

Private Members' Business

What this bill really does is abrogate a lot of democratic rights in this country. Canadians should be aware that the reason a party has to run 50 candidates somewhere in order to be registered as a party is really designed to make sure that taxpayers' money is not totally and frivolously spent. What happens, as most of us know, is if a candidate is successful half the candidate's election expenses are returned to them courtesy of the taxpayer. A lot of people think that is an abuse of taxpayers' money but it would be a lot more of an abuse if anybody could run and expect to have half their expenses paid by the rest of society.

The law was designed so that there had to be at least some threshold of support for a group or a party before they could expect to receive some funding from the taxpayer. That is the real reason why the present act says that a party must run 50 candidates somewhere in Canada in order to qualify as a registered party.

The law was not designed to limit the right to association of Canadians and limit the right of Canadians to get together for purposes of political activity.

• (1810)

I would suggest that it is very important that we not limit the right of Canadians, not make it more difficult, not put onerous requirements on Canadians who want to participate in the political process. This is a subject that obviously is very near and dear to my heart because for the last seven years of my young life I have spent building a new political dynamic to inject into a hidebound and reactionary system. We need change sometimes in democratic society and democratic politics.

That change usually starts small. It starts with a vision and support for it grows. It does not sort of arrive full blown from the soil. I am here to tell members that because I have participated in that kind of exercise.

If we insist that a political movement, a political dynamic, only has legitimacy if somehow it has instant support so that it can have registered candidates right across the country, and lots of them, it simply is going to limit the change, the newness and the renewal that we allow in our political system which is very unacceptable in a democracy.

The hon. member for Don Valley North when he spoke made two statements that I take very grave exception to. First of all, as a westerner I am absolutely outraged that he would say that you are only legitimate as a political party if you have an office in Ontario.

Somehow the arrogance of certain assumptions just overwhelms me. To say that only something rooted in Ontario has legitimacy in our political system is outrageous. I would suggest to the hon. member that the political renewal that has its base in western Canada is every bit as useful to this country, is every bit as positive a dynamic in our political system as a political party

that has its roots in Newfoundland, Montreal or in Yukon. It does not matter where your head office is, it matters where your head is and that is the important thing.

I also take exception to the continual distortion by members opposite of the Reform Party and its policies. Here is another example that we just heard a few minutes ago. The member for Don Valley West said that the Reform Party signs during the election campaign said this we will run the country the way we run our campaign. Then he went on to say since we ran our campaign without candidates in Quebec, obviously we would run the country without Quebec.

What an abuse, what a distortion of what Reform really said. For the record, the Reform signs said, and I hope everyone is listening, that we will run the country the way we run our campaign, debt free. I challenge the member to indicate whether his party ran the campaign debt free. We sure know it is not running the country debt free. It is running this country into debt \$110 million every single day. To it, success is placing a debt on our shoulders of another at least \$100 billion in its term of office.

I would like to have less distortion and more facts from the other side about what the Reform Party has to offer this country.

The real problem in this country is not political parties and who they represent and where they have their head offices. The real problem in this country is that the status quo, the old system, the old thinking, the old way of approaching issues does not work for us any more. We need renewal. We need change.

What we see in this House with a party which represents only one province and whose agenda is to break up this wonderful country is not something that should be corrected by suppressing legitimate political concern and discontent, but by addressing the root of the problem that caused this situation to begin with. The root of the problem is that status quo federalism does not work. We are faced with an opportunity staring us in the face to fix this system, to acknowledge that changes are needed for the benefit of all Canadians. It is not just the province represented by the members beside us that are discontent with the way this country has been run. There are people in all parts of the country who are saying we need change.

• (1815)

We need to serve notice that there has to be an honest debate about renewing our federation so that it works better for all of us. We do not need bills to suppress legitimate political expressions and democratic involvement. We need a government that will put ideas on the table to renew the way we operate as a country.

We need solutions and we need a resolution of this problem, not to hide it, not to suppress it, not to make it illegal, not to push it under the rug but to say we need change and the kind of changes we need.