members were elected with 26 or 27 per cent of the votes. Thus, theoretically a defeated candidate may be very close to the winner and not have obtained 20 per cent of the number of votes cast.

Instead of speaking of 20 per cent of the number of votes cast, we could say 25 per cent of the number of votes cast for the winner. It would be more fair, I think, for all the candidates. There are at present at least four official parties that put up candidates in almost every riding. If, at a given time, there was a close contest between the four parties, each party could theoretically get 25 per cent. Thus, that is when the candidate gets 20 per cent of the number of votes. In such a situation, this result becomes fantastic.

We should rather say 25 per cent of the number of votes obtained by the elected candidate, our electoral system being what it is, based on the principle of the simple majority on the first ballot.

There is another aspect of this bill that is worth mentioning. A maximum fine of $25,000 is provided in the case of political parties that would be guilty of an offense against this act.

Mr. Speaker, when one knows about the astronomical amounts spent by certain political parties during an election, when one knows that those expenses amount to millions of dollars, one will understand that paying $25,000 for violating the law would not be very much for old political parties. They will readily pay those $25,000 for they have plenty of money.

The paying of such a fine would not make much difference in situations such as those we have unfortunately known and will probably see again.

It would seem at first sight that the object of this bill—I would not like to question the motives of the President of the Privy Council—is to favour the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties' election funds.

Mr. Pepin: Poor little martyr.

Mr. Matte: Indeed Mr. Speaker, some election funds are well supplied. Methods were devised so that corporations of all kinds and individuals may make contributions to political parties. And God knows that it is being done. The hon. Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) puts this principle into practice when he writes for example to all the corporations to which he granted subsidies, inviting them to contribute to the Liberal party's election funds. There is no doubt that huge amounts are expected.

I think that we should pay more attention to such things, in order not to alter the results of the elections.

Mr. Speaker, the bill also says—this seems to be another important part of this legislation—that some tax exemptions will be available. We are all for that but, again, this will benefit mostly those who can offer considerable sums of money to the political parties. On our side—everybody knows it—we are a basically popular party that exists only through the willpower of the people at large. All those things are foreign to us. Those who are being elected exclusively on matters of principle and conviction are always somewhat surprised at the potential of well-lined electoral coffers.

Anyway, we heartily hope that this legislation will be so amended that the ideal situation might be pursued, that is to allow to people full freedom of speech something which must be safeguarded even more when elections come since at that moment the voter makes the most important decision. We therefore have before us a legislation directly related to the voter's freedom of speech.

We should therefore consider all possible ways to ensure more freedom of speech by means of such a bill, provided the government is prepared to accept our suggestions and our amendments in due course.

[*English*]

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I shall be very brief, Mr. Speaker, but I must put in a word or two about one or two of the exceptions to the exceptions for which provision is made in this bill. I speak not only for myself, but for my colleague the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange), though I am sure there are one or two other constituencies, such as for example, Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador and Coast Chilcotin where there is an absence of conventional means of transportation. I speak specifically of the clause in the bill which deals with the reimbursement of travel expenses. I hope the government will seriously consider amending the bill in committee so as to deal with a defect which, in my view, is very glaring.

Hon. members who refer to this clause on page 18 of the bill will find that it limits the reimbursement of travelling expenses to a maximum of $3,000. Now, where there are no scheduled airline services, where there are no roads and where it is not possible to reach certain portions of constituencies, such as the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, without chartering air services, hon. members will realize at once that this amount of money disappears very rapidly when applied to transportation. For example, $3,000 would pay the cost of two return trips from White Horse to the northernmost portion of my constituency at Old Crow.

As to my colleague from the Northwest Territories, there is no way he can travel from Yellowknife to the easternmost portion of his constituency without coming down to Edmonton and taking a commercial carrier into the eastern Arctic. From that point he has to charter air services. It is impossible to undertake this kind of travel for an expenditure of $3,000. The two factors to be taken into account are the absence of conventional means of transportation and a lack of easily accessible communications media in those two large northern constituencies.

I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Northwest Territories makes up a constituency which is 1,300,000 square miles in area. It is not possible to get around a constituency of that size on $3,000. I did not look at the last return of election expenses put in by my colleague from the Northwest Territories, but if he did not he should have spent some $10,000 on transportation. In the Yukon, I can state quite frankly that my average over the seven elections that I have gone through in the last 14 years has been $5,000. There is no way you can cut that figure any finer.