

Election Expenses Bill

For example, in a constituency having 45,000 electors a candidate would be limited to \$30,000 on his campaign advertising costs. These are the figures put forward by the special committee. They are larger than the amounts recommended earlier by the Barbeau committee. They are within shooting distance of the actual experience of particular urban candidates in the last federal election.

They may seem to be generous or to be too large, but bearing in mind the recent experience of candidates, and that if adopted this legislation will exist probably for quite a number of future elections, they seem to be a reasonable limit at this particular time. As a government we are not married to these particular figures. If persuasive arguments can be made that they ought to be increased or decreased, then we would consider that question as well.

Now I would like to deal with a number of constituencies so that hon. members will get some idea of the amounts we are talking about. For example, the constituency of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), with estimated electors of 60,284 at April 1, 1972, would have a spending limit of \$28,825.

• (2030)

An hon. Member: He will need more than that.

Mr. MacEachen: The constituency of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), with 45,807 electors, would have a spending limit of \$25,201. The constituency of the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), with 47,130 electors, would have a spending limit of \$25,550. The constituency of the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), with 33,000 electors, would have a spending limit of \$22,000. Those are the limits for these constituencies. It is not difficult for hon. members to compute the amounts for themselves. If I can make a personal comment based on my experience as a candidate in a number of elections, I believe that these are real limits, not fictional limits and that in the future candidates will be held back quite forcibly by these limits when they are confronted with managing a modern election campaign based, as it is, on the employment of the media.

I should like to turn for a moment to the limitation of spending by the parties. The bill does not impose any over-all spending limit upon registered political parties. In this particular we followed the recommendation contained in the Barbeau report. The bill does, however, impose limits on the use of the broadcast media by political parties through an election campaign. It is in the area of the electronics media that campaign spending by registered parties has escalated most notably in recent years.

It was for this reason that the Barbeau committee and the special committee recommended that some limitation be placed on spending in these areas. Spending by registered parties in other areas such as in the press has not proved to be as significant in terms of consumption of campaign funds as the broadcast media, and consequently the need for control is not so great. Registered parties will be limited to 6½ hours on any broadcast outlet during the election campaign. That is not 6½ hours for each political party; the total 6½ hours is to be shared by the registered parties and the bill provides that the CRTC will be

[Mr. MacEachen.]

given the responsibility of adjudicating any dispute as to the allocation of time.

Mr. Woolliams: That is pretty dangerous.

Mr. MacEachen: This is also a real limit. It follows the recommendation of both the Barbeau committee and the special committee. In arriving at any allocation formula, the CRTC is to consult representatives of the registered parties in an attempt to have the formula worked out by agreement. If agreement cannot be reached, the CRTC can put forward a proposal and give notice that it will be binding and after two days it will be binding on all parties. The CRTC will then notify all broadcasters in Canada of the proposed allocation and these broadcasters must provide time to the registered parties on the basis of that allocation. There are penalties for any failure to provide this time. The time will be paid for one-half by the Chief Electoral Officer and one-half by the political party itself.

Beyond this over-all limit, political parties will not be permitted to buy time but broadcasters who so wish can contribute time over this limit to registered political parties. If such a contribution is made, it must be made to all parties on the basis of the formula just mentioned. Consequently, the advantage to any registered party which might be obtained by having had campaign funds available for media advertising will be lost and all parties will be on a comparable footing as far as the use of paid broadcasting is concerned.

As hon. members are aware there is a great deal of interest in the question of disclosure of the source of campaign funds. The Barbeau committee in its hearings identified a feeling held by many Canadians that political parties must have something to hide because they do not disclose who are their contributors. I do not suggest that this feeling is justified by the facts surrounding the contributions to any party; however, because this feeling exists it is necessary that we not only reassure the public about political parties but that we do it in such a way that they will be convinced that the assurance is real and solid.

This bill reflects the view that disclosure of the sources of campaign contributions will put the facts surrounding contributions before the public. It will have a salutary effect in reducing the alleged mystery surrounding the financing of political campaigns, and probably for the first time will impress upon the public the fact that usually political parties are broke and between elections have a great deal of difficulty financing their annual activities, and that despite the alleged wealth of political parties each of them has great difficulty and candidates have a great deal of difficulty at election time in raising money to finance their campaign.

It is a myth, of course, of modern politics that money flows into the coffers of political parties without limit and that really it is an abundance of riches with which the parties work at election time. We hope that the system of disclosure recommended in this bill will put a good deal of this misunderstanding to rest and that the public will have a real look at how much money political parties raise each year, how much they raise for elections, how much they spend and what they spend it on. As a government, we have not gone into conclave and decided what system of