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the immediate period of the campaign. Of course, the problem would be less acute if the official campaign period could in some way be shortened because in Canada, we have a very long one at the federal level as compared to the U.K. where it lasts three or four weeks. One is really not restricting this kind of activity except for a very short period, and then it is only once in four years on the average.

Mr. Laflamme: But we reviewed the Canada Elections Act last year and we found that we could not shorten it more than we did. I agree that it is still a long period. However, in terms of the education of the mass media would it not be a good thing, when dealing with election expenses, to give more money to the Chief Electoral Officer so he can supply people at election time with more information about the enumeration and then, in order to avoid a lot of expense to parties, to check the lists and to have people reviewing whether anyone has been forgotten or has the right to be on the list. Also, by way of educating people to avoid those parties that spend a lot of money, I would say a third of their budget...

Dr. Paltiel: I think any expense that is involved with that kind of activity should be absorbed by the state, such as the Quebec approach of paying the scrutineers—a step in that direction—and the notion of transferring the cost of the “You vote at...” card. There may be other objections to it, but I think that was one of the things; that they thought it was really up to the state to tell people where the polls were and where they should vote. Gentlemen, I agree with your position. They also recommended, if you recall, that contrary to the Broadcasting Act as it was written at the time and the regulations of the old BBG, that parties be permitted to solicit funds over the broadcasting media—which was against the rules at the time—in order to encourage people to contribute and help meet the expenses. As you know, the efforts of parties—and there have been numerous efforts—have not been particularly successful in getting a mass fund-raising response. They suggested that the media permit this kind of solicitation and not view it as a partisan political broadcast in the ordinary sense.

The Chairman: Do you think they should be able to do this?

Dr. Paltiel: I think so. Why not? I mean this is to support the electoral process, and as long as it is available to all.

Mr. Laflamme: I would like to ask one more question. Last year we had many meetings about this very thing and a lot of M.P.s recommended that the state should pay for agents of candidates in the polls, which is also quite an expense for candidates.

● 1625

Mr. Paltiel: This is what the Quebec law does now.

Mr. Laflamme: Yes.

The Chairman: Does the Quebec law pay the salary of the official agent of the candidates?

Mr. Paltiel: Not the official agent, the agents at the poll.

[Interpretation]

gne électorale durait moins longtemps. Cette dernière, surtout au niveau fédéral, dure très longtemps; elle ne dure que trois ou quatre semaines au Royaume-Uni. On ne fait rien pour limiter la longueur de la période électorale.

M. Laflamme: Nous avons révisé la Loi électorale du Canada l'année dernière et elle ne peut pas beaucoup être plus courte qu'elle ne l'est. Je suis d'avis que c'est un peu long. Ne serait-il pas bon de donner plus d'argent au directeur général des élections qui pourrait éduquer le peuple et vérifier la liste électorale pour voir si tous les noms sont inscrits. Ainsi, les partis politiques ménageraient le tiers de leur budget.

M. Paltiel: Toutes les dépenses relatives à ce genre d'activité devraient être absorbées par l'État. On croit qu'il appartient à l'État de dire au peuple où se trouvent les bureaux de scrutin. Contrairement à la Loi sur la radiodiffusion et aux règlements de l'ancien Conseil des gouverneurs de la radiodiffusion, on recommande de permettre de recueillir des fonds par l'entremise de ce genre d'organisme. Dans ce domaine, les efforts des partis politiques n'ont pas été couronnés de succès. On ne voudrait pas que ce genre de message ait l'air trop partisan.

Le président: Croyez-vous qu'on devrait pouvoir le faire?

M. Paltiel: Je le crois; cependant, tous les partis politiques devraient avoir chance égale.

M. Laflamme: J'aimerais poser une autre question. L'année passée, nous en avons beaucoup discuté. Beaucoup de députés avaient demandé que l'État paie les représentants des candidats au bureau de scrutin. C'est là une grande dépense pour les candidats.

M. Paltiel: C'est ce que la loi du Québec ne fait pas.

M. Laflamme: Oui.

Le président: La loi du Québec paie-t-elle le salaire de l'agent officiel des candidats?

M. Paltiel: Pas l'agent officiel, mais les agents de scrutins.