

items in the act which we feel should be given reconsideration in order to maintain consistency throughout various sections of the bill. Of much greater concern, however, is the silence of the bill in respect to the question of anonymous contributions. Earlier in this debate the leader of this party spoke about the brown paper bags and envelopes passed around to different parties at election time. I think that question was explored very well by the committee. I certainly cannot see how it is going to give confidence to the electorate if political parties can receive donations from individuals who in the future will expect something in return. I think our political system must be above that.

While this matter will have to be discussed in depth in the committee, it troubles me that it has not been included as an amendment, despite the fact that such a proposal was put forth by the all-party committee. Having served on that committee, I must point out that it was the feeling of the committee that an amendment should have been introduced instructing that all anonymous contributions received by a candidate or organization be sent to the Receiver General. It is most difficult to understand why the act is completely silent on this issue and ignores the suggestions which were agreed to by members of all four registered parties. When the minister introduced the bill today, he mentioned unanimous consent. This was part of the unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, and I do not think he meant to lead the House to believe that everyone was in agreement with the all-party committee.

Another matter which demands equal consideration involves an amendment which has been included in the act but which was not, in fact, agreed to by the all-party committee. This question centres around clause 9, dealing with election expenses and adjustments which more specifically apply a cost of living index to party and candidate expense limits for elections held after 1977. The pros and cons of such an arrangement certainly will have to be considered, but I feel that it should be pointed out that this amendment was not, in fact, given unanimous support by the all-party committee. The government is ignoring the recommendations of the all-party committee.

Without trying to suggest outright improper motives, one must question the government's treatment of these two points with respect to this bill. Surely, the day has long since passed when anonymous contributions are an accepted part of the political process. I refuse to believe or to accept that Canadians want to sanction underhanded or questionable dealings with respect to the finances of a political party. The spirit of openness is pervading all areas of our life today, and certainly the political process should be in the forefront of reform. Instead, the government seems to prefer to drag its feet or, worse yet, to ignore, by silence, a shoddy practice. It has been said that silence gives consent, and the application is quite clear in this situation.

There is much more I could say regarding the specifics of this bill, but I will deal with these matters at greater length in the pending committee meetings. I am sure it is the intention of my party that the fair-minded and co-operative spirit which

was evident in the ad hoc committee will continue during further deliberations. We will, however, oppose those aspects of this bill which we feel are not in the public interest, and I look forward to pursuing these matters vigorously in committee.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the election expenses legislation in Canada was a completely new departure and, I suppose, a departure that is unheralded in the free world and certainly one that is being studied in other nations of the free world. For the first time, legislation required all parties to fully and fairly disclose the source of their funding, both from the point of view of the party and from the point of view of individual candidates. It allowed, for the first time, an unusual inducement for members of the public, from all walks of life, to become involved in the political process by making contributions. In fact, it brought out of the back rooms of politics the question of party financing and the financing of candidates.

It brought, I think, a level of understanding to the political process which had never been evident before. It gave the average Canadian a legitimate chance of participating in the political process in the full glare of public scrutiny. Disclosure was the hallmark of that bill, and consideration for the full disclosure was the allowance that could be given for tax purposes. It is a statute that has been used effectively in my riding and in others. It was one which politicians were quite proud and pleased to support in every way.

When the statute was first introduced a few years ago, it required a number of amendments. They were advanced by all parties, including the government, because it was so new and so untried that no draftsman could hope to encompass all the difficulties the first time. The interesting thing about the committee process with regard to this bill was that there was a great range of mutual understanding, a sense of togetherness, by men and women of all political parties, officials and elected representatives who were prepared to band together to ensure that we had within our grasp the best possible statute.

There was an atmosphere of good faith and of consultation. Because all of us—I suppose we, more than anyone else, in the political process—are aware of the cynicism which affects that process. This series of amendments which has resulted in this rather formidable Bill C-5, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act which was given first reading on October 24, 1977, came about as a result of a series of further consultations. The representatives of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and, I dare say, those of the New Democratic Party also, felt that the same spirit of co-operation, the same sense of non-partisanship, the same positive approach that characterized the earlier negotiations would continue. To a great measure, this has been the case. But it is a matter of regret—and I know it is a matter of regret for the hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton (Mr. Scott) and his hon. friends on the committee—that the bill seems to go far beyond that which was agreed upon.