

Cultural Property

materials which have accumulated during our short history.

In thinking about this subject, as I mentioned earlier we obviously think of the whole question of nationalism, and we shall have other opportunities to deal with aspects of it as government legislation comes forward. But I think, very fortunately, Canada lives beyond speeches made here, even beyond our poets; an essential part of our Canadian psyche is the love found between these borders, embodied at times in geography, harsh and gentle, and sensed so strongly when one returns from an absence. We then get into our paradox, because I am going to quote a United States poet, Emerson, who said:

The ear loves names of foreign and classic topography. But here we are, and if we tarry a little, we may come to learn that here it is best.

Surely Emerson and anyone who loves his works do not use that quotation in any narrow or xenophobic sense. We have had enough of Little England and Little Englander as a concept and I think we have had enough in the world of little nationals anyway. The nationalism I speak of is a much broader concept. We have seen many tragic manifestations of the narrow variety. Of course, many of us, because the land is so large and so disparate, will have our own special places where our identification as Canadians is sharpened by sights, sounds and even smells which arouse clear but undefinable feelings for us about the land. As I say, I use this concept not in a restrictive sense.

Among the multitude of forces which shape today's world, nationalism need not and does not take a back seat to any in its strength and vigour. It is full of pros and cons and liable to vigorous debate. Regardless of one's own position, it cannot be denied that nationalism is a force to be reckoned with, and what I can see from my biased position the positive variety is a very essential element in nation-building. And from a strong nation which understands its identity will come a strong internationalism.

Canada and the Canadian scene provides a wealth of illustration of this topic. The fact that to many Canada is a branch plant economy, much of which is dominated by subsidiaries of American firms, makes the task of cultural expression and development more difficult. As a result, many of us, among whom I certainly classify myself, busily considering what should happen in this field, read American magazines. The prospect of cultural paralysis is certainly distasteful to thoughtful Canadians in prodding them into determining what course of action is open to them in changing such an outlook. Since it is assumed that the responsibility of the government is to protect the cultural heritage of the nation, this is the very rationalization of the bill that we are considering.

● (1430)

We will be anxious in committee to go into the specifics of the bill. I think the debate at second reading stage is not meant to pick up particular clauses and try to find weaknesses in them; rather it is the opportunity to have a more general debate on the whole topic. One Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood, had this to say:

It's all very well to say that art transcends time and place. But good writers don't cut themselves off from their roots, from the ground they stand on. They may transcend their nation, their time, their class, by being good, but they don't transcend it in the texture of their work.

[Mr. Fairweather.]

I think that says in much more elegant terms what the response of this party will be to this bill. We will not take a narrow look, and I hope that the minister and the board will not be taking a narrow look either.

The Canada Council annual report about a year ago enunciated the problem of trying to understand the role of the arts in the quality of life. The report said it was useful to consider them in their broadest sense. They are, after all, a kind of self-expression. They help us cope with the often described feeling of powerlessness that is one of the overriding problems of mankind. It is in this sense, I think, that by having our heritage preserved to us we will not spend as much time as we usually do in trying to work out our own identity.

If I could find fault with the psyche of our country, I think it would be that we spend so much time deliberating upon our identity. I think it is time wasted. Northrup Frye wrote about a book published some 40 years ago by Frederick Grove, called "In Search for America". In this book the narrator, the hero, keeps looking for the genuine America buried beneath the hustling capitalism that occupies the same place. This buried America is an ideal that emerges in Thoreau, Whitman and the personality of Lincoln. All nations have such a buried and uncreated ideal, the lost world of the lamb and the child, and no nation has been more preoccupied with it than Canada. The paintings of Tom Thomson and Emily Carr, and later of Riopelle and Borduas, is an exploring, probing painting, tearing apart the physical world to see what lies beyond or through it. Canadian literature, even at its most articulate, seems constantly to be trying to understand something that eludes it, frustrated by a sense that there is something to be found that has not been found, something to be heard that the world is too noisy to let us hear.

If we can preserve unto ourselves these essential elements of our history which are made up of physical artifacts, we can spend a little less time on this elusive search. The Canada to which we really do owe loyalty is the Canada that we have failed to create. I should like to suggest that our identity, like the real identity of all nations, is the one that we have failed to achieve. It is expressed in our culture but not attained in our life. Just as Blake's New Jerusalem to be built in England's green and pleasant land is no less a genuine ideal for not having been built there, the uncreated identity of Canada may be, after all, not so bad a heritage to take with us. But that does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we do not prospect for the New Jerusalem; to do less, of course, would be to reject our heritage.

Therefore, the analogy I should like to draw in ending my remarks in response to the minister's speech is that in a sense we are prospectors as citizens—prospectors trying to find the identity which is, after all, all about us. I very much hope the bill—not just the ink and paper of the bill, but its philosophy—will assist those who feel the way many of us do about ourselves, and that it will be an important tool in the attainment of this elusive identity.

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to Bill C-33 which is before us today, a bill respecting the export from Canada of cultural property and the import into Canada of cultural property illegally exported from