

limiting candidates if political parties or national headquarters and provincial organizations can spend limitlessly on candidates? The purpose of the bill is to prevent political parties doing anything directly to assist a candidate.

Mr. Lewis: How do you do that?

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member asks how it is done. Probably there will be certain borderline cases, but certainly it seems to me that a candidate could get boxes of information or material, with his name on the boxes, from the national headquarters and regard that as an item which is not to be included in his over-all limit for advertising. It would seem to me that if in the committee there is any doubt concerning the tying-off of that string, or that it has not been tied properly in the bill, then it should be done in the committee. So there are limits in these two phases of possible activity.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister will entertain a question. He was speaking of individual candidates. Will he not agree that someone who has been a senior cabinet minister, or someone who has been a senior Member of Parliament would have an exposure on the media because he had the privilege of being here previously? He might be running against a just as good or an even better candidate who is a newcomer, but because that candidate had not had exposure on television, radio and perhaps the other media, he would be running at a very great disadvantage. There is the problem.

Mr. MacEachen: Of course my hon. friend is right. Who is equal in politics? The right hon. member for Prince Albert spoke about his method of electioneering. Who could be on an equal basis with him? Who could start in an equal position with the right hon. member for Prince Albert, in his constituency or in any other? What law could alter that? It seems to me we must be realistic and understand what a law can do in respect of trying to cover every possibility and make everything equal for members.

In respect of this bill I have attempted to tackle the obvious problems where results can be achieved. These are the principles I wanted to outline to the House, I hope in a non-provocative way, in order to explain the attitude behind the proposals. The Leader of the Opposition made an important point, as did other members, about the provisions respecting the print media, the moratorium on partisan comment, so-called, on polling day and the day before. People have asked where this came from. I shall try to explain the evolution of the appearance of that clause in the bill. It is clause 13. The special committee, in recommendation No. 25 recommended as follows:

We further recommend that the existing restriction on political broadcasts on polling day and on the immediate preceding day be extended to the print media, with the exception of newspapers which regularly publish only on Sunday.

Without boring the House by reading the sections, may I say that the present restrictions on political broadcasts are contained in two places, section 99 of the Canada Elections Act and section 28 of the Broadcasting Act. In reading that recommendation from the committee, one must refer to the existing restrictions and the existing law which is to be found in the two sections I have mentioned.

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It is a fact, also, that the Barbeau committee made no recommendation on this point, while the special committee did.

I shall not read the sections because they are there and can be read by members. Section 28, for example, I believe indicates the nub of the restriction. It provides that no broadcaster shall broadcast and no licensee of a broadcasting receiving undertaking shall receive a broadcast of a program, advertisement or announcement, of a partisan character. Then it refers to polling day and the day before.

• (1650)

What the draftsmen did in applying this section to the print media was probably to substitute the words "article" and "editorial" for the word "program". That is a simple transference in legal language, and the intent is to do that. There is no intention in this bill to have a news blackout; the intention is merely to achieve under the Broadcasting Act, for the print media, that which has existed since 1936 in the broadcast media. You can find the references in the parliamentary committee proceedings in 1936 when that provision was put in the Broadcasting Act, and broadcasters have been living under it from 1936 until 1972. That is a fact. Nobody has screamed about freedom of speech for the broadcasters.

I am informed that while there are some difficulties in application, it has been possible over these years for broadcasters to abide by this rule without too much difficulty. There has been some resistance to its application to the print media, to the newspapers, and I want to tell members of the House that when we go into committee, if it is commonly agreed that this is an inappropriate provision, that it ought to be modified and that different treatment should be accorded to the newspapers or the print media than to the broadcast media, then I will be receptive to legitimate and reasonable change. Changes can be made in the committee because the purpose, really, is to give effect to recommendation No. 25 of the special committee.

I have mentioned two matters already, one with respect to the reimbursement formula, upon which I think further thought is justified, and the second is the print media provision. Undoubtedly, there are others that will occur. All I want to say is that I am somewhat regretful that members of the House did not take my words at their face value when I said I had an open mind on a lot of things. Probably I will not agree to change some things, but here are some that I think we ought to consider in committee. In any event, regardless of the vote on second reading I would hope that we can tackle the bill in committee and, hopefully, produce a piece of legislation that will justify the support of the House in the final stages.

Mr. Stanfield: Would the minister permit a question for clarification? Was I correct in understanding the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) to say that he thought perhaps there was merit in the government contribution being related to the total range of expenditures of a candidate, rather than simply to areas of publicity, and that the President of the Privy Council is not prepared to support a ceiling on those total expenditures? In other words, is the position of the President of the Privy