

Election Expenses

I recall an occasion during a recent election campaign when a candidate in Toronto went deeply into debt in an unsuccessful bid for office. He was forced to declare bankruptcy in order to clear his campaign debts and he hurt a lot of people, including himself, in the process. That was a personal tragedy. I am convinced that a great many people will be encouraged to take such a long chance in the future if we encourage them with handouts from the public purse. To some people, running for office is a tremendous challenge but one that is beyond their capability and beyond their means. As our system works today, these people in most cases are discouraged from getting in over their heads, and in my view this constraint is a healthy and wise one.

A worthy candidate for public office is rarely prevented from reaching that goal because he or she lacks personal wealth. If such a limitation existed in our country I might be inclined to support clause 11, particularly if it would remove such a restriction. However, I do not believe anyone is restricted from standing for public office or that this in any way will be corrected by this provision. Therefore, I cannot accept this as a legitimate part of a bill on election reform.

The hard-fought political campaign in which two or more serious candidates are often locked in a battle for public office, whether it be for the House of Commons or any other level of government in this country, is part of the tradition of Canadian politics. This system has not only endured for the past 106 years and more; it has become an integral part of Canadian life. I would not want to see such an institution sacrificed for something that is less desirable and less likely to ensure that the right candidate wins office. I am not convinced that the subsidization of candidates by the federal government is a better system and I urge all my colleagues in this House to insist that this clause be amended or deleted from the bill.

Again I am reminded of the monstrous bill this government called tax reform over a year ago. That bill was change, but it was not reform. The same can be said of this bill. Let us have reform, but let us not have change for the sake of change. Let us not allow this government to change our political system in such a way that it resembles something which is not Canadian.

I have worked most of my political life to preserve and build in the Canadian way, both in municipal and in federal office, and I cannot stand by and watch this government tear down everything I and others have worked to build up. The Canadian taxpayers are carrying enough on their backs already. I urge my colleagues once again not to burden them further with the election expenses of every candidate who aspires to public office. Let us preserve the Canadian ideal to the greatest extent possible.

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REDISTRIBUTION

CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS TO COMMISSION REPORT ON ONTARIO

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Before I recognize the parliamentary secretary perhaps the House would allow me to interrupt the proceedings.

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

It is my duty to inform the House that an objection signed by the hon. members for Cochrane, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Timmins, Kenora-Rainy River, York West, Nipissing, Renfrew North-Nipissing East, Thunder Bay, Algoma and Grenville-Carleton, has been filed with me pursuant to section 20 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, chapter E-2, RSC, 1970, to the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Ontario.

If the House agrees, I would suggest that the text of the objection be printed as an appendix to the *Votes and Proceedings* of this day.

Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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ELECTION EXPENSES

PROVISION OF PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PARTIES FOR CERTAIN BROADCASTING TIME

The House resumed consideration of the motion (Mr. MacEachen) that Bill C-203, to amend the Canada Elections Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Income Tax Act in respect of election expenses, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-203 addresses itself to the two principal problems of election financing, the problem of assistance and the problem of control. By the problem of assistance I mean assisting the various political parties in financing elections and, of course, by the problem of control I refer to the controlling of the collecting and spending of funds by political parties. The fundamental political issues here are not theoretically separable from the democratic functioning of political parties in our system, which in turn is not separable from the successful functioning of representative democracy, if we believe, as I do, and I am sure all of us here do, that political parties and their well-functioning are essential to the kind of democracy we know.

All of us who have been active in political party associations before coming to this House will be especially conscious of this fact. Personally, I have been preoccupied with this problem for a good many years. In 1966, as chairman of the policy committee of the Liberal Party of Ontario, immediately following party reform in respect of policy accountability and leadership review, in which I played some part, I moved to establish election financing as the next priority within the party. The bill before us today is the end result of a process which began with the appointment of the Barbeau commission by the Pearson government in 1964, and was encouraged along the way by pressures from within all the political parties by people devoted to democratization.

Some would go further than this bill before us proposes. I recall at least one witness who appeared before the Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada who suggested