

*Election Expenses Bill*

**Mr. Lewis:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Is the hon. member aware that under the present law he would be obliged to disclose the names of these contributors, that is, he being a candidate? We will not need any change in the present law to accomplish that objective.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, the minister knows what I am talking about. I am surprised at his intervention. I know this is not in the act, and I also know it is not going to be made public.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Why not?

**Mr. Lewis:** Is the Chief Electoral Officer obliged by law to make public the names of my contributors? Am I obliged by law to make public every contributor who gives me money?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Yes.

**Mr. Lewis:** I do not read the bill this way. My return goes to the returning officer for my constituency.

**Mr. Woolliams:** It is the law, but it is circumvented legally.

**Mr. Lewis:** You mean under the law at present? My heavens, if I had thought the minister was talking about that I would not even have been as polite as I was. He knows that every member and every candidate lumps contributions into some constituency organization, or something else, and thus those contributions are listed as coming from the York South constituency organization. Everyone knows that that is the case.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Is it lawful?

**Mr. Lewis:** I think this is the way the present law is worded. Therefore, there is need for a change in the present law to oblige every candidate and every party to make public the names of the contributors and the amounts contributed. I am perfectly well aware of the fact that this will cause embarrassment to some contributors. It may cause embarrassment to corporations which make contributions to both the other parties in this House.

It may be that it will take a few years before people accept the practice as being necessary and desirable for our democratic society, and it may be that there will be some loss of contributions by candidates and by parties. And maybe that is not a bad idea. Maybe to have a law that produces contributions from those organizations and people who really support the candidate and party, rather than contributions which are given as a matter of insurance by persons, corporations or organizations, would be a good thing for democracy and for society.

I gather, Mr. Speaker, that the government is not prepared to deal with the question of disclosure of all contributions. Therefore, that is one basic principle of this bill that we cannot accept and to which we thoroughly object. I want to make perfectly clear that I mean all contributions: I mean the contributions of all corporations which contribute to the Liberal party, to the Conservative party

or to my own party. But I have never known of one that does so, although there may be such.

I also mean all the contributors who contribute to the NDP, and not only contributions in cash but in kind. I want to have a law that clearly obliges my party and myself to disclose to the people of Canada all information about the sources of my funds and the funds of my party, precisely, fully and completely. I believe every party in this House has to be prepared to do precisely that. That is the only way in which the people of Canada can gauge what is subliminally influencing candidates and parties in this House, and it must be remembered that the subliminal influences not infrequently are a great deal more important than other influences.

The minister says it is difficult to enforce limits on parties and so he has confined himself to the limit on the media. Let me say two or three things about that. As he was speaking I recalled being on a plane several months ago with a leading Liberal who is a member of the other place—and, incidentally, why we have a habit of saying the “other place” instead of saying directly “the Senate”, I will never know. This man is a Senator. He was one of the directors or chairmen of the Liberal party campaign in 1968. He informed me during our conversation—I am sure he will not mind my saying this—that Liberal party expenditures on the media during 1968 were very few. In fact, if I remember correctly he said they did not spend any money on media expenditures, as a party.

I asked why, and his answer was that the Prime Minister was getting so much coverage on television and radio that was free, that the Liberal party did not have to spend any money on buying time on the media. I do not know just how accurate that may be and I do not know whether the people of Canada appreciated the exposure that the Prime Minister received then. I do not know how much they will appreciate it in the future. I merely mention that conversation to indicate that it is an illusion to think that merely limiting media expenditures is a real limit on party expenditures.

You can organize anything if you have the money. I have never had that pleasure or experience in politics, but you can organize all sorts of things. If you have the money you can organize all sorts of affairs and shindigs, all sorts of circuses, all sorts of pancake breakfasts, and all the rest of it. The people in the media, the public relations firms employed by the Liberal and Conservative parties, are pregnant with ideas all the time and they usually require only a few hours rather than nine months of gestation. They come forward with every sort of gimmick, every sort of thing that can be done without coming under the heading of media expenditure at all.

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You could spend literally millions of dollars, as was the case in the province of Ontario with the Conservative party in the recent election. You could spend hundreds, thousands and probably millions of dollars on all sorts of gimmicks and ideas and services. You could get all the coverage and media exposure that you needed without actually having to buy the time. There are all sorts of ways it can be done. So when the minister tells us that limiting expenses on the media is an effective limit on