

Adjournment Debate

without imposing an economic burden on the users of ships built in Canada.

The Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion is holding meetings with the private sector to discuss problems faced by Canadian shipyards and to receive suggestions as to how all parties concerned may look for a solution that will prove to be viable in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my dear colleague for Lévis, and also give him the assurance the Minister will not hesitate to get in touch with his colleagues in this House as soon as a solution has been found.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS (A) INQUIRY IF GOVERNMENT DISPOSED TO INSIST ON CANADIAN CONTROL OF FILM INDUSTRY. (B) REQUEST CONCERNING GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF CANADIAN FEATURE FILMS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I raised yesterday a question concerning the report published the day before yesterday by the Task Force on the Film Industry. That group has done an excellent job, because it has made a strong and in-depth analysis of the problems of this industry. The actual situation points to the third-rate status of the film industry, in which 97 per cent of profits made in Canada are going to the United States. Indeed, Canadian moviegoers are supporting the American film industry.

Now, part of the profits have to be re-invested in Canada for Canadian production. Canadian film producers have no access to the Canadian market. Canadian films take up only 3 to 5 per cent of screen time, and account for only 2 to 4 per cent of titles available on videotapes. Canadians are confined to marginal positions in their own country, and viewers are essentially funding foreign productions. This is why the Task Force has recommended that the Government issue a clear policy statement on Canadian control of film distribution.

American film distributors are now treating Canada as part of their domestic market. When they get distribution rights on a film or a videotape for the United States, they also insist on getting the same rights for the Canadian market. Even Canadian producers are compelled to grant Canadian rights to an American distributor to have access to the American market. This is no longer acceptable. It never was.

Canada is the only country in the world which accepts such a denigration of its cultural sovereignty. We have here in Canada a situation of vertical integration between film production and distribution, which means that the multinational corporations controlling the distribution of films are the same ones that produce them.

Of course those corporations do not promote films produced by other firms, whether they are independent Canadians, the National Film Board or small Canadian film companies.

Vertical integration in the film industry is no longer legal in the United States, because of the harmful effects of that kind of monopoly or duopoly, which comes to the same in this case.

American film multinationals are now enjoying in Canada benefits that are illegal in the United States. We must tell them: The End. Access to the Canadian market must be controlled by the Canadians themselves. We must make sure that in the future, part of the profits are reinvested in Canadian productions. Canadian control of film distribution will allow Canadian producers to negotiate for Canadian distribution rights of foreign films and videotapes. Canadian control will put an end to the monopoly enjoyed on Canadian soil by American distributors.

Canada is a nation with a population of 25 million people living next door to a large country with 250 million people. No country with that kind of population can develop a film industry without Government intervention, which means financial support and regulation by the state.

All European countries, even those with populations larger than ours, have developed their industry with state-support measures. We have started with initiatives for promoting the production of films.

Now without the means to provide for the distribution, such measures remain useless. The Task Force has in addition, suggested creating a fund to finance Canadian feature films. Even with other proposed measures, such as increased private investments, co-productions and sales abroad, the Task Force feels that public financing will be essential. More specifically, it advocates a fund of \$60 million per year. The Task Force notes that 40 or 50 feature films must be produced if we are to play a significant role with respect to movie theatres and pay television.

This is only 5 per cent of the amount paid out every year by moviegoers in Canada. The Task Force notes that in other countries, higher amounts are earmarked for production. We are aware here of the necessity of serving linguistic and cultural communities. Consequently, it recommends that special attention be granted to French-language and regional productions.

Unfortunately, there is no reference to the fact that very few women have access to capital for the production of films, especially costly ones such as feature films. Of course, the contribution of the Provinces is essential for a film distribution policy, but we should not delay granting the required funds. I would have been more satisfied, if the Minister had given us a more constructive answer.

● (1900)

[English]

We have heard enough about good intentions for action. The Minister knows these problems and he knows them well. They have been talked about in his Department for a long time. I dare say his Department has had a copy of this report for a