

*Election Expenses Bill*

Council that he is prepared to consider at least a government contribution related to the total range of expenditures of a candidate, but he is not prepared to recommend a ceiling on publicity expenditures, despite the fact that the government would be contributing toward the total expenditures?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Yes, I said that I would be prepared to consider relating the contribution to the over-all expenditures that a candidate would list on his return, rather than just to advertising expenditures. I have considered this and I do not believe there is necessarily any logical contradiction in agreeing to the proposition urged by the Leader of the Opposition and not agreeing to placing everything under a limit. But perhaps my logic does not work in the same way as that of others. At least I think that that area has to be considered in the committee.

**Mr. Benjamin:** I am not clear on what the minister said. Perhaps I missed something he said regarding the recommendation of the special committee on the limitation of expenses of a party. I am sure the minister is aware that the limitation which the special committee recommended was 30 cents per elector in the aggregate number of constituencies in which the party runs candidates, provided they qualify. Would the minister tell us what his feelings are on this, and if there is no over-all limitation on the parties in that sense does that not nullify much of the rest of the bill?

**Mr. MacEachen:** As I mentioned, there is a virtual limit on broadcasting and that, we have been told, is the area where the greatest expansion of expenditure has taken place in the last ten or 15 years. So that is capped; there is a limit on that. I have said that the intent of the bill is to prohibit parties from spending money in a way that will assist the candidate in piercing his limits on advertising. It seems to me that those are two effective limits on parties. If you put a dollar limit on the over-all expenditure you would strike out the broadcast limit, because why have two separate limits?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Is that more of the MacEachen logic?

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has spoken with such a pleading voice to members of the House that one feels almost uncomfortable in telling him off, but I will suffer the discomfort. May I say to him that no one doubts that his mind is open. The question is whether it is merely ajar on the points that he has indicated, or whether it is really open with respect to some of the basic principles of this bill which my colleagues have indicated, which the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) indicated and about which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) spoke today.

Let us look at the situation and find out why the minister is so eager to push this bill through. The question of election expenses has been on the agenda of public discussion in Canada for God knows how many years and, as has already been pointed out on a number of occasions, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) undertook in no uncertain terms in the campaign of 1968 to deal with the matter of electoral reform on a first priority basis. At one point he said—if I remember correctly and I am sure I do—that

[Mr. Stanfield.]

he would deal with it at the first session of Parliament if he were elected Prime Minister.

We have waited four years. It is clear from what the Prime Minister and the Chief Electoral Officer have said publicly to the committee that even if the bill were passed quickly, it is not likely to be available for the next federal general election unless that election does not take place for a year. So why is the government so anxious to push this bill through, when they know perfectly well that it will not be available, even if it were not changed, for the next federal election?

**Mr. Woolliams:** The answer is obvious.

**Mr. Lewis:** As the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) said, the answer is obvious. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) and the Prime Minister want to be able to go across the country waving a piece of paper in the air and saying that they have done something about electoral reform.

• (1700)

So far as my colleagues and I are concerned, we do not intend to make it easy for them to mislead the Canadian people that they have engaged in electoral reform. If the President of the Privy Council admits, with the Prime Minister and the Chief Electoral Officer, that this law cannot be of use in the next federal election, then I say to him that the proper thing to do is to take a great deal of time with the bill and see whether we could not arrive at changes that are basic to the whole concept of election expenses.

Not with any surprise, Mr. Speaker, did I hear the Leader of the Opposition agree with the government party against requiring full disclosure of election contributions. I want to emphasize that so far as the NDP is concerned, we stand firmly on the proposition that the people have a right to know who has contributed to parties and to candidates. Other people have dealt with this question in a personal way. Let me put it to you, Mr. Speaker, in a personal way. I am certain that if there were full disclosure of personal contributions to my campaign, I would lose some contributors because some persons who contributed to my campaigns in the past are not of my party but are well known supporters of some other party. But for some aberration or other that I would not like to define, they have decided they would send me \$100 or \$200 to assist me in my campaigns.

It may well be that if I had to disclose their names, they would telephone me and say, "David, I am sorry. I did it during the last few elections but I cannot do it now because I don't intend to make public the fact that I make a contribution to you." That may happen to all members of this House and it may happen to all parties in this House, but I think that is a very small price to pay for the important and basic principle by which our party stands, that the people of Canada have a right to know who is contributing to my campaign, who is contributing to my party and how much is being contributed to my campaign and to my party.

**Mr. MacEachen:** May I ask the honourable gentleman a question?