

Canada Elections Act

I might say that the government had a different kind of proposal, but when it saw what we came up with it backed off its own and went ahead with the one that the all-party ad hoc committee proposed. I would ask hon. members to give unanimous consent to allow this to go forward.

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, I have sat on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections since 1973. In preparation for the debate on this bill, I read through each one of the minutes. I find in issue No. 1 for Tuesday, November 8, and Wednesday, November 16, 1977, that the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) queried Mr. J. O. Gorman on pages 18, 19, 20 and 21 about this topic. On pages 18 and 19 of issue No. 2 of the committee I asked something about this.

It is also referred to in issue No. 3 at pages 17 and 18 where the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Leblanc) discussed this with Mr. Hamel, putting two different types of examples. The Chief Electoral Officer indicated one would be caught by the act as it existed and one would be legal as the act existed. I remember in 1973 we asked that there be a defence allowed in that act. Since the Crown has appealed the decision, I do not think we can say it is not working. It may very well be working. The Crown is sufficiently satisfied that there was a wrong decision at the lower court and that they had a strong enough case to make an appeal.

Mr. Reid: Not the Crown, the Commissioner for Election Expenses.

Mr. Dick: All right, the Commissioner for Election Expenses. I thought that was an agency of the Crown. On that ground, and because of the lack of co-operation I have had from the minister, I feel this is a minor thing and I will withhold my consent on this occasion.

Mr. Benjamin: Shame!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may say a word on this same point of order. I hope I can suggest something that might bring peace. I appreciate the fact that the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) is not prepared to give the necessary consent to proceed with this motion. However, it has come out of the debate that has taken place that there have been discussions among the representatives of all the parties, including his own, of which he was not aware. I wonder whether there is some way we can stand this matter so that there can be discussions overnight and we can deal with it tomorrow.

Let me right away say this, and I invite the attention to this of the deputy government House leader. I realize that one of the concerns about not getting this bill through the report stage tonight and having to finish the report stage tomorrow is that some members might not be willing to proceed with third reading tomorrow. I want to give the undertaking on behalf of this party that if this report stage is stood over until tomorrow so that we can conclude it then, we will agree to proceed with third reading tomorrow.

We may get no further tomorrow than we can get tonight, but I make my appeal to the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton, not that he change his mind tonight because he has made it pretty firm where he stands, but that he be a party to discussions overnight to see whether there might be consent.

I listened with interest to the point made by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid), not only about the agreement of all the parties, but that all parties have a stake in it. I would go further and say that the country has a stake in any effort to see to it that a bill that is supposed to put a ceiling on election expenditures actually does it. If we do not cover this, the sky becomes the limit.

I do not blame you, Sir, for getting to the point in your chair, that indicates you want me not to get into the substance. I shall get back to the procedure.

● (2122)

I make an appeal to the House to let this motion stand. We could then go on to motion No. 16 and continue the report stage of this bill tomorrow on the understanding, as far as we are concerned, that third reading will also be proceeded with tomorrow.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I want to make it clear that it is agreeable to us that third reading should be completed immediately following the report stage consideration. I say this so that the deputy government House leader, when considering the suggestion made to him by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), might understand the position we are prepared to take. I hope the hon. gentleman will consider standing the motion on the basis of that undertaking.

Mr. Cafik: If my understanding of what has been said is accurate we would be quite prepared to agree to standing this motion. However, I should like to make sure that my understanding is accurate: there would be an agreement of the House, now, which would allow us to proceed to third reading of this bill tomorrow and to complete third reading tomorrow. If that is the case I am quite prepared to allow motion No. 15 to stand in order to allow the party opposite to consider its position with regard to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The way to evil being paved with half measures perhaps we should make it an order of the House that, notwithstanding deferral of consideration of motion 15 and the completion of the report stage, tomorrow the House would proceed to the adoption of the bill without further delay, completing all its stages.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is the proposition I was making and you are perfectly right in including in that House order that proceedings on the bill should be concluded tomorrow—that Bill C-5 be passed through all stages before the private members' hour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There seems to be agreement. Unless somebody expresses a contrary view, it is so ordered. Motion 15 is accordingly allowed to stand.