

Canada Council

House in terms of economic stress over cultural matters. This was a display of either the ignorance or the hypocrisy of the NDP. I come from what is generally regarded as a cultural community, Stratford. People from all over the world, but mainly Canadians and Americans, spend \$7 million a year buying tickets for the Stratford Festival. For every dollar spent on a ticket, \$3 is spent on accommodations, food, souvenirs and travel. These dollars do not go to multinational companies but to small-business people, not only in my riding but in London, Kitchener, and the towns and villages surrounding Stratford. I have never seen a cultural dollar provide a better bang for the buck in terms of the economic multiplier effect than the \$1 spent on a ticket in Stratford, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, for the Winnipeg Ballet or wherever. If my Hon. friend in the NDP is talking about providing a stimulus to the economy through cultural events, I say to him that he should come to Stratford.

This is not necessarily only a cultural debate. It is also an economic one. I have serious reservations about censorship, but I did not hear that matter raised. He made no reference to the fact that we were talking in terms of censorship. Having been given a mandate from fellow Canadians to represent them in the House, it would follow in my view that we would have a responsibility and obligation to be deeply concerned about the use of dollars which they send to us in terms of taxes and about how they are spent. Were I the chairman or a member of the Canada Council and I heard no criticism, I would be very worried. I would be extremely concerned if there were no criticism of the decisions I took. It is profoundly helpful, not only for constituents and taxpayers but for the Canada Council, for it to be the subject of criticism.

Any Member of Parliament who stops receiving letters of criticism starts worrying about the next election because the people have forgotten him. The Canada Council should worry when we in the House of Commons stop discussing what we consider to be decisions that are not in accord with the best interests of our taxpayers or constituents. That is the time to start worrying.

There is a great difference between censorship in the abstract and censorship when it relates to the expenditure of the dollars of taxpayers. I have no difficulty distinguishing between the two. It may have been a waste of my friend's time, but it certainly was not a waste of my time to hear the remarks of those who participated in the debate or to be able to criticize. When we in Stratford, who owe so much to the Canada Council, are not in accord with its judgment, we criticize.

The Stratford Festival is judged year after year. We have to stand up and be judged. If we fail to meet the level of expectation of the Canada Council, we are quite rightly cut off. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. I think I speak on behalf of almost any arts organization with which I have had any contact when I say that the moment an organization does not permit itself to be judged by the ticket buyer, the Canada Council or the community supporting it, whether it be a Little

Theatre in Owen Sound or the Stratford Festival in Stratford, the particular arts facility is doomed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon raised by the Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Ellis). I am rather interested in the most recent remarks of the Hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis). As the Hon. Member well knows—and he alluded to the fact—the Stratford Festival, in which he is very much interested, receives a great deal of support in many ways from the Canada Council. Because I come from the neighbouring riding of London West, I must add that we in the area appreciate the efforts of the Stratford Festival and what it means not only, as the Hon. Member mentioned, to the Stratford area, but certainly throughout southwestern Ontario, to London in particular and of course right across the country. There is no doubt that the Canada Council in many ways is the supporting arm of arts and culture in Canada.

At the outset I should like to indicate that it is fine to bring these matters before Parliament for debate. Certainly from time to time the Canada Council must be responsible for its actions, but I emphasize the point, as I am sure all Hon. Members know, that the Council operates at arm's length of Government and regardless of the Government of the day. As was already mentioned, grants awarded by the Canada Council, whether they be to poets, writers, musicians, theatre groups or touring groups, are done on the basis of the judgment of a panel of jurors, if one likes, who assess each individual application for a grant as it comes along.

I am sure all Members received today a very interesting document from the Canada Council which gave a report on the first seven years on the Touring Office of the Canada Council. The report detailed to a great extent the tremendous work of the Council in facilitating artists and young theatre groups, not only those in stationary positions, to tour across Canada and also on an international basis. I recommend that each Member read the report in detail.

● (1740)

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, the question of language, of literature, of the work of various Canadian poets has often been raised in this House. As a matter of fact, I believe it was the late Right Hon. Lester Person who referred to the fact that these questions kept arising time and time again. He said that members should really stop bringing such questions to the House, that perhaps they are letting failure go to their heads. Nevertheless, the matter has been raised. It is one which must always be answered, no matter how unfounded it may be. I suppose, and I can speak from experience having come from the broadcasting industry and having had the opportunity of working in that industry over a number of years, that perhaps what disturbs us is good. We can be disturbed on many fronts and on many elements. When we are perhaps disturbed, and especially when it comes from the cultural world, it sets us