

Cultural Property

That leads me to this point, that Canada is made up of a mosaic of people from many countries and this bill will enable Canada to develop an image in keeping with its international origins. The people of this country have come from practically every nation on earth. More important than that, this country is only two lifetimes old. Two lifetimes ago the ancestors of our people were living in other cultures. We are fortunate in being heirs to their cultural values.

For too long some people in this country have talked about the search for the Canadian identity. Although I concur with the minister's efforts, as put forward through this bill, to safeguard some aspects of our culture, we should be clear about one thing—Canadians should enjoy a very real sense of identity. Anyone who has been to the Gaspé and watched the people there carving their wooden statues, who has seen the potato fields and red soil of Prince Edward Island, who has hunted in northern Canada and perhaps photographed the Canada Goose flying overhead, will know what Canada is; will know that Canada is unique among nations. We do not need to spend much time in searching for a Canadian identity, for it is here.

We are the inheritors of many cultural values. Our land is populated by many peoples, by the Eskimo, by the Indian, and by those who have come from other ethnic backgrounds; and all made Canada great. This is what we must bear in mind. The government ought not tell us what nature of culture we should have.

It is important for us to keep in mind the three points I have made: First, the government cannot enclose culture in parameters, cannot decide what is good or bad in culture. It can only protect and record. Second, we should avoid instilling a spirit of supernationalism into our people, even though some nationalistic influences probably are valuable. Third, we should not use this bill as a means for creating what some call a Canadian identity, because it already exists. Canadians already ought feel that our country is unique. They already have an identity, one for which they need not apologize. Although in many ways our views in this House diverge, I concur with the intent of the bill, so far as it goes. That is to say, I support the principle underlying the bill.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on this bill and give it some tacit support. I also wish to support the views that there is an area in the bill which needs some attention and definition. I refer to paragraph (a) on page 3, which reads:

objects of any value that are of archaeological, prehistorical, historical, artistic or scientific interest—

I refer specifically to the phrase "objects of any value". I think it is a fundamental maxim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore value is a qualitative and not quantitative measure. It is subjective and almost totally extrinsic.

Any values that relate to art come by the values that we impose on them. It is a well known historical fact that Shakespeare wrote his plays in a matter of weeks. He intended them to be used only once for the purpose of his travelling company, and afterwards they would be discarded. It so happened there were enough members of the

audience standing in the wings who cribbed his notes well enough to preserve them. They did that because they realized there was extrinsic value in them.

For that reason it is difficult to impose a value on articles such as this. Therefore the sensitivity of this bill lies in the area of judgment. That judgment has to be given to the members of the review board who will be appointed to regulate this act. It is parliament that has to establish the criteria and the review board that has to make them workable. There lies the difficulty in this bill.

The very need for this legislation indicates that art is not only art. It is also commerce. Value can be imposed on it, not because of its extrinsic value but because of the commercial value that it attracts. The fact is that demand creates value. A work of art like the Mona Lisa has value not only because of the work of art itself, but because there is only one. Therefore it is in demand.

Another example of this is the current interest of nostalgia in Canada. It is a fact of life that those articles which a few years ago we were discarding, putting in attics or out in the back sheds, today have some value because some people saw the value in them. They have imposed value on them. This caught the public eye. It has become popular. There is now an additional value imposed, a commercial value.

There is another aspect of this bill which concerns me. That is the commercialization of historical sites and articles within the country. I notice the bill refers to import and export. The question I wish to raise is the value of historical sites that remain in the country but are controlled by interests outside the country.

What about foreign investment in the country in historical sites because of the commercial value? That is a part of our culture to which we need to pay attention. It is the nature of a young country not to impose enough value on its short historical past. Future generations will criticize us for not having done so. Therefore we need to preserve that short historical past.

We, as a parliament, need to examine the degree to which foreign interests should control historical artifacts or buildings within this nation. Some time ago, if not even to this day, the home of Sir John A. Macdonald was in the hands of a foreign nation. It is tragic that we do not have enough interest in our history to control those very sites that are nearest to our historical roots.

I wish to add one short postscript to this short speech. Revenue will be derived from the administration of this legislation. That must be one of the intents. Our government has done some work in helping museums establish our historical identity. I encourage the minister and the government to take the additional funds accruing to the government from the administration of this bill and apply them to helping museums in the future so that they can do a better job of preserving our historical past.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Speaker, the general objectives of this bill certainly meet with my approval. I do not want to traverse or repeat the remarks of my colleague, the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather), or other members who have spoken with regard to the general purposes of this bill. I think that generally they are quite acceptable.