

● (1442)

I suppose this consultation may be forthcoming since I read a news report stating the revenue which could be forthcoming from the federal government would be that of Loto Canada. They seem to have a respect for Loto Canada, but not for the normal courtesies of consultation. If and when I receive notification, I will be pleased to answer it.

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ARTS, LETTERS AND SCIENCES

FUNDING OF CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State. I was delighted to hear the Secretary of State make his commitment on the arts today. I hope he has persuaded some of his cabinet colleagues, particularly the President of the Treasury Board.

Since I wrote to the Secretary of State on August 31 with respect to a proposal which, in line with the government's restraint program, would reduce its spending but increase its funding directly to the Canada Council by \$2 million—a body which has had its budget frozen for nearly four years—and since the minister's only public response was to cut the budget of the Canada Council, that of the CBC, the National Film Board, the Film Development Corporation and other artistic and cultural institutions—which may have disastrous repercussions, as the minister well knows, for artistic communities in the country, the closing of art galleries and theatres, etc.—in view of this virtual freeze in constant dollars to the Canada Council and the crisis that is being created in the arts, what concrete action is the minister planning to take?

Hon. John Roberts (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member's question—

An hon. Member: I am not.

Mr. Roberts:—because usually he is more conscious of the facts than he seems to be today. The Canada Council's budget was not reduced; its base budget was increased by \$3 million, or almost 8 per cent or 9 per cent. The budget of the CFDC was not cut, Mr. Speaker; it was increased.

It is true—now I regret it—that I did not reply to the hon. member's letter because I did not take it very seriously. He was suggesting that the budget for the Canadian Unity information office be wiped out—I am sorry Mr. Speaker; he suggested it be cut down by \$9 million of \$10 million—and this seemed to me to be an irresponsible suggestion, given the referendum which is to take place in Quebec in the coming year. He suggested that we should cut out the funds of the French and English national theatre companies at the National Arts Centre, which seemed to me to be an extraordinarily irresponsible suggestion.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Oral Questions

Mr. Roberts: So I came to the conclusion that the letter was sent to me for no other purpose than to garner some newspaper publicity in what I consider to be an irresponsible way.

An hon. Member: Oh, David!

Mr. Roberts: The last point on which the hon. member is again incorrect is in his indication that this government is insensitive to the arts. The fact of the matter is, as I said, that the basic budgets of the arts organizations have been marginally increased. It is true that the budget for the CBC was frozen, but budgets over-all were increased rather than cut. In view of newspaper speculation that there were going to be cuts of something in the order of \$60 million to \$90 million, I would have thought he would have recognized the strong determination of this government, shared by my colleagues, including the President of the Treasury Board, to make sure that this area of activity continues to receive strong government support.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, there is a great line from Shakespeare which is appropriate to the occasion. It is, "methinks thou dost protest too much".

I wonder if the minister could refer to two specific matters that happen to be of great concern to the artistic community: that of the Disney report, which has been in circulation for some months now and has been on his desk since early this spring, having to do with the taxation situation of the arts in this country, and also the Keyes-Brunet report on copyright, which affects the publishing and recording industries in this country and on which there have been numerous submissions.

What action has he taken with his cabinet colleagues to accelerate real performance on matters of basic concern in the tax and copyright areas to the artistic and performing people in this country, which they desperately need?

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, once again I am pleased to see the interest which the hon. member is taking. Of course we are concerned. With regard to the recommendations in the Disney report, that is exactly why we financed it. It is we who promoted the funding of the Disney report because we wanted to have that assessment which was taken of the employment situation which artists in the country face. We have received the report and I have distributed it to my colleagues who are concerned, and active discussions have taken place and are under way now with my colleagues about it. I have also discussed that report with, for instance, representatives of Equity, and people on my staff have discussed it with other arts organizations. We attach great importance to the Disney report and we are actively pursuing discussions within the government.

In terms of copyright and other procedures, the hon. member will remember—if, for instance, he goes back earlier this year—the action which the government has taken to deal with the problem which authors have expressed to us over the dumping within Canada of books which are remaindered in