

Supply—National Library

Mr. Pickersgill: I really do not think that anything I could improvise on the spur of the moment would be half as good as the excellent report made by the national librarian, which I think all hon. members have.

Mr. Knight: I do not know whether that might be considered as a broad hint that I too should make no contribution to this debate.

Mr. Pickersgill: I assure the hon. member I was speaking only for myself.

Mr. Knight: In your case there might be some truth in it. However, Mr. Chairman, in spite of the fact that the weather is hot and in spite of the fact that we hope the session is drawing rapidly to a close, even if one makes a rather meagre contribution I think that at least an attempt at some contribution should be made on a subject which to my mind is a vital one in the cultural life of our country. After all, we do spend a great part of our time on very prosaic and material money matters, and important as they are I think we should devote some time to the cultural side of life. In that regard I have made some efforts of which I hope various ministers across the way have taken note.

I have read the report and I agree with the minister it is an excellent one. I agree that the full report rather precludes the necessity of asking any detailed questions with regard to this new institution, an institution of which, I may say, we are looking forward to being very proud. In the absence of my leader, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart, may I also mention that this is a project which has always been close to his heart.

I am also glad that we have been given a picture of the architect's model of the very fine modern building which we hope will soon be ready for use. Generally speaking I am, of course, in support of all libraries, and needless to say I support a national library. I have even gone so far as to claim in the house on various occasions that the government was perhaps giving support to things less worthy or less needed than libraries are.

To my mind libraries in this or in any country are the main source of adult education, and I think it is unfortunate, but it is proven by statistics that we are not a reading people in Canada. Perhaps we have not reached that stage of leisure or of affluence in which we can afford to spend much time on reading. We have picked the stones, we have cut out the stumps, our agricultural land has been put on a productive basis, we have established industries, and surely now we have some time, some leisure, to devote to reading. Surely we also can afford to spend

[Mr. Knight.]

some money. In that regard may I say that with the present price of books a good deal of money is necessary if one is going to maintain a private library of his own.

I had a discussion with my hon. friend from Winnipeg yesterday on the matter of free enterprise. We were talking about a public health insurance scheme and I pointed out to him that a book had been written by a friend of mine, Jim Wright of Saskatoon, entitled "The History of Saskatchewan over the Last Fifty Years". He asked me if I was going to buy it. I said I hoped to but at the moment I was going to use the public library where I could obtain it at no direct cost to myself. The price of the book is \$5. It is a very good investment, and I hope to get a copy in due course.

But here is a form of public or social enterprise which, like the post office, I think even my Conservative friends look upon as being a very worthy one. It is a place where people can receive adult education at practically no cost, even if their opportunities have been limited in their youth, and it is one of the best public institutions I know. I said that on the whole Canadians were not a reading people. I am not going into the statistics that prove that fact although I could dig them up. I have travelled across the country and have been in every province except Newfoundland from which my hon. friend—I was going to say from which my friend comes—

Mr. Pickersgill: It is where he wants to go.

Mr. Knight:—but I shall change that and say which my hon. friend, rightly or wrongly, represents. I was down in the eastern part of the country, and it is a part of the country which is very clannish. If you say anything about one of the provinces you will get the inhabitants of all provinces in the group down on your neck irrespective of what political party they happen to follow. I was visiting a town there this year not too far from where my honourable and genial friend, the Minister of Public Works, comes. It is a pretty little town and there is a bridge in it across a stream or river. I was told by an informant that the town had the greatest per capita individual wealth of any town in Canada, and I think he had the statistics to prove it.

I had to spend an hour or two there and I walked around and looked at the fine residences and the signs of prosperity on all sides. However, it is a small place and after a while I thought to myself that I would go and read a book until train time. I met an old gentleman on the street and I said, "Excuse me, but could you direct me to the public library?" He looked at me in amazement and said, "Public what?" I said, "Public library." I said, "I have an hour or two to