

who is willing to put up funds of his own to increase his expenditure to the maximum permitted.

There are two ways to solving this difficulty. One is to reduce the total amount of expenditure allowed. I have no objection to this being done, because if it is reduced fairly and if all the loopholes are blocked, all candidates will still have the same chance. There is another alternative, and it is to allow for a greater degree of participation by the public. I do not know whether this is a satisfactory solution, and I have no axe to grind one way or the other, though I rather feel the public might.

If we are really saying that candidates should have an equal chance before the electorate, and that money should not buy a seat in the House, these are the only two alternatives which occur to me. We can reduce the expenditure or increase the ante, or we can reduce the expenditure and increase the ante. I have talked this over with a number of constituents and some of them feel that a contribution of 50 per cent of the expenditure might be more reasonable. I do not know. All I know is that the gap should be reduced between the \$26,250 and the \$7,750 which is presently suggested as being the contribution from the public purse.

There is one further point that might involve revising the over-all expenditure permitted in the bill. It is that one mailing be distributed at public expense. Under the provisions of the act, what is commonly called a "you vote at" card is to be prepared by the elections officer in the riding to be distributed to all the voters in that riding. There is provision in the act to permit candidates the cost of a first-class mailing, which amounts at the present time to 8 cents for every person in the riding.

● (1550)

That seems to me to be a pretty naïve suggestion. First of all, the cost involved in a mailing is considerable more, merely in terms of just preparing the mailing. Envelopes have to be prepared for every name on the voters' list. It seems to me that the elections officer has in fact access to that information. It is his responsibility to prepare the "you vote at" card under these provisions in any event, and since he has to provide that service he should provide an addressed envelope for the first-class mailing for every person in the riding for each party candidate who is running.

At the present time, all that is provided is the cost of the first-class postage. I do not see any provision in the act which would obligate a candidate to use that money for a first-class mailing. Perhaps my reading of the act is not clear, although I have read it two or three times. It seems to authorize the cost of a first-class mailing without providing any obligation to actually send out the mailing pieces. A person may not wish to send out a mailing; he may have a modest organization without the facilities to prepare the mailing for distribution. So I suggest that in addition to the "you vote at" card being provided, we provide an envelope for the candidate with the necessary postage affixed.

There are a number of other points in connection with this bill which cause me concern but I shall not deal with them at the present time. I intend to appear before the committee and I may make some representations at that

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time. I think this is an important step in the right direction and will clarify a matter over which there has been a cloud. It is important to encourage political donations by individuals and ensure that major contributions are identified by name. I think, too, that it is a very wholesome step forward to allow a tax concession to those who contribute to political parties. I have some reservations, however, and I think the major one involves how it will work and how it will be supervised in order to make sure that all candidates live up to the terms of the elections act so that one does not do something outside the act and thereby gain an unfair political advantage.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-203 to amend the Canada Elections Act in respect of election expenses seems good if we stop at the title. But if one makes a thorough study of it, as I did, one realizes that it is very complicated and that it is definitely to the advantage of the old political parties.

But who prepared that bill? Public servants, which means persons who were never elected but appointed for life in the public service. If there is a bill about which all members know something and which falls within their experience, it is surely the bill on election expenses. Public servants, who are never elected, nevertheless drafted the bill concerning the financing of members. That is why it is very complicated, confused and lacks practical common sense.

Before coming to the heart of the matter as regards this bill, Mr. Speaker, I should like to put on the record in *Hansard* the statement made by the president of the American Lobbyists Association when, in similar circumstances in the United States, a bill was to be introduced to limit election expenses. The president of that association stated, as he opposed such a piece of legislation, that politics belong to big corporations, banks, finance companies and that people had nothing to do with it. He contended that financiers knew better than anybody else what was good for the people, that finance experts, who managed politics and politicians, were the most qualified people to lead politicians. Later on the bill on election expenses was amended; expenditure limits were dropped and today the sky is the limit, as one could see during the last American election.

Limiting election expenses is a commendable objective but I would like to get at the precise meaning of this bill. The Social Credit Party of Canada has been the party which, to this day, has suffered most from the intervention of high finance in the election fund coffers of the old political parties. We have only to open the newspapers published during the last two weeks of an election campaign. We have only to listen to the radio or watch TV to realize how much has been spent during the election campaign and to see that election propaganda is something that takes millions to buy, and that makes use of a kind of brain-washing through the various media, as is done by the multinational soap companies. With this type of brain-washing and political propaganda, it is not surprising that the people are asking questions and that 40 per cent of the voters no longer go to the polls. And unfortunately, some of the people in this 40 per cent say to themselves: Politics