

Election Expenses

it mandates to collect the money, spend it, and make commitments on its behalf.

[*English*]

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the desire of this House to move this bill along in view of the fact that there are 40-odd amendments on the order paper. Having been a member of the committee at the time this particular clause dealing with electoral agents was discussed and related amendments in the name of Mr. Knight, Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 and particularly No. 5 in the name of Mr. Rodriguez.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Nowlan: That is the way it is on the order paper.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That does not give you the right to break the rule.

Mr. Nowlan: I am just reading the order paper, Mr. Speaker. If the man from Winnipeg North Centre wants to give some spiritual guidance to anything I have to say tonight I would be glad to sit down and let him help elucidate my very, very offhand reading of the order paper amendments Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 that are under discussion in the names of the members I cited.

In spite of that distraction from that distracting individual, I should like to go back to the merits of the amendments and deal with the merits rather than procedure, something that is fundamental rather than the rule book. I should like to deal with something that affects the rights of every member of this House rather than the dust of the parliamentary library where some members like to hibernate in season and out, and do not care about a vacation, be it Christmas or not. Let us hear some more from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to learn what he can add to these amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5 which go to the very heart of the constituency organization which puts all the members here in this House.

There are many things I could say about this bill. All members considered it with diligence in the committee. I am going to disagree with the hon. member for Halton this time, but he and other members of my party on that committee, frankly did help the government to bring some order out of chaos to Bill C-203. I think finally the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), who has laboured long and with some hope of fulfilled expectation that this bill might move further down the sessional trail and perhaps to from conception into birth—I guess it has been conceived and it is partly in pregnancy now—perhaps wants to make sure it is not going to be stillborn or a complete abortion. This bill would have been an abortion if it were not for the members of the Conservative Party and the NDP. I guess, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre could say a ho-hum to that because we are not supposed to refer to party names in this House but to the opposition and the government, but the member for Winnipeg North Centre has to refer to party names because he and members of the government are sort of tied up in an unholy alliance!

Be that as it may, all members worked on these amendments and the government brought forth many remedial amendments. What gives me most concern, and I echo

[Mr. Dupras.]

many of the remarks of the hon. member for Skeena, is that this bill is founded on the assumption that all candidates are potential frauds and that the citizens are going to be seduced by politicians. I do not like the atmosphere in which this bill is conceived. I am all for reform, I am all for disclosure and I am for the state helping to pay back the candidate after a good election. Let us go further. The Liberals will have their next leadership contest within three or four months. If they are going to be consistent, let us have public funding not just for candidates at election time but let us make sure that wealth is not a necessary ingredient to be a candidate for the leadership of any party as we tunnel along the parliamentary road in this democracy of ours.

Coming back to amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Skeena and the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton stressed what to me is fundamental, and what I do not think members fully appreciate is the significance of these amendments dealing with the electoral district agent. There are many things I could say if we were speaking in general terms, but since we are dealing with these motions I have to restrict myself. However, it could be said that these particular amendments start at the wrong end of the totem pole. The authority by law which has some say in the appointment of the electoral district agent, is at the top. I am against that, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared to fight it and differ with my party if my party cannot be persuaded and other members of this House cannot be encouraged to amend this clause along the lines of the amendments we are dealing with right now.

I hope members of the Social Credit Party participate in this debate because, without the amendments, the bill allows the leader of the party to pick the electoral district agent in each of the electoral district ridings. As the hon. member for Skeena said, he may pick one or five but it is the leader who picks. This is a centralizing instrument in the hands of a leader in a national party context. I do not believe national leaders should have that authority. What would the position have been with the Social Credit Party during their schism when there was a Social Credit Party and a Cr ditiste Party if Bill C-203 had been in operation? Just what leader and what faction would have been appointing the electoral district agent to help give the income tax returns and collect the funds between elections?

The hon. member for Skeena correctly cites the bill now in its present form in conjunction with the Elections Act when all candidates, after nomination, appoint their electoral agent. This provision opens up new territory. We had a wiretapping bill which went to the other place, was amended and perhaps it is going to be ironed out. All the members on the committee, and certainly some in the House, stressed that since the wiretapping measure was entering into the field of privacy, safeguards had to be introduced. Certain members of this House said that the name of the bill was a misnomer; it ought to have been called the invasion of privacy act under certain conditions. They said that we must make sure there are safeguards, so that the privacy of individual persons is protected. That brought on much debate.