

Oral Questions

the United States. We are concerned with the copyright situation and we have responded to the specific suggestions which have been made to us.

INQUIRY WHETHER STUDIES CONDUCTED ON EFFECT OF
CUTBACKS IN FUNDING

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I regret that the minister's self-serving remarks earlier today prevented my motion declaring today as Arts Day from being passed.

I want to put a question to him in terms of real budget cuts that the artistic community knows have taken place. In view of the fact that as of 1971, 85 per cent of all Canadian visual artists earned less than \$5,000 a year, and since the establishment of the Canadian art bank accounted for \$1,300 of the annual income for over 600 artists from whom works were purchased last year and, further, considering that \$800,000 will be indiscriminately slashed from the art bank program along with another \$800,000 cut in the Public Works Department's fine arts program for a total of over \$1 million can the minister tell the House if his department has conducted studies into the effects of these cuts on the income of Canadian artists?

Hon. John Roberts (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to my remarks being self-serving. They are not self-serving. What they serve to do is to express the interest which this government has in supporting the arts throughout this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roberts: I have been Secretary of State for two years and not once in that time have members of the opposition used an opposition day, or any other occasion, to raise the question of the arts policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Roberts: Finally, Mr. Speaker, now that there are people in the gallery, they show interest in this issue but today is the first time in two years that they have put such questions to me.

[English]

Good news travels slow, Mr. Speaker, but I am glad to see that, finally, members of the opposition realize this is a subject of importance and significance. The hon. member referred to the question of the arts bank—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie on a supplementary question.

Mr. Symes: That kind of empty rhetoric is so self-evident to the artistic community, as well as the lack of dollars from this government, that I think the minister is digging a deeper and deeper hole in which he will find himself together with the artistic community in this country. With regard to the non-answer which the minister gave me to the very precise question

[Mr. Roberts.]

in real dollar reductions, I would like to put another example to counter his phony argument that there are no reductions.

In the light of the minister's statement which shows a reduction of over \$1.1 million in assistance to literature and publication, a reduction which amounts to 16 per cent of the current budget, not accounting for inflation and increased costs, and given the fact that only 15 per cent of all books sold in Canada were authored by Canadians, has the minister's department conducted studies on the effects of these cuts and what effect they will have on Canadian publishers and authors, who are contributing much more than the minister to the preservation of Canadian culture?

Mr. Roberts: First of all, Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question on the art bank cuts, I want to assure the hon. gentleman that those cuts were made after our discussions with members of the Canada Council about them. They were undertaken in view of the extremely high administrative costs which were involved in the program and the belief, not simply on the part of the government but expressed to me by the director of Canada Council, that it would be useful to be able to reassess the administrative efficiency of that program.

In so far as the member's general question is concerned, it is true that I have had discussions with the various cultural agencies. Those discussions are continuing so that I might have the benefit of their advice as to what the effect will be of the restraint on expenditure within the arts community. I may say that I have found within the arts community general support for the government's restraint program—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Roberts: —because people in the arts community realize that the arts suffer more from the impact of inflation than almost any other sector of the economy, and they are most anxious to see that inflation brought under control. Naturally, there is concern about the impact of cuts upon them and I share that concern; but they are generally supportive of the need to bring government expenditure further under control.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NAMIBIA—UN SUPERVISED ELECTION ON INDEPENDENCE

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs; given the fact that both sides of the House want a legal and peaceful settlement on the question of Namibia's independence, what assurances did the five western ministers receive in Pretoria last week that the election of a constituent assembly in Namibia in December—which we know will be declared null and void—will in fact be followed by a UN supervised election which will then be recognized by the world community?