

principle of tax-free reading and writing is a democratic one which must not discriminate among Canadians. This coalition submits that the government's failure to fully address and support the importance of reading and writing in Canada is an inappropriate cost of the GST, and one which this country cannot afford.

Therefore, the Don't Tax Reading Coalition strongly recommends that all inputs and supplies related to the production, dissemination and consumption of print materials must be subject to a zero-rate of tax. An exemption would not be sufficient, as it would lead to unrecovered tax and increased prices on reading material produced for domestic use and for export. The benefits that would accrue to Canada from a signal to Canadians and the world that the principle of tax-free reading is sacrosanct would be far greater than the loss of revenue resulting from zero-rating. They urge senators to return the bill to the House of Commons substantively amended in support of zero-rating of the written word. Education is, to each and every Canadian, subjective. Learning through the printed word occurs at all ages, in all environments, and in any way we choose. A tax rate of zero for reading will ensure the democracy of education.

[Translation]

Moreover, the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association backed the submission of the Don't Tax Reading Coalition, insisting on the fact that reading as such, which includes books and periodicals, should be exempt. Allow me to quote one paragraph concerning magazines in particular.

I will read only one because everything that has been said on books also applies to magazines.

● (1620)

[English]

They also stress the unique contribution that magazines make to Canadian culture, that our publications are a major source of support for writers and illustrators. Indeed, many of the nation's best-known writers were first published and polished their talents in Canadian periodicals. A full 93 per cent of the writing and illustrations in our magazines are created by Canadians. These publications are a major outlet for creative talent. To jeopardize this industry would deal a severe blow to Canadian culture.

[Translation]

I hope that for once Senator Simard will refrain from shouting: "So what?" He did not shout "So what?" because he is not here. Senator Simard is in a position to know that a magazine is essential for the preservation of a society's cultural values.

Magazine publishers in Quebec support the contentions of their English-speaking counterparts.

In their conclusion, they refer to the example of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher with the assurance that it should impress Mr. Mulroney, although these days he is under the spell of President Bush.

And I quote:

[Senator Hébert.]

By exempting magazines, newspapers and books from the GST, Canada would remain among the countries eager to protect as much as possible the access of their citizens to knowledge. Several countries already do. It is the case for instance of Great Britain where Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has recognized the need to protect magazines, books and newspapers.

George Bush would have had greater impact, but Mrs. Thatcher is better than nothing.

It has been repeatedly stated that the public in Canada generally and in Quebec in particular oppose in large number the GST. It is undeniable. If a poll were taken on the particular issue of applying the GST to books and magazines, I am sure the results would show that nearly 100 per cent of Canadians are against it.

Senator Gigantès: Except the Tories who do not read!

Senator Hébert: Then let us say 99.9 per cent of all Canadians. This does not seem to impress Mr. Wilson and Mr. Loiselle, two ministers who repeated hardly a month ago that they would remain inflexible. I quote Hon. Gilles Loiselle, who as a Quebecer should know what this will mean for Quebec. During a Question Period, he stated that the decisions are made, that they are well known, and that they will not be changed.

That is the kind of people they are. Even if all Canadians are against it, they will not listen and will go ahead just the same. The Prime Minister, for one, is slightly less convinced. It was enough for him to spend 45 minutes with the students at Burnaby South High School on October 22 to be shaken. He finally confessed, and I quote his statement as reported in English-speaking newspapers.

● (1630)

[English]

... "Of all the criticisms I have heard, (concerns about tax on religious books) worries me the most", adding that he hoped the tax code would be revised to deal with that issue.

That was stated in the *Globe and Mail* on October 23, 1990.

[Translation]

If Mr. Mulroney had spent another half an hour in that high school, books and periodicals would have been GST-free! Another fifteen minutes, and that would have done the trick.

The conscience of each and every senators on the other side of this house is our last hope. When the time comes to vote for or against the amendment were are dealing with, to vote for or against the destruction of the publishing industry in Canada, the closure of a third of our bookstores, and everything else, I am sure some senators will put the preservation of our culture before partisan considerations. I think in particular of senator Solange Chaput-Rolland: when the time comes to vote, she will remember, I hope, that she is a reporter, that she even published her own periodical at a time when it took a lot of courage to do so.