

*Supply*

out in culture and the arts. In the absence of a credible reason from the government side, I will have to pose some questions as to why the Government might be cutting in these fields.

For example, have Canadians been demanding cuts in the arts and in culture? Have Canadians been saying to the Government that we are spending too much on arts and culture? We should examine a few facts. We should look at the attitude of Canadians with regard to the arts. Something like 82 per cent of Canadians believe that it is important to promote, encourage and develop talent and artistic activities, and 78 per cent of these Canadians think that federal dollars should support the arts.

Does the policy adopted by the Government that means cuts in spending for arts activities reflect the attitude of Canadians? Quite clearly, no. This is sad. When the members of the Party opposite ran during the election and sought the confidence of Canadians, they promised to be more sensitive to public attitudes, to listen to people and to do what the public wanted. They contrasted their promises with what the previous Government did. Now that they are in office, they are doing just the opposite of what Canadians desire as it affects arts and culture.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** What percentage of the vote do you have?

**Mr. Keeper:** I had enough to get here, and I intend to stay here.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** By Stanley Knowles' skirts.

**Mr. Keeper:** In no way would I be ashamed of Stanley Knowles' skirts. I hear the heckling from across the way. I am tempted to react to it, but I will restrain myself.

The Government should realize that Canadians are strong supporters of the arts. They illustrate this not only in their attitudes and desires, calling upon the Government to spend and support the arts, but with regard to their activities and attendance at activities. For example, the attendance at cultural events from 1971 to 1980 increased by 121 per cent. That shows a broad support among Canadians for cultural and artistic activities. In fact, more people in this country attend cultural events in a year than attend sporting events. The Government should respond to the priority of Canadians rather than cutting back on it.

● (1610)

What other reason could there be for the Government to make cuts when it comes to arts and culture? Perhaps we are already spending too much on arts and culture. Perhaps the federal budget for arts and culture is too large and needs to be cut back. Let us examine a couple of facts in that area. In 1982-83, federal expenditures on the arts were 1.8 per cent of the total federal budget. That does not mean a great deal by itself, but when that is compared to defence spending which was 10.6 per cent of the federal budget, we begin to see that the priority the Government places on arts is much less significant than the priority the average Canadian would place

on arts. Consider that we spend 10 times as much on defence than we do on arts and cultural activities.

**Mr. Holtmann:** That's not a good comparison.

**Mr. Keeper:** I hear from across the way that that is not a good comparison. It is an objective comparison and these are facts. In the absence of a rational reason for the Government to cut spending, I present these facts and challenge the Hon. Member opposite to enter the debate and to put forward his reasons for cutting expenditures on arts and culture. Could he justify the feeling that we are spending too much on arts? I say that when we spend 10 times as much on defence spending as we spend on arts, there is no objective way we can say we are spending too much on arts.

Between 1971 and 1980, government support to the arts in constant dollars, taking into account inflation, declined each year. Spending on the arts over that decade has already declined. How can one put forward the notion that we are spending too much on arts? Why would the Government be cutting if we were not spending too much?

I would point out to my colleagues on the right that the years 1971 to 1980 were years in which the Liberal Party was in office. While I hear my Liberal colleagues rise in the House to criticize the Government sharply for cutting spending in the area of arts, and deservedly so, I must question the sincerity of Members who so recently were in office and Members whose own Government, throughout a decade, decreased public spending on the arts.

What other possible reason could there be for the Government to be cutting in the area of the arts and culture? Would it describe arts and cultural spending as being a waste or a mere luxury? When government Members were running for office, they said that they would cut the waste out of public spending. Is that what this means now? Does it mean that when cutting back on the arts and culture, they are cutting out the waste? Let us examine spending in the area of the arts from the point of view of its value and from the point of view of investment. I would make the argument that spending on the arts is a good investment rather than a poor one, and I will back that up with facts.

Spending in the arts sector directly increases government revenues. It increases revenues through sales taxes, property taxes, income taxes and unemployment and health insurance premiums. It increases government revenues in an amount which equals or exceeds grants to the arts. How could spending in the arts sector be considered a waste or a luxury when it increases government revenues?

Looking at economic activity in the arts, in 1982, for the 136 theatres which were related to the Canada Council, there were something like 5.5 million spectators and total expenditures of some \$67 million. Keeping in mind that every time there is a dollar spent on ticket sales for artistic endeavours, at least another dollar is being spent on related items such as drinks, food, babysitters and parking, then public spending in the arts becomes a very good investment rather than a waste or a luxury.