pass without limiting the capacity for abuse of office by a party in power. As it stands, this bill is an invitation to unilateral disarmament. Opposition parties are at a disadvantage anyway in our parliamentary system. Even though the things we say make more sense than the things the government says, government statements carry the promise of action and thus get more attention. For example, the proposal by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) to stop the tax system from profiting from inflation had less force as his proposal than it did when it was adopted holus-bolus by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) in one of the flip-flops that have come to define

### *Election Expenses*

that man of principle. There are other disadvantages of opposition, Sir, not the least of which is the danger of appearing negative because of the constitutional requirement to be skeptical of things the government proposes.

● (2050)

These disadvantages are an inescapable part of the system, and we will live with those for the short period we remain in opposition. But, Sir, they are in a category apart from the illegitimate advantage governments draw from their access to the public purse. The government proposes in this bill to limit further the already limited capacity of opposition parties to compete, while retaining unfettered the single most important weapon in the armament of a party in power—the ability to abuse public funds for party purposes. This bill will be a fraud unless we add amendments to limit the government party as effectively as we limit opposition parties.

I said that I would return to the question of Manitoba. The examples of abuse there are not simply examples of abuse: they also underline the fact that the NDP in practice prove that their motive in chasing the money changers from the temple is simply to take over the trade. The only way the NDP in office has changed bad practice is to make it worse. They have practised abuse with moral authority. I would ask the House to consider these facts of life in Manitoba in 1973, and to let each one of us here ask himself, what multinational corporation, or other bogeyman, has so abused power to distort the principle of an equal chance in elections?

The Manitoban election was in June. From January into May there was an accelerating program of advertisements on radio, television and in the newspapers, ostensibly telling how to apply for an education rebate, but in practice extolling the program.

**Mr. Faulkner:** What about the practice in Ontario?

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** The Secretary of State is responsible for the campaign to do with multiculturalism.

During the same time, a general and accelerating increase in government paid advertising in Manitoba by various departments and agencies was explaining, of course, what wonderful things the Manitoba government was doing as a prelude to the election. In May, in the mail box of virtually every farmer in Manitoba, there mysteriously appeared a government brochure forecasting the great plans of the government for agriculture, at public expense. The same month, a week before the election was called, a personal letter on the stationery of "The Office of the Premier" was mailed to every resident in the province advising of the removal of the medicare premium. Prior to that, on the same stationery, with the same taxpayer paying the post, a personal letter was sent from the premier to every citizen whose home improvement grant was approved. This personal approach, over the signature of the premier, was made in a province where, you will remember, the party in power was anxious to hide its own name, and emphasize the premier's name, at public expense.

In the campaign itself the premier flew around in a Saunders Aircraft plane.

**An hon. Member:** Davis did the same . . . tario.