

order to encourage public participation in political life, and measures designed to democratize access to radio and television at election time—both excellent innovations.

This bill provides for a tax deduction of one third, up to a maximum of \$500, of contributions made annually to registered parties or to candidates through authorized agents who will have to file a report. The special committee had rather recommended the introduction of tax relief for individuals and corporations. This is, however, an excellent measure which should encourage the public to participate in the financing of our political parties, a thing for which it has always showed very little interest, and the results will be most interesting to watch.

Finally, the bill aims at limiting to 6½ hours the broadcasting time allowed the registered parties at election time, according to the recommendation of the special committee. This time will be divided up fairly among the parties, under the authority of the CRTC, and I believe that formula has already given good results. It is only fair that the cost be shared by the government and the parties themselves that will benefit from the arrangement.

I want to point out a well-advised innovation which will be welcomed by all the candidates and which is already enshrined in the Quebec Election Act. As everyone is aware, election campaigns signal the revival of the almost general practice whereby the rates of advertisement in newspapers, over the radio and television are boosted. From now on, rates will be based on the lowest rates applicable to customers for comparable advertisements. This reform was imperative and is intended to rectify an unjust situation.

Mr. Speaker, the president of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) indicated that, except with regard to fundamental principles, he was willing to listen to the recommendations of hon. members, and of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to which the bill will be referred, and where we will have the opportunity of discussing it further and suggesting amendments. Meantime, the government must be congratulated for having introduced this bill with a view to bringing in several important and interesting changes in a complex field which touches upon the very basis of our democratic life.

This is an important step towards improving further a system that was not perfect but which won Canada the reputation of holding elections that truly reflect the will of the people.

[English]

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, when this debate began on Thursday, May 18, my colleague the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) indicated that we are in support of the principle of this bill. But in that same speech he pointed out that in the bill there are some very serious flaws. Even by the time my colleague reached the end of his speech, he found it necessary to say this:

• (1650)

Finally, and in my opinion most importantly, I say to the government House leader it is a "must" that we incorporate an additional clause in the bill to provide for a limitation on parties the same as is provided for candidates. Unless we have a limitation on parties'

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expenditure, the whole intent, purpose and most of the principle of the legislation is nullified or set aside.

I may say on behalf of the members of this party, including the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), that our further and more detailed study of this bill has led us to the conviction that although there are a number of things in it that are good, the bill itself completely fails to implement the principle that we support and the principle that the bill is supposed to implement. We have had that drawn to our attention in mild but very effective terms this afternoon by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Chappell) who was the chairman of the special committee that considered this whole question. Even he, before he got to the end of his speech, pleaded with the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) that Bill C-211 be sent back to the special committee, and that the special committee be reconstituted for that purpose, so that it might participate in the drafting of a better piece of legislation.

The position that we take is that this bill, although it is presented to us as a bill to control election expenses and to do certain other things with respect to elections, completely fails to do what it proposes to do and we feel that to pass this bill off on the people of Canada in its present form is to perpetrate another hoax. In our view, the government is trading on the general and popular interest in the idea of doing something about election expenses and it hopes that because it has presented a bill which is called a bill dealing with election expenses the public will swallow it and think that something good has been done.

In our view, if this bill were passed and put on the statute books, it would fail to do the job that it is supposed to do, and its presence on the statute books would be a bar to getting a decent piece of legislation for a long time to come. Therefore, we feel, as does the hon. member for Peel South, only perhaps we feel a bit stronger about it than he does, that this bill in its present form should not be proceeded with. It should either be sent back to the special committee that dealt with this matter or it should be sent back to the government and a totally new piece of legislation should be introduced.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that you realize that I am making it very clear that it is our intention to vote against this bill in its present form so that you will realize that when I propose at the end of my speech a reasoned amendment you will see that it is not one of those amendments with which you sometimes have to cope, the kind that seem to go both ways. Ours is an amendment that says that this bill should be stopped in its progress and, instead, that a totally different piece of legislation should be introduced.

In the reasoned amendment which I shall move, I shall indicate at least two of the important principles which should be contained in a better piece of legislation. I may say that we gave a good deal of consideration to the question of whether those principles could be obtained by making amendments to this bill, and we have come to the conclusion that that cannot be done. I state that both in procedural terms and in substantive terms. We therefore feel that this bill in its present form should not be proceeded with but that the House should stop it in its tracks,