

● (1610)

We find that he quotes the party practice. I emphasize that on no occasion has the function been carried out in the past. Professor Thorburn goes on to say:

Since no enforcement provision was included in the act, and established parties naturally feared retaliation if they or their members should bring an action or lay an information against a member of the other party or parties, virtually nothing was done to compel obedience to the law, and the prohibitions in the act remained essentially unenforced. In addition, since private citizens are not likely to take the trouble and incur the cost of contesting an election suit, this means of initiating an action is virtually inoperative. Also, we have not had any effective organized non-political groups to undertake the responsibility of scrutinizing election activities with a view to initiating legal action in cases of infractions. Finally, no public agency has felt itself responsible nor has been made responsible for prosecuting candidates or others who violate the law on election expenses.

Under such conditions it makes relatively little difference what provisions are made in the law to require scrupulous behaviour of all participants in the election process. If nothing is done to compel obedience to the law, the law is quickly brought into contempt and serves merely as a form of window-dressing to cover a situation which could not be approved of.

Madame Speaker, I think that draws our attention, from a perspective of academic objectivity, to the very serious break in the law which we have not yet been able to reform satisfactorily. So unless we adopt this measure that I propose in Bill C-107, or some similar measure, we could be left without having achieved electoral reform at all, despite our labours.

I recognize the problems of operating an independent commission, problems of additional staff, problems of whether that office or officer will be busy between elections, although I think it would be helpful to have that kind scrutiny occurring between elections as well as problems of extra costs. But as a parliament I think we have to face the larger problem, if parliament has laboured to pass a reform bill which will not work and if we have an instrument which will not work because it is not likely to be enforced.

As active politicians, all of us go to schools to meet with young people and we are aware of the developing cynicism in the country toward the political process. All of us who care about the future of our political institutions, and indeed about the future of our country, know that our greatest enemy is not another party in this House but it is the simple cynicism that is growing daily, fed perhaps by the forces of Watergate but also by a feeling among Canadians of all ages, that parliament does not mean what it says. When we pass laws designed to achieve reform, we do not go that extra step to ensure that it will be achieved.

I think we have to be conscious of that and of the fact that a great deal of attention has been paid by the public generally, and particularly by the young people of Canada, to Bill C-203 to reform electoral practices which was passed in January. If we have not in fact achieved reform, we are going to be accused of engaging in an empty gesture and of having made a pretense of reform when we knew that what we were writing into the law would not be enforced and therefore there would be no change.

Madame Speaker, I have no particular pride of authorship in Bill C-107. There are provisions in it that perhaps would fall of their own weight.

*Canada Elections Act*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. I regret to advise the hon. member that the time allotted to him has expired.

**Some hon. Members:** Continue.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Thank you, Madame Speaker. I hope that the unanimous consent expressed here will be repeated later in the day.

I have no pride of authorship in this bill. My intention was simply to draw the attention of parliament again to the very serious problem which faces us of not having devised effective enforcement procedures to make sure that reforms introduced in the fall of last year will be practiced in future. If there is a disposition in the House to have the subject matter of this bill considered, I will believe that the work I have been trying to do in introducing the bill has been worth while.

In thanking the House for its generosity in giving me these extra few moments, may I express the hope that serious attention will be given by members on all sides of the House to the problem of amending Bill C-203 in respect of election expenses in order to make sure that we have legislation which achieves the reforms that all members wanted and that we have the essential instruments of enforcement to do this.

**Mr. Rod Blaker (Lachine-Lakeshore):** Madame Speaker, may I join the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) in expressing the pleasure not only of myself but, I am sure, of all hon. members present in the House at seeing such a remarkable change in the occupant of the Speaker's chair.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blaker:** In supporting Bill C-107, introduced by the hon. member for Rocky Mountain, I could perhaps quote him verbatim. I could not find myself more in agreement with anything I have heard in the many debates and the discussions at the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections than with what I heard the hon. member say today. After paying such a compliment it is customary to add the word "but"—and I shall proceed to do that, unfortunately—but with all due respect to the hon. member's intentions, although the recommendations set forth and the proposals made in Bill C-17 are certainly much in order, the sections relating to the electoral districts are rather unfair and contradict one another.

Hon. members interested in pursuing the subject will find that the definition of an "electoral district agent" in section 2 is somewhat contradictory to that referred to in subsection 13.1(4) of the act, which again is contradicted in subsection 13.1(2)(b), so there can be no doubt that the amendment is absolutely necessary. The difficulty is, however, that there are a number of other amendments which one would think will have to be considered. Before going on to that, and in order to make more sense of the problems that I foresee which will require amendments and which I think might be referred to as the need for an