

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-58. With the exception of capital punishment and abortion, this bill has given rise to more correspondence than any other subject that has been debated in the House since I came here in 1972.

The majority of my letters have been with respect to *Reader's Digest*. With one exception they have all been opposed to the legislation. I had fewer letters in connection with *Time* magazine, but here again of all the letters I received there was only one that was in favour of the legislation.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): And that was from the publisher.

Mr. Neil: My hon. friend said that was from the publisher. I was very interested in reading the remarks of the minister as recorded in *Hansard* for Thursday, May 8. I wish to quote from page 5592, the first paragraph of the minister's speech, as follows:

It seems to me it is a fact that in any free society, magazines significantly influence the development of the culture, the national sensibility, the free play of ideas and exchange of views and the critical faculties of its citizens. One might say that the part magazines play in this process is perhaps not as directly influential as television or films, but that may be largely a matter of taste and circumstances. Certainly, if one can judge by the views expressed by hundreds of persons who have written to me during the past few months about possible changes in the income tax law affecting advertising in periodicals, magazines are a very important factor indeed in terms of developing and nurturing a distinctly Canadian culture and identity.

I was impressed by the words "a free society" because that is what every man, woman and child in Canada is concerned about today; a free society, a society in which we have freedom of expression, freedom to move about, freedom from fear, and freedom to read whatever books, magazines, periodicals or newspapers that one wishes. All these are freedoms which individual Canadians hold dear. We should have a free society that creates an atmosphere which lends itself to a natural and gradual development of a culture, unencumbered by government legislation and regulations.

You cannot legislate culture. All a government can do is create an atmosphere which lends itself to the development of the richness of one's culture. Culture in a nation such as Canada, which is young in years, has to evolve with time. It develops as a result of the intermingling of the ideas and customs of those various ethnic groups who came as immigrants to Canada to meld their thoughts, ideas and cultures into the mosaic of our society.

Bill C-58 will not do anything to add to our distinctly Canadian culture and identity, as the minister put it. This legislation has one purpose and one purpose only, to assist the Canadian periodical industry. Development of our cultural society is secondary and very minor in the mind of the government. I wish to quote again from page 5592 of *Hansard* where the minister, talking about the Canadian owned periodicals and the industry, said:

The difficulties facing that industry have for some time been a matter of concern to my department and to me; for some months now, we have been engaged, in co-operation with the industry, in the development of a plan of action aimed at finding solutions to certain of its problems. I regard the amendment proposed in this bill as an important element of that plan and one that is essential to its success. . . . It is not a negative

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decision if it leads to positive results; when it is seen as a stage in the development of a program of effective government assistance to Canadian periodicals about which I shall be speaking a little later.

In other words, the government is not concerned about the cultural aspect of the magazine industry. It is concerned about assisting the publishing organizations and the periodicals that are published in Canada today.

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Later in his speech the minister said that *Time* and *Reader's Digest* have an unfair advantage over Canadian periodicals. What is this advantage? My reading of the present law is that these foreign-owned periodicals compete on an equal footing with *Maclean's* and all other Canadian magazines. The only advantage they have is an advantage with respect to other foreign magazines. So what is the problem?

Why is the Canadian magazine industry in difficulty, if it is in difficulty? After listening to the remarks of the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) I doubt whether it is in real difficulty judging from the profits the Maclean-Hunter organization has made, for example. It is not the lack of advertising dollars.

I went down to the Parliamentary Library this morning and thumbed through the most recent issue of *Maclean's*. Between one third and one half of that magazine is taken up with advertising—I suggest it is a larger percentage of advertising than most magazines carry. Basically, people buy magazines to read the articles, not for the sake of the advertising and, frankly, it is annoying to have to search through the advertising to find the continuation of articles.

As I say, people buy magazines to read the articles, and this is where Canadian magazines have fallen down. They do not carry articles which the general public finds interesting or informative. They carry articles which in many cases are biased, and in others, critical articles which are never complimentary of our public figures, our society or our way of life. If it is poor circulation these magazines complain of I submit it is not the fault of competition but the fault of editors failing to keep their finger on the pulse of the nation so as to know what the public wants.

I should like to comment on a number of other statements the minister made during this debate. As reported at page 5593 of *Hansard* on May 8 he talks about the world view of Canadian readers being influenced by United States periodicals. Surely Canadians are intelligent enough to read foreign periodicals, whether American, French, German or others, and understand that in most cases, in their editorials at least they are inclined to be biased in favour of the country of origin. Surely adult Canadians are intelligent people who can assess the comments made in these magazines and draw their own conclusions.

A short time ago I had occasion to speak to a group of servicemen. The first thing they said to me was, "Make certain you vote against that legislation because we want to see *Time* magazine continued." I questioned them, and they said, "We agree it is inclined to be somewhat biased toward a United States view but, on the other hand, it is the only magazine where we can get in summarized form an overview of what is taking place in the world; we