

INCOME TAX

AMENDMENT TO ASSURE SURVIVAL OF CREATIVE ARTISTS

Mr. Robert Gourd (Argenteuil-Papineau) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending the Income Tax Act to increase to \$20,000 the basic exemption for creative artists (craftsmen, authors-composers, choreographers, film-makers, photographers, writers or any other creator of original works of an acknowledged cultural or artistic nature) in order to alleviate the financial difficulties threatening their survival and the survival of the Canadian culture to which they contribute.

He said: Madam Speaker, first of all I wish to thank my colleague from Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) who agreed to second this motion. Among his friends and in his riding, the Hon. Member is known as a friend of the arts, and he was therefore pleased to support the motion.

When I presented this motion on October 15, 1981, some of my colleagues, especially those on the opposite side, told me: You are wrong, because this is going to create a special class of citizens. Your motion wants to make craftsmen, authors, composers and artists a privileged class. I feel, however, that in Canada we have already created a number of privileged groups. Members of the Bar Association are a privileged group; the members of the College of Physicians are a privileged group; architects are a privileged group; engineers are a privileged group; and farmers are as well. Therefore, I fail to see how, now that we are about to review the Applebaum-Hébert Report which concerns that very important issue of Canada's cultural policy, could review cultural policy and ignore the people who create our culture.

Madam Speaker, when I presented my motion, I was thinking of Francine Périard, an artist in my riding, who in the course of her career will probably sell about \$20,000, \$25,000 or maybe \$50,000 worth of paintings. I am not mentioning famous artists or famous Canadian authors. I am thinking of Jacques Lamarche for instance, author and citizen of La Petite-Nation who is barely making a living. That, Madam Speaker, is Canadian culture.

And why am I saying all this? Why am I asking for concrete action today? For the simple reason that for sixty years the Government has been examining the feasibility of amending the Copyright Act, legislation which formerly was the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, although I am sure I do not know why. Today, the legislation is being revised, and the two Ministers involved, namely the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) have assured me that the revised version would be tabled in the House very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I told the Applebaum-Hébert Commission that the rights of our creative artists were being abused. We have a system in which the State subsidizes artists, and as soon as we have the State acting as a patron of the arts, there is a form of prostitution involved. Our artists and authors have to go begging for grants. Instead of making beggars of our artists and authors and photographers and all those who create our

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Canadian culture, we could make them proud and happy to be artists. So many young people cannot participate as creative artists because they have to make a living some other way, in other words, get a job, and give up all hope of ever being an artist.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to another aspect of the same subject, namely, communications. Yesterday, I attended a press conference given by the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox), when he presented a document bearing the title: *Towards a New National Broadcasting Policy*. Well, now we have the Appelbaum-Hébert Report, we can probably expect a new cultural policy as well.

I now wonder whether, since the Government has announced that we can expect a new national broadcasting policy, it has also decided to establish two classes of citizens, namely, those living in densely populated urban areas and those living outside those areas. I wonder whether the Government, in connection with the new policy it is announcing, is prepared to make use of an existing program, namely, the Northern Communications Assistance Program in which CN and Bell Canada are involved and which provides for telephone communications in remote areas. Since the Government has that program, I suggest that it be extended to all rural areas. In my own riding, which is scarcely 50 kilometers from our national capital, the towns of Papineauville and Saint-André cannot get something urban Canadians are now getting, namely, pay television or even cablevision to get all their favorite programs. This is incredible in a country where all citizens are supposed to have exactly the same privileges. Why do people in towns like Thurso which is right near Ottawa, towns such as Sylvan Lake in Alberta or Wartime in Saskatchewan or Cocksiscoe in Newfoundland, why can't they get the same services? Aren't these people Canadian citizens as well? Aren't they all paying the same taxes?

Mr. Speaker, if these people are paying the same taxes, I think the Government should consider providing them with the same services, and in this case, it should consider making an arrangement through its existing program and broadening its scope to cover telecommunications and audio-visual services as well. The Government should consider setting up such programs immediately, especially since this is International Communications' Year, and I hope that in his reply, the Parliamentary Secretary will let me know whether or not the Government intends to take this route.

Mr. Speaker, let me get back to our creative artists. They represent the very basis of our cultural policy in Canada, but what have we done for them since the Massey-Lévesque Commission reported? We have conducted more studies, and we now have the Applebaum-Hébert Report which unfortunately does not deal extensively with copyrights.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed with great reluctance that I am now begging the Government to encourage Canadian artists