

The government's response to the second recommendation was to pass the issue over to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of the Artist to propose options to solve the problem.

With the greatest of respect and as much as we want this bill, I think that we can find the options now and I hope that we will be able to do so within the amendment process. We feel that the government has failed to adequately address and act upon the four unanimous recommendations of the standing committee.

If the government is committed to improving the socioeconomic status of the artist and I believe it is, it would also provide adequate funding for the CBC so that job cuts are not so necessary.

It would remove tax on books and magazines and newspapers because this tax is causing fewer publications to be purchased and fewer authors to be published.

It would restore postal subsidies to Canadian magazines.

If the government is committed to fostering and promoting the Canadian film industry, it would fight the American domination of cinema screens by introducing the long awaited film distribution bill.

This bill is, in the words of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, a first step, a foundation, a stepping stone. But we need more than just a stepping stone. We need a bridge, and we need a strong foundation. It is my firm belief that that firm foundation can be built on this bill as it stands with a few changes, a few amendments. I firmly believe that it is the desire of the government and all members of this House to ensure that as a group, the artists of this country deserve the best that we can give them. They are utterly and intrinsically important to our cultural survival, our sense of self, our sense of identity as Canadians, our ability to communicate among ourselves, to ourselves and about ourselves.

I believe all of us who sit in this House represent artists. There is not a riding in this country that does not have its artistic contingent. All of us—I know I certainly feel this way—have almost an envy, if I can use that in the best sense of the word, for those people who have been given the talent, drive, ambition and perseverance to continue to create in an atmosphere that does not foster creativity. They continue to create when they could make more money and have more security else-

where. They continue to create when, because it has taken us such a very long time to get even to this point, they must sometimes wonder if we are listening here, if we are aware of what it is they are trying to do and if we care.

I think, Madam Speaker, that we do care. We care very much. We care for the artists in this country because we know how important they are, just as everyone of us in this House cares for this country and, I pray, is determined to preserve it. Part of that preservation, a very major part, is the cultural input of creative artists in this country.

Therefore I say in conclusion that this bill is a good first step. It needs some improvement. I cannot wait to get to the part where we are allowed to make those improvements.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, I think it is tempting to perhaps cite the irony of the fact that this legislation, Bill C-7, which is the bill to recognize the status of the artists in this country, should be presented by a government that has conferred such significant cuts on the cultural institutions in this country. It has imposed a GST on books and has put the cultural industries of this country at risk by the free trade agreement that was negotiated in the past and a trilateral free trade agreement now in the process of being negotiated. It is a government that has failed as yet to provide sufficient protection for Canadian film distributors.

I think that that would be perhaps mean and inappropriate at a time when the artists of this country have for the first time achieved what they have been seeking for so long. They have achieved recognition of their status as an important part of this country and as professionals in this country with the protections that they ought to have as workers, artists and professionals.

I am going to say a great deal during this debate about the significant contributions that those whom we describe as artists provide to this nation. I think there is a danger that in treating them in the abstract in an idealized and perhaps philosophical manner, citing the historic contributions that they have made to the human psyche and the way in which they have reflected the best of our imaginations and our creativity, we will glamorize them too much and probably see worth in glamorizing even the starving artist.