

Election Expenses Bill

there are limits for parties, there do not appear to be limits for candidates. Since there is no limit on the parties with regard to the funds they can raise, and there is no limit on the candidates as to how much television, radio and newspaper advertising they can buy, what is to prevent the party siphoning money into riding after riding for candidates to spend up to the limits which they are allowed on advertising? The bill is inconsistent in this respect.

Some provision has to be incorporated in the bill limiting the candidates as well as the parties in the broadcasting field. On the one hand we do not limit parties and limit the candidates when it comes to funds and on the other we limit the parties but do not limit the candidates when it comes to broadcasting. I hope the government House leader will agree that these inconsistencies need to be ironed out in committee.

With regard to shortening the election campaign, I submit that what the special committee really had in mind, if I may say this to the hon. member for Hillsborough, was that 56 to 59 days campaign time is not too short. It is barely sufficient time for the Chief Electoral Officer to prepare and for party organizations to prepare for and conduct their campaigns. If you are really going to campaign among the people, call on them, and if our election is to be something more than radio, television and newspaper advertising, you require six to seven weeks. This is necessary if you are to meet thousands of electors.

The committee felt, and I feel, that the public is not demanding a shortening of campaigns, a shortening of the time between the writs being issued and the election date but a shortening of the time in which they are bombarded with television, radio and newspaper advertising advertisement until they are so fed up they pay no attention to the political issues. We urge that the length of time during which broadcasting may be carried out should be limited to the last four weeks of the campaign. This is why we said 29 days. If you knock off the day of prohibition, there are 28 days in which broadcasting and advertising can be permitted. A shortening of the campaign for broadcasting time is feasible and it is what the majority of the public want.

We were disregarded when we suggested offering tax credits for income tax payers. I find this strange, when Mr. Carter proposed tax credits instead of exemptions and when tax credits were advocated in this House for individual citizens instead of exemptions, that the government said it cannot be done. However, the government finds it is something different when it comes to tax credits for corporations in other areas. How we have tax credits for political contributions. All of a sudden, it can be done.

I suspect that whether you allow political contributions as deductions from net income for income tax purposes or whether you allow a tax credit, in terms of dollars to the national treasury and in terms of savings to taxpayers it is six of one and half a dozen of another. May I illustrate my point by saying the committee recommended that a citizen be allowed to deduct from net income up to \$1,000 a year for a contribution to a party, and in an election year an additional \$1,000 a year contribution to a candidate. In an election year he could deduct \$2,000 from his net income. If your tax rate is 25 per cent, you save \$500 on income

tax. The bill proposes allowing a \$500 tax credit as a maximum. In dollars and cents, it does not make very much difference. However, it is encouraging in a sense that maybe this kind of move to tax credits will speed up the day when we have tax credits in our income tax law for the individual taxpayer, instead of exemptions.

I submit there are three areas that are most urgent and require scrutiny. First, the area of disclosure. If the government cannot and will not agree to full disclosure of all political contributors, I hope it will at least agree to a furthering of the modified disclosure provisions in the bill. Where there is a violation of the election law, the names of contributors to that candidate, that party in that constituency would be made public.

The second area is that of reimbursement. I hope the minister will agree to drop the government's formula and include in the bill the formula recommended by the committee. I submit it is much more fair. It does not discriminate against the candidate who has limited or no financial resources. It provides for a more equal and fair reimbursement for all candidates provided they qualify under provision concerning 20 per cent of the votes cast. I hope the minister will consider lowering that 20 per cent floor to at least 15 per cent. In fact, I hope he will agree that any candidate who gets 10, 12 or 15 per cent of the popular vote is not a nuisance candidate and should be entitled to reimbursement.

Finally, and in my opinion most importantly, I say to the government House leader it is a "must" that we incorporate an additional clause in the bill to provide for a limitation on parties the same as is provided for candidates. Unless we have a limitation on parties' expenditures, the whole intent, purpose and most of the principle of the legislation is nullified or set aside. We are asking for abuse. In future elections, politics and politicians will be brought into even more disrepute by the citizens of this country.

May I call it ten o'clock Mr. Speaker?

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

PUBLIC WORKS—RECONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED NORTHUMBERLAND CAUSEWAY

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, on May 1 I asked the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Dubé) if, in the new era of prime ministerial largesse, reconsideration was being given to the construction of the Northumberland causeway. This, of course, is a project on which the government repudiated its commitments. But it was in light of great promises of billion dollar corridors to the north that I asked if the much less costly Northumberland causeway, so long promised, would now be built, or completed since \$20 million has already been spent on it.