

### *Election Expenses*

a real form of assistance to them. The bill also provides for a cash amount of \$250 to each candidate who receives 20 per cent of the vote. This, as was proposed in the committee report, is to provide for auditing fees.

The bill restricts advertising to 29 days prior to the date of the election and puts a limit of 6½ hours on time for broadcasting. This time is allocated among the various parties through the CRTC and representatives of the various parties. There is a further public subsidy in that one-half of this time is being paid for out of the public treasury.

The bill also makes provision that the rates charged will be the regular minimum rates, not the inflated rates that many of us have run into when buying time on television and radio stations during an election campaign. It seems to me that this provision shortening the public advertising period will be most merciful to the people. Anything beyond 29 days stretches the campaign out beyond all reasonable limits, at least at the public level. The 6½ hours of time recommended for television, which works out to some 13 minutes per day, does not seem very much. Of course, when the largest percentage of this is concentrated in the last few days I am sure most Canadians find it adequate to listen to.

● (2040)

The tax credit for donations represents a significant contribution from public funds in view of the loss of revenue to the public treasury. However, I personally hope that the fact that a person gets a deduction on their tax will give their donation a certain air of respectability and acceptance by the public and that it will act as an incentive for making donations to political parties, which is highly desirable. The Barbeau commission spoke about the idea of broadening the base so that we have many people giving smaller amounts of money, and of course the tax credit system is designed for that; it is weighted toward the small donor.

These proposals in Bill C-203, Mr. Speaker, represent the most sweeping reforms in election campaign expenses in Canada's history. They embody most of the proposals of the Barbeau commission report and the special committee of the House of Commons; they meet many of the concerns that the committee had and that Canadians in general have; they place a limit on expenditures by candidates and parties; they shorten the campaign of advertising on the broadcast media; they prevent gouging by T.V. or radio stations of candidates in their charges for advertising; they provide assistance for candidates who receive 20 per cent of the votes cast in the election; they provide assistance from public funds for radio and T.V. advertising by parties; they provide for disclosure of donations to parties and candidates of over \$100; and they provide tax incentives to make donations to political parties. I believe the bill removes the veil of secrecy from party financing which, when it is open to the light of day, I think will seem less spicy and less interesting.

I am pleased to support the bill, Mr. Speaker, and to see that all parties in the House are supporting the bill. I hope it will proceed to adoption by the House after a thorough study in the standing committee.

[Mr. Foster.]

**Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, like other members of the House I welcome the bill that is before us and I certainly support its basic principles. I think there are a number of particular faults that have been enumerated by others who have spoken before, and which will be re-enumerated by others speaking in the debate tonight. It is the clear will and intention of the House to get the matter into committee quickly so that we can give it the careful and detailed examination necessary to bring a better bill back to the House.

I welcome also the interest of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) in amendments. I am prepared to overlook the fact that he has no alternative on this issue in this minority parliament. It seems to me to be the particular genius of the President of the Privy Council to act gracefully when he has no alternative. I presume that his expression of interest in amendments was a kind of apology in advance for the draftmanship of the bill. Clearly the bill is so riddled with holes and uncertainties as it stands that one is almost tempted to think that the cabinet ignored the services of the law officers of the Crown and drafted it themselves. The bill needs extensive tightening and amendment and this will occur during the committee stage.

I think an important point to make is that this matter will not come back before us again. This is the only time we will have to consider the question of election expenses and questions of related abuses. We must therefore take care in committee to ensure that we achieve the best bill possible, and to ensure that we get it out of committee and into this House in time to be in effect before the next general election.

While I welcome the bill I do not welcome the atmosphere which brought it here. That is not an atmosphere of Watergate, which is a consideration which is irrelevant, at least to my party. We were on record for the need for improvement and reform in this area well before Watergate, and on record as assigning the highest priority to this question of reform. The atmosphere I speak of is one of cynicism and suspicion which was developed deliberately for partisan purposes by spokesmen of the New Democratic Party at great cost to the public's respect for public life in Canada. Indeed, Sir, if any Watergate analogy is apt, it is the analogy between the apparent immorality of the advisers there, who believed that any means justified the end of re-electing the President, and the amorality here of the political operatives of the NDP who deliberately and over time, and virtually without evidence, sought to create a mythology of corporate control of the political process, thereby deepening cynicism and public distrust.

The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) was at it again today, drawing dark implications with his usual lack of specific evidence. I do not intend to dwell longer on this point except to say that we are talking in this debate about honesty in the political system; and if it is dishonest for a politician to be bought—as we all agree it would be—so it offends any sensible concept of honesty to suggest that one's opponents are bought, subliminally or otherwise, when you know that they are not.

That atmosphere of cynicism is unfortunate, not simply because it undermines respect for the system and the process of politics, but also because this contrived ques-