

*Private Members' Business*

sponsored by a long-term member of Parliament, my friend from the Official Opposition.

Private Member's hour reflects the best of the Parliament. It has changed over our joint tenure in the House, his much longer than mine of course. In the past, Private Members' bills would go year after year being talked out and going to the bottom of the list. They had virtually no chance of ever coming to the fore.

Private Members' Business today has much more significance. It does not mean a bill always goes through the first time, the second time, or even the third time, but because a certain number of bills are drawn and have to come to a vote. The government, and certainly the bureaucracy, have to spend much more time thinking about Private Members' bills. I commend my friend for taking the time to develop a bill for us to debate. This helps the people of the country see what we are about.

The intent is certainly legitimate. There is absolutely no doubt that there are major abuses of the obscenity legislation as defined in the Criminal Code. We can all recognize them on the extreme end of obscenity. We would all agree that there are abuses and, indeed, the existing Criminal Code does a pretty good job on it.

The problem we run across as legislators, of course, is in the middle where we are trying to draw the specific line at artistic freedom, and between our own personal beliefs of what is right and wrong and what is acceptable and unacceptable. When something crosses the line, we should use the full weight of society—all the police forces and the judicial system—by throwing people in jail for short or even long periods of time for breaking the laws. The longer I have been here, the more hesitant I have become to substitute my view for the many views that exist in the community. I guess it reflects a number of counterbalancing pressures that we find.

• (1405)

Having said that, there is no doubt that it is up to Parliament, after a sufficient amount of debate and consideration of different types of bills, to come up with a decision. Our distinguished friend has put forward his proposal.

To a certain extent, it depends on which area of the country one is from. There is no doubt that my riding has a more small "c" conservative view on obscenity. There

are pictures in books which would be more objectionable to more people in my riding than in certain other ridings. That reflects that I come from a constituency with a small city, small towns, many farmers, and some deeply fundamentalist religious groups that are truly and honestly offended.

Having said that, within the city of Lethbridge, a small city of 60,000 people, there are a group of people who are not nearly so offended. Indeed, they would argue passionately about my friend's definition which would define even a picture of a nude as obscene and not allow it to be sent through the mails. They would honestly and legitimately not agree with that because they are in no way offended. They refer back to the long historic development of humans and artistic freedom being able to depict these types of things.

I wish we could have a committee stage because I would ask my friend whether his definition would include even medical books that show a nude person for medical purposes. I know he personally would not intend that to be the case, but as I read the definition, I was a bit worried as to whether that would be covered. Maybe it would not. That is the advantage of the bill ultimately coming to a vote. It would then go off to a committee which could hear lawyers, church people, the artistic community, and ordinary citizens to get their perspective on this bill.

As I say, it depends a bit on whether one is from a big city or a small town. It depends on the region of the country we come from. As well, Canada is becoming more and more part of the global community. There is absolutely no doubt that our young people, having been raised on a diet of television, feel that the world is much smaller and much more theirs than do some of us who are older. That means, of course, with additional trade, commerce, and travel, that the world standard has to be taken into consideration.

As we move up to a broader level of generalization, we know that more individual perversity, odd, and queer things can occur. But in this country, since 1982 particularly, when we entrenched as part of our fundamental law freedom of association, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, the country has been put into a whole new dynamic. That was eight years ago. Eight years in the life of a nation is a drop in the bucket. In eight years, the ideas of people change.