

Railway Act

Berton and other prominent Canadians are featured speakers at the Council of Canadians, a nationalist organization holding its second annual meeting in Ottawa.

"But the Conservatives don't understand that. In my opinion, the Conservative caucus wants to destroy the CBC. But they know they can't do that or sell it to their friend John Bassett. So they are doing it by attrition, by cutting the budget every year."

Berton said proposals for a further \$50 million cut in the CBC budget on top of the \$133 million in cuts the Conservatives have already ordered are monstrous especially after a federal task force called for stronger public broadcasting in Canada.

I would like an enlightened response from my hon. friend. Do you agree with Pierre Berton or do you not?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Speaker, I must say that certainly Pierre Berton is a very respected author and broadcaster in this country and he is entitled to his views. I do not believe this Government is strangling the CBC, or whatever word he happened to use. It is my understanding that the CBC has had one of its most successful seasons. They had many enjoyable programs, including Mr. Berton's, on the air last year. We have asked the CBC to tighten up a little bit on its operating expenses and get itself in line, but it has known about that since 1984. A cut was made at that time but there have not been any cuts since then. We have asked the CBC to live within its budget.

As I pointed out, and I should not have to repeat this, our commitment to the cultural industry has been unprecedented over the past two years. As I pointed out, there was an increase of \$375 million over five years in support of cultural industries. That is unprecedented. For the film and video industry there has been \$33 million for 1986-87, and \$165 million over the next five years. The Minister announced that on July 17. There was \$13 million in 1986-87 for the book publishing industry, and \$65 million over five years, an increase of 25 per cent.

The Hon. Member and Mr. Berton talk about us cutting back on funds to our cultural industries. I see no indication of that at all. I do not think any Members here could possibly read that into these figures. There was \$5 million in 1986-87 for the music and recording industry. I am sure Mr. Berton and others like to enjoy recorded music by Canadians, as do I, as do you and as the Hon. Member does. That amounts to some \$25 million over the next five years.

Mr. Berton says the Conservative caucus is trying to destroy the CBC. I know we are not supposed to talk about things that happen in caucus, but I do not recall the CBC being debated in caucus. Not when I was there. The Hon. Member knows that my ears perk up when I hear about the CBC, having spent several years with that organization. I think I know whether it was discussed and whether the Tory caucus is trying to destroy it. If anything, we are bolstering the CBC. As a matter of fact, over the last two years the CBC has done some tremendous work. Some tremendous programs have been produced. It may not be the old CBC, the way it used to be, but things have to change. I think they have changed for the better.

Do I agree with Mr. Berton? I certainly do not.

Ms. McDonald: Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member has been very misleading in his remarks. It is easy to get up and refer to an increase here, an increase there, a percentage here and a dollar there. He has not looked at the total picture. The total picture is of a net decrease. There has not been so much as a cost of living increase, as promised to people in the cultural community, a promise made by the Conservatives over the course of the 1984 election campaign. Yes, there is an increase here and an increase there—

Miss MacDonald: They add up.

Ms. McDonald: —but the decreases are greater than the increases. In the case of book publishing, where the Hon. Member refers to an increase, that increase is not as great as the amount of money taken out of book publishing by the new tariff. It is entirely misleading to talk about an increase because it is a net decrease.

The Conservatives practised this kind of obfuscation with regard to the family allowances and child tax credit. Instead of slashing everything at once, they increased the child tax credit while they decreased the family allowance and now plan to decrease the child tax credit later. They have everybody bamboozled. They can go around saying, we have increased support for families, and they are doing precisely the same thing in the cultural industry. In fact the decreases have been greater than the increases even in specific areas.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Speaker, that was very much the same question and I do not want to go through the same answer again. I just want to assure the Canadian people that certainly this Government has every intention of supporting the cultural and communications industry.

I just want to take this opportunity to congratulate the new Minister of Communications (Miss MacDonald) on her appointment, and I am sure we can expect greater things over the next two, four, six or eight years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I would really like my friend to be precise. I will take up from where the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) left off. Let us just talk about the CBC, as you were a staff member there and are proud of the CBC. I am sure you were not particularly pleased with the—

Mr. McKinnon: Order!

Mrs. Finestone: Who is calling "order"?

Mr. McKinnon: I am.

Mrs. Finestone: Why?

Mr. McKinnon: Madam Speaker, it is not customary for Members to be addressed by the personal pronoun. The Hon. Member has been here long enough to know that she should