

the North American continent as a proud and distinctive nation”.

At the moment the CBC is facing a very bleak and uncertain future. Its radio and television budgets are being cut by \$75 million. Special series will be shelved. Children's programming will be cut. This is extremely important to Canadians. We have heard a number of concerns in the House, and some of them have been raised by the Hon. Member from Newfoundland who is now chairing the special task force on parliamentary reform. He has been a very articulate and effective spokesman in the House for children's programming which is designed not to exploit children. It will be very sad if we start to lose control of that.

I represent a riding where a lot of young artists, musicians, actors and technicians live. The cuts in the CBC have essentially made them unemployable for the immediate future because their skills are not transferable. They cannot walk across the road and be hired by another radio or television station because this kind of hiring is not happening. Some of these young people are being forced out of the country. If a massive exodus of talent occurs, the whole country will be the poorer.

It is interesting to look at some of the statements which the Conservative Party made in its election platform. They are very different from what we are seeing at the moment. In August of 1984, the Canadian Conference of the Arts sent a questionnaire to the present Prime Minister. I will quote two statements which it was sent back. The first reads:

We are committed to maintaining federal funding for the agencies and councils in line with inflation.

Another reply in the same questionnaire reads:

We are committed to real growth in federal contributions to this sector.

In fact, the Government has neither maintained funding for agencies and councils in line with inflation, nor has it shown commitment to real growth in federal contributions. Instead, it has cut funding in the areas of arts, culture and communications to the extent of some \$121 million. I can understand why the Parliamentary Secretary might prefer to speak at the end rather than during the course of this debate. He himself, when in opposition, vigorously defended the cultural communities. He must be somewhat embarrassed by the present situation.

Another response by the Conservative Party to the questionnaire of the Canadian Conference of the Arts reads as follows:

Our commitment to improving the quality as well as the quantity of employment in the cultural sector is firm.

Yet, look at all the cuts we have seen and the people who have become unemployed recently. The cuts in the budget of CBC alone will result in 1,100 lay-offs. The present Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) said in the House that he would examine areas in which cuts are proposed to ensure that Canada's arts community is not exposed to cut-backs and that, on the contrary, funds allocated for creative work and production are increased. I hope that the Minister seriously meant that commitment which he made on November 29. If the Parliamentary Secretary does speak later on in this debate, I

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do hope that he will address that issue. This is a very serious matter for the cultural life of the country as well as for the individuals concerned and their ambitions and aspirations.

Another official response of the Conservative Party to the August, 1984 questionnaire of the Canadian Conference of the Arts was:

We recognize the proven job creation capacity of the cultural sector and the training opportunities provided. We believe that federal programs such as those under the National Training Act have to be made accessible to this sector.

To the present we have not seen any job-training programs in the arts and cultural sector or any other sector. I look forward to hearing this issue as well addressed in the debate.

In December, 1984 the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Beatty) acknowledged the fact that the number of people occupied in artistic endeavours is growing faster than any other occupational group in the Canadian economy. Statistics in 1981 indicated that in the 10 years previous the number of people working in cultural occupations doubled, as compared with growth of some 30 per cent for all other occupations over the same period. It is rather puzzling that clearly some Ministers of the Government recognize that the artistic and cultural industries are growth industries, while the cuts give the impression, which I hope is misleading, that the Government regards cultural activities as a frill or luxury which can be dispensed with.

With regard to the arm's length relationship, a subject with which I started my comments, the response to the Canadian Conference of the Arts questionnaire of August 1984 reads as follows:

We are committed without question to the arm's length principle and regard peer review as the most equitable and consistent mechanism for federal funding support to individuals, groups and institutions. The cultural agencies and councils are more able than politicians and bureaucrats to assess the need identified by the cultural sector . . .

It appears that there have been some changes in that position also since August 1984. We just heard one Conservative Member speak of the need for more direct ministerial control and management. Perhaps this could be explained to us as the debate continues.

In an interview with the *Globe and Mail* on November 29, 1984, the present Minister said that he wanted to rethink the arm's length principle. He said that his Government was moving rapidly to apply "a direct political hand" in the affairs of CBC. In the Bill before us we see a direct political hand being applied to the affairs of CRTC. There may be good reasons for this, but those reasons should be presented to us and should take into account the good reasons that existed in the past to do otherwise.

● (1630)

On November 19, the Prime Minister said in the House, "I am pleased to be able to confirm that the position of the federal Government in respect of the CBC and other groups will be to stay at arm's length at all times". One Conservative Member contributed to this debate by saying that the apparent contradiction was owing to different interpretations of arm's