

Election Expenses Bill

and call upon the government to bring in another piece of legislation.

This whole question of election expenses is one that has been before us for a long, long time. It was a live issue before any of us in this chamber came here. But in recent years it has been a particularly lively issue, and no one has done more to popularize the idea that something should be done about the control of election expenses and about putting candidates on an equal footing than the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself. At a press conference on April 7, 1968, in the city of Ottawa the following question was put to the Prime Minister:

Do you intend to do anything about implementing the report of the Election Expenses Committee?

That, I may say in parenthesis, was the report that was tabled in 1966. The rest of the question was:

It seems to me this is rather fundamental to the just society which you mentioned.

The answer of the Prime Minister was very terse but very much to the point:

I agree. Top priority. Next Speech from the Throne.

That was in 1968. Later that same year, on June 4, 1968, in the city of Edmonton the Prime Minister said:

There are many aspects of the just society. It includes electoral reform so that the citizen really has a right to express his choice, his political choice, freely and without basing himself on how much money a party can get.

A few days later, on June 10, 1968, speaking over the CBC the Prime Minister said:

The important thing is that our laws and our election laws be reformed in order to make sure all parties are on an equal footing as possible by reducing election expenses, by making the government assume as large a part of the election expenses of all parties as is possible.

I say, therefore, that no one gets more credit for this issue being a lively one today than the present Prime Minister. Mind you, when, as a result of these statements, we pressed him for action on the matter of the election expenses, we were put off; we were given the old answer about the crowded state of the parliamentary timetable, and so on, and we were told there was not time to do anything about it before the next election whenever it might come. But now in this pre-election period—however long the period may be—when we seem to be getting various kinds of goodies, we have been handed this bill. The trouble is that that word does not apply to this piece of legislation. It passes itself off as doing something about election expenses but it completely fails to establish the kind of equality to which the Prime Minister referred.

Mr. Speaker, since you are about to get to your feet I shall sit down, but I shall have something more to say about this matter at eight o'clock.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION**SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED**

Mr. Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson)—Grain—rape-seed—laying of charges by Wheat Board against certain farmers for overdelivery—request for government intervention; the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose)—External Affairs—proposed nuclear test by France—suggested grant to "Greenpeace III"; the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay)—Natural Resources—offshore mineral rights—state of negotiations with Nova Scotia.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions, private bills, public bills.

• (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**ATOMIC ENERGY**

HEAVY WATER PRODUCTION—REQUEST FOR COPY OF REPORT ON ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEUTERIUM OF CANADA PLANT BY ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity) moved:

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of any report or reports prepared by or for the government recommending that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited assume responsibility for the reconstruction and operation of the Deuterium of Canada Limited heavy water production plant at Glace Bay, N.S.

He said: Mr. Speaker, there are at least three important principles involved in a discussion of this resolution. The first and most immediate is the question of disclosure of essential information necessary to enable members of parliament to fulfil their function as watchdogs of the public purse. The second, and related principle, is the extent to which political considerations should be injected into economic decisions by government. The third, and equally related question, is the extent to which government should raise money through taxation to spend on high cost projects that have highly political overtones. There is a question of priorities, and Canadians are over-taxed by governments which spend money with reckless abandon.

Speaking to the first point, Mr. Speaker, I wonder how we can determine whether or not the government's decision to reconstruct the Deuterium of Canada plant is a wise decision if we are denied access to the information on which the judgment was based. It is just possible that the government did not receive any advice, Mr. Speaker. If that is the case it is an important fact of which we should be made aware. More likely, however, in this case there would be a recommendation from Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. I would like to know if the government has acted in accordance with expert advice, or contrary to it. Of course, the government may be making the best of a bad deal in proceeding as it is or, Mr. Speaker, it may be throwing good money after bad. How do we know if we do