

Canada Elections Act

of persons should also be increased up accordingly from 25, if we want to make as serious a comparison as is included in the Hon. Member's motion. Because of this, Mr. Speaker, I hasten to say that I wholeheartedly support the motion now before the House. I believe that its purpose is to improve our political system and give us better and more serious candidates. No one could blame us for committing ourselves to this objective and for wishing, on both sides of this House, to offer our voters more serious and better qualified candidates who would be better equipped to serve our society.

• (1610)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) indicated that he was not making a proposal to amend his own Bill, which he cannot do, but that he would be open and agreeable to any such amendment which would refer the subject matter to Committee.

The Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) has now said that he approves of that proposal. The Chair is in some difficulty. I believe that what should be done, if it is the intention of the House to move in that direction, is to have the Bill amended that way. I think it would help Hon. Members to know that there is such an amendment. I leave it to the Hon. Member for Joliette to decide whether he wants to propose such an amendment.

[Translation]

The Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) has already indicated his support for the motion of the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) by saying that he would be in favour of referring the subject matter to the committee. If he wants to propose an amendment, he can of course do so.

[English]

I have to know whether or not such an amendment is on the floor because Hon. Members perhaps are not certain of where it is going. Of course, it has to be seconded as well.

Mr. Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is distinctly my impression from listening to this debate that both Members expressed a preference for what should happen. To my understanding, it was never couched in terms of an actual amendment—it was a wish. Therefore, I believe that it would be appropriate simply to continue the debate as it exists.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Member for Willowdale (Mr. Peterson) is quite correct. This preference has come up and it is sometimes the duty of the Chair to attempt to understand whether an Hon. Member intends to take the proposal and turn it into a procedural matter. I must indicate to the Hon. Member for Willowdale that no distinction will take place as to the procedures, time allotment or anything else. I simply indicate that when I hear Hon. Members referring to what they call a proposal, I believe that I have

to serve them by indicating that proposals should either be converted to amendments or not, as they see fit.

[Translation]

Should I recognize the Hon. Member for Joliette?

Mr. La Salle: I want to add, Mr. Speaker, that I have indicated my support for the Hon. Member's suggestion because I had also understood that this subject could be referred to the committee for consideration. It was not my intention to move an amendment. I simply said that I fully agreed with the Hon. Member that this matter could be referred to a committee for further discussion. If such is the wish of this House, I have no objection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I should explain that everything is quite clear and that there is no amendment. If an Hon. Member wants to move an amendment, he may do so. For the moment, there is only the bill itself.

[English]

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I very much appreciate your attempts to bring more order out of a slight amount of misunderstanding. Perhaps it would be advisable to let at least the next speaker proceed. We can then see if there are any more negotiations going on in the Chamber.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak in opposition to this Bill. However well intentioned the Bill is, I believe that it would not, in fact, be likely to work in the interest of democracy.

The purpose of the Bill is to restrict the right of a candidate by a financial qualification. An appeal had been made in a previous Bill of this sort in the year 1882, when the deposit was \$200. Of course, that was a much greater sum of money then than it is now, relative to an individual's earning power. It is interesting that in 1882, the year which was chosen as the model in the previous debate, at least half of the adults in Canada were disenfranchised.

• (1620)

Leaving aside questions involving Indians and non-European immigrants or northern European settlers, no women of Canada were allowed to vote in those days. I am not saying that they were excluded on property grounds or on the basis of wealth. I am not quite certain what would have been the rationale given by Sir John A. MacDonald and others for excluding all married women, for example. We know that for many years in at least one Province of Canada the laws had restricted the right of women to act in their own names, as adults. It may be that that kind of thinking helped to prevent Canada, in the first decades of its history, from allowing slightly more than half of our population to have the vote.

The idea of restricting the vote according to property or wealth did not die with the nineteenth century. I remember that when I first settled in Toronto with my family in 1954, the