

Government Orders

the full development of minority official language communities, measures which I announced this summer during the Acadian World Congress.

Third, the department is focusing its efforts on the management of cultural development in Canada and on means of communication which are crucial not only in ensuring our uniqueness but also as a powerful instrument of economic development. Culture is not an abstract concept separate from the real world, nor is it mere decoration. It is first and foremost a way of looking at the world and a manifestation of our civilization. This unique view of the world is one of the features that allows one group to distinguish itself from others. In short, without culture, there is no identity.

In this age of trade globalization and amid the proliferation of information technologies, our cultural resources have become not only a means for Canada to carve out a place for itself on the world stage but also a powerful economic lever. The numbers speak for themselves.

In 1991-92 the cultural sector accounted in total for 3.7 per cent of the gross domestic product or approximately \$22 billion. In addition, the sector employed almost half a million people, which represents a rate of employment growth of approximately 21 per cent between 1986-87 and 1991-92. The economic impact of culture is far too great to be left entirely to chance.

• (1215)

The rate of growth may be impressive but it must not overshadow the problems our industries have to address. I need not point out that cultural industries do not have the capital or the market to compete in Canada with the big producers of mass culture, namely our neighbour to the south, the United States, the richest cultural market in the world and one which is increasingly visible in Canada because of the new distribution technologies.

Bringing all cultural functions together in a single department will enable the Government of Canada to take more concrete action, making it possible to defend the interests of the cultural community, our cultural community, on many fronts. From this standpoint the department's responsibilities are primarily national in scope. The department has a duty to contribute to the emergence of Canadian culture, foster a sense of belonging and instil national pride. It is responsible for providing funding for and encouraging the development of cultural agencies that have a national mandate such as the CBC, the National Arts Centre, the Canada Council, the National Theatre School, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board. It is also responsible for museums, archives and the National Library.

The department also has to spearhead legislation aimed at fostering the full development of creative activity in Canada.

The aim of copyright legislation, for example, is to enable our authors, producers and performers to earn a decent living from their crafts and be fairly compensated for their work.

Let us get one thing clear. After a very long period under the former government during which culture suffered from marginalization and was considered merely as a distraction, not to mention a luxury, we must bring back culture to the forefront of society's concerns, for it is essential to our identity, to our pride, to our unity and to our independence in international society.

Culture contributes to our quality of life. It is part of the ever richer heritage that is our legacy to future generations. The Department of Canadian Heritage has international responsibilities relating to the promotion, distribution and marketing of Canadian culture. For example, the department is expected to negotiate agreements on cultural exchanges with other countries and identify foreign outlets for Canadian cultural products.

In keeping with this mandate the department was actively involved in the development of TV-5, the international French language television network that serves as a cultural and commercial window for French language programs and francophone artists from Canada and other French speaking countries.

The Department of Canadian Heritage also has a mandate to ensure Canadian participation in international exhibitions. The most recent Canadian initiatives of this type took place last year in Taejon, South Korea, one of Canada's largest export markets. It produced excellent results as Canada banked on economic partnership for the first time. Exhibitions of this kind are outstanding international fora that combine both culture and communications. They are also an important part of the mission of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

For example, the government's commitment to implementing a Canadian strategy for the information superhighway augurs well for the cultural industries. The super highway is far more than a technological infrastructure. It will be a powerful vehicle for Canadian content and will ensure wider distribution of our cultural products, making them more accessible to all Canadians.

• (1220)

The department is particularly sensitive to broadcasting issues, as broadcasting is without question the most popular and the most powerful of all cultural media. More than 99 per cent of Canadians own a radio; 99 per cent also own a television set; and more than 75 per cent own a video cassette recorder.

Because broadcasters are among the companies most vulnerable to competition from their American rivals, the Department of Canadian Heritage has to be very vigilante and adopt policies and programs that make Canadian culture as accessible to Canadians as possible.