

country to judge more accurately the candidates who present themselves to be judged, I believe that we would be more certain that the best candidate would be selected to represent a riding, and in this way the quality and standards of the House of Commons would be materially improved.

If we follow such a plan as this, it would no longer be possible for a wealthy man, one who can afford high-priced public relations men, television, and other costly means of advertising that are available today, literally to buy his way into parliament.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** You will be in trouble, George.

**Mr. Hees:** I am very interested to hear that comment, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member who made it would go back over any of the eight elections in which I have run, he would find that I was one of the most enthusiastic exponents of door to door canvassing. The reason I have been able to maintain my membership here is that I believe in personal campaigning, which is why I speak with such enthusiasm about it.

Another change that I would suggest we make in the electoral procedures of this country is one that would not only reduce the cost of running elections but greatly improve the quality of the presentations that the various candidates make to the people they ask to elect them. I suggest that we cut the length of the election period from the present eight weeks to four. The eight-week period was necessary in the days when rail transport was the only means of getting the leaders across the country and there was no jet travel or television. In those days it took an eight week period for the party leaders to travel across the country and discuss the issues with the people. Today, as we know very well, jet travel and television enable all issues to be discussed in all parts of the country in an absolute maximum of four weeks. We who have participated in elections, and certainly the people who have to listen to us, know only too well that after four weeks there is nothing new left to be said and the whole election campaign becomes dry, dull, boring and extremely costly.

• (1630)

Therefore, I believe it would be very worthwhile for the government and the country to maintain a permanent voters' list, just as is done in Great Britain and in many other countries. Although this would cost some money, it would greatly reduce the over-all cost of elections both to the parties and the candidates. After all, that is what this measure is all about. It is designed to reduce the cost of running an election, and to make it as easy as possible for young men and women with ability but with limited means to present themselves with every chance of becoming elected.

I strongly urge the government to give some consideration to what I have said. This will not cost the government or the taxpayers of this country one penny, except for the added cost of maintaining a permanent voters' list, and I think everyone would agree that this additional cost would be worthwhile. These measures are simple; they have been tried and proven successful and workable in a country far more sophisticated in election matters than

### *Election Expenses Bill*

are we, namely Great Britain, as well as many other countries. I am confident that these measures will work equally as well in Canada.

I strongly urge the government to accept these suggestions in the spirit in which they are made and to adopt these measures. I believe if they are adopted we will greatly increase the effectiveness of this House by making it possible to get the very best candidates elected, including the young men and women with ability but with limited funds who would make a very great contribution to the governing of this country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Forest (Brome-Missisquoi):** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of taking part in the Special Committee on Election Expenses as a vice-chairman. The chairman of this committee was our distinguished colleague from Peel South (Mr. Chappell) who spoke earlier and who fulfilled his functions with much tact, skill and efficiency.

Our sessions were quite lengthy and often complex, but the committee members showed much patience, good will and understanding despite the different views, which were inevitable, about a subject on which we all pretend to be quite experts.

It must be noted that the committee received advice from a legal adviser who, most of the time, was assisted by the Chief Electoral Officer, whose skill and work we all admire. Their advice was very valuable to all committee members.

We also had the report prepared by the previous members of this committee, who made much deeper and further studies on the subject, that is the report of the special committee established by the government in 1964, whose chairman was Mr. Alphonse Barbeau—now judge of the Superior Court of Quebec—and made up of recognized experts from different parties, which presented the result of its investigations and discussions in 1966.

This committee was appointed as a result of public concern about the source of election funds as well as a need for a reform in order to curb the continuing increase in election expenses, in particular since it became necessary to use new means of communications, which are very costly and expensive.

The committees' reports and this bill aim at improving the situation of the parties and candidates, at increasing the people's confidence in our system of parties while guaranteeing the individual's liberty of choosing not only the man, his party and his philosophy but also the way it should be supported.

Contrary to popular belief, the lack of funds is a painful aspect from which the political existence of parties and candidates is suffering. Their financing has always caused precarious situations. The very minor importance given to the financing of our political institutions is unbelievable in view of the crushing responsibilities entrusted by our system to the parties and candidates who, among other things, are required to explain to our citizens the objective and efficiency of laws, the decisions and actions liable to affect their way of life and often their existence.