

Because salaries in the book industry are not high, it generates more jobs than an industry about the same size but with a larger payroll.

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It is particularly surprising to see how low salaries are in bookstores and publishing houses. The reason, I think, is quite simple: the product sold by these so-called businesses is not similar to other products. Moreover, working with books even at a ridiculous salary is often more interesting than having a better pay to sell products other than books.

"Publishing houses have a very important cultural place in Quebec. They have a vital influence on book contents and readers' tastes. Their contribution to cultural life and education is also of the utmost importance.

However . . .

and God knows I learned that.

. . . this is shaky industry. Shaky because it is a young industry which does not have control of its entire infrastructure; shaky because it lacks needed capital since almost 80 percent of publishers and 75 per cent of bookstore owners have incomes of less than \$1 million; shaky because its market is too small to allow economies of scale and because of the strength of foreign competition.

That is often forgotten but according to the United Nations standards, a publishing industry cannot be viable in a country of fewer than 10 million people speaking the same language. In Quebec, even including those few on the outside, we are about six million. As I explained earlier, those six million are very fortunate, as far as book readers are concerned at least, to be bilingual and have access to two great literatures, which reduces further the part of the market that remains for the purely French language Quebec publishing sector.

The strength of foreign publishing

. . . must not be neglected

. . . is also manifested in book clubs. Almost all book clubs in Quebec are foreign-owned. Apart from the fact that all benefits realized on the national market escape Quebecers, strictly speaking, no benefit accrue to our publishing companies from the existence of those clubs that feature few of our books. In fact, the Quebec content in the catalogue of Québec-Loisirs, a subsidiary of France-Loisirs and the most important French language book club in Quebec, varies between 8 and 10 percent while, as we have seen, the real performance of Quebec books amount to 33 percent of the market.

Thus, Quebec books account for 33 percent of the market but, in the largest book club of the province of Quebec, scarcely 8 to 10 percent of the books that are proposed to the readers are from Quebec.

"On the other hand, since the average period of time that books remain in bookstores is considerably reduced now, an average of 3 to 6 months . . .

At the end of which the bookseller says to the publisher: "Take back your books because we are expecting new ones.

. . . Quebec publishers must constantly increase the amount of new releases, with the important investments it involves, and forget about the establishment of a publishing fund they absolutely need to make their investments profitable.

Although Quebec publishers are exporting an increasing number of their books, those exportations now represent no more than 5 percent of all the sales of our publishing industry.

Despite all the efforts which have been made and which started at the time I was getting myself into the publishing business in the late 50s or early 60s, all kinds of operations undertaken to try and sell our books abroad failed or were extremely difficult and not profitable. As for the French, of course we have to understand that there are three things they do not like imported from abroad: perfumes, wines and books. They think, not without reason, that they produce themselves and provide the rest of the world with the best in those three areas. The fact remains nonetheless that the result for the moment may not be very satisfactory with only 5 per cent of the total sales of our publishing industry going abroad, mostly to France.

The difficulty inherent in benefitting from these rights can be explained by the fact that Quebec publishers have so few outlets, and it is a significant loss of a source of income for all people involved in the book publishing industry, whereas European and American competitors take full advantage of these rights which account for interesting additional profits.

The weakness of our cinema industry and the extremely low CBC budgets which the government keeps paring down are all factors which contribute to reducing even more the opportunities for publishers to sell their rights to movie and TV producers.

With respect to publishing, it is a fact that government policies have played a significant, indeed a determining role in the growth of the book industry. This also needs to be said today because there is a long standing tradition—it goes as far back as I can recall—concerning books.

First, as I pointed out earlier, never has a tax been levied against books in this country. Not only that, but grants have been awarded to authors and sometimes to publishers to help pay for translating and publishing books, particularly in the field of literary works.

It goes without saying that such initiatives on the part of both provincial and federal governments gave added currency to a belief which some people want to deny today, namely that books are not products like all others, that publishers and book sellers are not ordinary tradesmen but indeed key agents of culture dissemination at the most accessible level—books.

This has always been recognized by both levels of governments through a wide range of policies and supportive measures. I will not go into the fine details, but there was a great variety.