

Creative Artists—Income Tax

rather than merely making grants available to them. Canada is a young country with a promising future, but to what extent do we help our artists? I am seeking the support of the House so that our creative artists, our photographers and our composers may find their place under the sun in Canada and live normally above the threshold of poverty without having to rely on grants.

To those who would ask me how many artists there are in my riding, I would say quite a few, and many people in my riding can indeed become creative artists, writers and great performers. Still, what are we doing for them? All we have are grant programs, which I am suggesting should be abolished. I am urging the Government to consider the possibility of changing those programs with a view to making it possible for any creative artist to earn an honest living.

● (1520)

[English]

Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating the Hon. Member for Argenteuil-Papineau (Mr. Gourd) for bringing forward this motion, and I congratulate the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for his concern in seeing that it was brought forward.

I have no doubt what the Government's response will be to the motion. I am sure the Government will invent, as usual, any number of reasons for rejecting decent consideration for the artists of this country. It should be clear that the value of the motion is not necessarily the actual language of the motion. Both the mover of the motion and I would agree that the symbolism of pointing out how little has been done in tax policy vis-à-vis our artists is the important issue. There will be those who will argue that a basic exemption for artists different from other Canadians might be inappropriate. On its face, that is a plausible argument; but the point that has to be reiterated in any cultural policy discussion is that, in a way, it does not matter whether you increase the exemption to \$20,000 or \$100,000 because the average, struggling, full-time artist in Canada has an income of less than \$10,000. The Writers' Union of Canada will tell you that people who write for a living, those who do nothing else but attempt to be creative writers in this country, earn on average \$7,000 a year.

The Hon. Member for Argenteuil-Papineau knows this motion will not increase their income. I do not think that is the purpose of his motion. I would not pretend that he is trying to kid anybody. What he is trying to say, and what I want to be very clear on, is that our artists have had their issues represented by others to this Government for a long time. I think specifically of the Disney report in 1977 which set out that for the artists in the Canadian community there are different problems than for the average Canadian worker. Therefore, a tax treatment of the way and of the circumstances under which our artists work is absolutely mandatory.

We are entering an era where productivity will be a buzz word. We are increasingly being told that if we are to survive in international trade and in international affairs, we will have to find ways to use our human resources to get more for less

and to be more competitive. There is no other sector in this country as competitive and productive as the artistic community. Ironically, it is the most labour-intensive community in Canada. It is a labour force that works as much for love as for money. As a consequence, it accepts wages, remuneration and treatment from a Government that no other community, organized or unorganized in the labour field, would accept. It is long past the time we recognized that.

I am not going to speak for very long. By making a short speech, I want to say that Members on this side hope that the Government will see that a motion which says "It is advisable to consider change", which is what the Hon. Member's motion says, is overdue for adoption by this House, as is change in the treatment of our artists by this Government. I encourage the Parliamentary Secretary, who I presume will be speaking, to say very clearly that the Government accepts the advisability of the intent behind this motion, and that it will let this motion be adopted by the House of Commons. Our artists will then know that proper treatment, both in fiscal and tax terms, which they have asked for and have needed for so long, will finally be available to them.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak for very long on this motion either. While I do not necessarily agree with the statement made in the motion that it would necessarily help the vast majority of people engaged in the arts in this country, I certainly agree with the intent of the motion. It is a matter that requires extensive examination by Members of this House to find the best ways that Members of Parliament can assist those engaged in the arts through what I consider to be necessary legislation. That kind of examination has never been done.

Why I say that I do not think that the actual language used in the motion would be of significant benefit to those engaged in the arts is that, to my knowledge, and certainly to that of people I am acquainted with in my riding, there are very few artists who earn anywhere close to \$20,000 a year. In fact, if many of them had the opportunity to earn an income of \$20,000 or more, I am sure they would be delighted, but that certainly is not the case.

I am supported in that by some of the statements in the Applebaum report. I want to quote a few of the sections. They point out that the well-being of the visual and applied artists in Canada has tremendous weaknesses in terms of the initiatives that have been given to the artistic community by Government. The Applebaum report speaks about women in particular who are engaged in the visual arts field. They earn a gross income from their art of only \$6,000 to \$10,000 annually. I know many artists in my community of Beaches who do not have an income of \$6,000 a year. That is for a number of reasons.

Several months ago my colleague for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) raised this point in the House in a question to the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox). She insisted, indeed demanded, that it was time the Government took