

Cultural Property

have said or done things that could have lead the adults in our time to think the same way. Today, the young are free to express such views, but deep in their heart, I feel they are proud of their country, of their ancestors, of their customs, of this culture and of all the things which make up our heritage.

This cultural property also has a very strong power to relate the younger generation to the older, which can only help to keep our country united, whatever our origin, our culture, our language. I have often found that it could help to forge very strong ties between the present and the past generations and at the same time between Canadians of different origins and cultures.

The Canadian government should encourage even more those who own some cultural property by giving them financial help, if need be. This is only a suggestion I make to the minister, because it may happen that some cultural property of great significance for our national heritage is owned by persons whose financial means do not allow them to give proper care to that property.

We still remember the paintings stolen from the Quebec City Museum some years ago. Every member here will recall it. They belonged to a former Quebec premier, Mr. Duplessis. Much was written about them. They were finally recovered. They are of very great value and should be considered cultural property. I refer to them as an illustration.

There certainly are in each province agencies for the protection of cultural property, whether government agencies or non-profit organizations. I feel the federal government should generously help them protect property of every nature that make up our Canadian heritage. In my hometown, Montmagny, there is a very old manor, the Dupuis-Couillard Manor Museum. An agency was established in the town to purchase it and convert it into a museum. The owners, responsible for its upkeep, are not millionaires. There also I suggest it would be fair, it would be in our country's interest to help agencies feature such works and maintain them in a proper state of repair we could be proud of, keeping them in their original condition, and not let them decay into an eyesore.

The Quebec Department of Education removed from the curriculum some years ago courses on our country's history. I think this is regrettable. Even though there are taboos in some parts of our history, this is no reason to strike history off altogether. The department realized its mistake and steps are being taken to reintroduce the teaching of history in schools.

For my part, when I was a student and I could read for myself, I was always fascinated by the question, what is this country of mine? Who founded it? What happened? How did we go about it? I had and still have great admiration for the history of Canada, whatever may have happened. Those people wanted to take over undeveloped land to build a country. I liked and I still like to study the history of my country and I feel that Canadians in all provinces should do the same so that our children may learn they are Canadians and know the beginning of this country we call Canada, in order to take great pride in it. That is a real cultural property we should try to protect and foster as best we can.

We, as Canadians, have the privilege to live in a country with many cultures. I think that is an asset. Each of us brought in his culture from his original country. We put them together and the result was fantastic. Indeed, it is interesting to build a society with a number of cultures.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I would like to call the attention of the minister on a matter which seems very important in order to avoid another constitutional dispute. We had a truce in that field. I should like to ask the minister whether any consultations with provincial governments have taken place before this bill was drafted, and if so, whether those provincial governments agreed on this bill as a complement to their own program for the protection of our national heritage in every area. Has there been any agreement? Have discussions taken place? Will the passage of this bill cause any constitutional conflict? That is the question I am asking the minister. I hope he will be able to answer it. If there were no consultations, can the minister tell us whether he intends to hold such consultations between now and the final passage of this bill, and bring in amendments that seem fit for the whole of the country?

Madam Speaker, those are the few points I wanted to make on this bill at the second reading stage. I am sure we will have the opportunity for a further clause by clause discussion in committee. I want to say again to the minister how happy I am that such a bill has been brought before the House.

● (1540)

[English]

Mr. Ian Watson (Laprairie): Madam Speaker, I will try to be as brief as possible. This bill is a welcome one. We all welcome the assurances of the minister that he is seeking the active co-operation and collaboration of the antique dealers and art dealers of Canada in achieving the purpose of the bill, which is to preserve and safeguard a very important part of our Canadian heritage.

I seek the attention of the House for a minute or two because I happen to have two private members' bills on the order paper, Bills C-329 and C-356, both of which deal with areas not covered by this bill but which, nevertheless, are areas of the same general concern. The first is a bill to provide for the establishment of the office of archaeological curator for Canada, and it was stimulated by an incident which all members of the Indian affairs and northern development committee were part of a year or two ago.

When that committee visited the Northwest Territories we happened upon a scene in Tuktoyaktuk where a bulldozer was excavating a site for a mission and had exposed a very important find of archaeological material. As a result the entire population of Tuktoyaktuk scrambled to look for these archaeological items.

There were literally thousands of items pulled from the site in a very unprofessional way, in the sense that the history of this site could have been examined far more expertly had a system of rules been in effect which would have required the local RCMP officer to contact the territorial administration, or federal branch of Indian affairs, and have a team of archaeologists sent to the site to stake it out and conduct the dig in a proper way. The result was