

*Adjournment Debate*

delicate matter and we should treat this very delicately in this House.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS—RECOMMENDATION THAT LIBRARIES SHOULD COMPENSATE AUTHORS. (B) REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL ACTION

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago I asked the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) whether he was prepared to implement a proposal that authors be paid for the public use of the books they have written which are available in public libraries. My questions arose following a series of cross-country demonstrations organized by the Writers Union of Canada in order to publicize the issue of payment for public use. It was, they felt, one of the only avenues left to them after many years of quietly suffering poverty and neglect.

There are several thousand people in this country, Mr. Speaker, who make their living by writing. Very few of them make a very good living. There are authors like Peter Newman, Pierre Berton and I suppose Margaret Lawrence and Margaret Atwood, to mention a few. However, most authors can only earn a part-time living, with an income of something in the neighbourhood of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year, from their writing. Most of them live in poverty. Despite that poverty, they endure and continue to write, contributing to the cultural life of this country.

● (1810)

I put this matter before the House in the form of a question several weeks ago. I referred to payment for public use program which would give authors compensation for the public use of their books through public libraries. This program would be one way of providing a minimum level of support for writers who now earn, as I have already indicated, somewhere between \$1,000 and \$3,000 a year from their books. It would encourage writers to continue writing and producing Canadian literature, and would, in a small way, support and enhance the development of Canadian culture.

This idea is not new; it is not unique to Canada. There are now various schemes based on this principle in existence in ten other countries. The question has been examined in some considerable detail by a number of very important organizations. It was studied by the Canada Council, which not only approved the idea but also worked out a proposal as to how it could be administered. It was studied by the Applebaum-Hébert Committee which also worked out a proposal somewhat different than that of the Canada Council, but one in which they adopted the principle, the idea.

Indeed, the Minister of Communications endorsed the idea, the principle, in a speech he made to the Writers' Union. Unfortunately, endorsements do not authorize funds. The total amount to implement the plan in the first year was estimated to be just \$1 million, a very modest amount by government standards. Yet the Minister has continued to stonewall its implementation.

All that the writers are after is some compensation for the royalties they lose when a library purchases books they have written and then loans them repeatedly to members of the public in order that all can enjoy them. Under this idea, book borrowers would not be penalized, nor would the libraries be required to fund the authors' payments. The revenue would come out of general revenue and at least some of it would go back into the public coffers in the form of income tax.

When I raised this question with the Minister, as I say, a principle which he apparently endorsed in his speech to the Writers' Union, he had two answers. First, he suggested that since libraries come under the jurisdiction of the Provinces he would have to receive the Provinces' approval. I say that that is nonsense. No province would object to a plan for helping authors earn a living if it did not have to pay for it. The proposal is that the Government would pay \$1 million a year to help authors earn a somewhat decent living.

● (1815)

The second point the Minister made was that the Canada Council could do it. Of course, it could and it has looked at the problem and worked out a system for doing it. Unfortunately, the Canada Council simply does not have the money. The Minister knows that the Canada Council already has many more demands on its funding than it can meet. Therefore, to suggest that the Canada Council can do it without giving it the authority or money required is simply to put off the implementation of this proposal. In fact, it is saying to the authors that the Government is not prepared to implement this idea which is so essential if Canadian authors are to be able to earn any kind of living.

I would urge the Government to seriously consider the proposal from the writer's union and implement this plan which would require a relatively modest amount of funding.

**Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), I believe he knows full well that in fact not only the Provinces but municipalities have a great deal to play in this matter of public payment for authors. We are really talking about the use of books in public libraries. The Hon. Member also knows that Provinces have great jurisdiction over public libraries, as do individual municipalities.

Of course, this matter is not only of concern to the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) but to the Government as a whole. The basic answer is yes, the Minister of Communications is in favour of some sort of program that would assist authors to receive financial benefits and payments for the use of their works in a public setting. However, we know that the Provinces have great jurisdiction in this matter.

The Hon. Member raised this question on September 15, at which time the Minister responded that all libraries that would be affected come under provincial jurisdiction. I cannot stress that particular point too strongly because it is a fact.