

Government Orders

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Madam Speaker, I rise to indicate to the House our support of Bill C-88 in the second reading stage and to urge speedy passage by the House so that this bill can go to committee and be properly examined.

I would indicate that the bill before us is to some measure a compliment to the parliamentary co-operation that has occurred on all sides of the House.

A few months ago when the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture were meeting we had representations from SOCAN, the organization representing composers. The technical fault in the copyright legislation of 1987-88 was pointed out to us. At that stage I said: "Well why do we not try for a quick little amendment? I am sure we can get all-party approval". All of us at the committee thought at that time that it was obviously a mistake or an oversight by those who had drafted the copyright legislation in 1987 and that with the full agreement and co-operation of all parties in the House we could quickly change it.

We have all worked together on this to ensure that the bill before us is brought to the House so that we could correct this mistake in the copyright legislation. However, things are not always that simple and the amendments that we saw seemed to suggest that it has opened the field to other areas that we did not anticipate when we originally looked at this and heard testimony earlier this year.

Concern has been expressed to us and I am sure to many members of the House regardless of what side they sit on, about the attempt by the composers association at one stage to collect fees from little town fairs. We have had letters from little restaurateurs expressing their concern that they would have to pay copyright fees because they happened to have a radio on and the restaurant is open to the public.

We all agreed that while this flaw in the copyright legislation had to be corrected, we also should listen to the various parties affected by this amendment. Instead of giving it the speedy passage in the House in all stages, all parties agreed that we should have some committee hearings on this and try to straighten out some of the conceptions and perhaps some misconceptions there

might be about this bill. For example, we are all happy to note that the organization involved with the country fairs and exhibitions have reached an agreement with SOCAN and that is no longer an issue.

It is important that we attempt to straighten this out in committee and that the report of the committee comes to the House as soon as possible, hopefully for final passage, so that this basic flaw in our copyright legislation can be corrected.

I think this House is in agreement that artists should be remunerated for their intellectual and artistic work.

The copyright legislation had a serious flaw that the cable companies took advantage of. We might add that most broadcasters, in terms of the regular television and radio services, did not take advantage of this loophole and have been paying the royalties.

It was the cable companies that decided to stick to the legal meaning of the law rather than the intent. Therefore, they have escaped paying royalties.

They are making money on other people's work and artistic talents. Those artists, the creators of the compositions, should be remunerated.

What we are doing is correcting this situation to ensure that the artists do have a proper return on their work.

I urge the House to pass Bill C-88 so it will come to committee very quickly so that we can give it serious and in-depth consideration. Then it would come back to the House for third reading. Hopefully, the bill, after committee, will be such that all members of this House can agree to it and therefore give it speedy passage.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.