

Government Organization

kite in an attempt to find out what public opinion was. Public reaction is rather surprising. I have been informed that there has been a lot of radio broadcasting, telephoning-in sort of thing, and discussions on this subject. The hon. member for Ontario has talked about buying a \$6 million painting when the aged of this country do not have an increase in their pension. This kind of argument does not pay any attention to the fact that \$6 million spent once is \$6 million, and that even \$10 a month adds up to an expenditure of \$100 million if carried on indefinitely every year. This sort of thing has been discussed on some of the radio programs and my mail has been running about half and half. In this respect my mail has been surprisingly heavy.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): How does the hon. lady spell that?

Miss LaMarsh: H-a-l-f. There has been a great deal of interest in this matter. I have received letters from those in the art world in particular and people who appreciate the goal which was intended, which was to erect a symbol of excellence similar to that which exists in the museum in Holland with regard to Rembrandt's "Night Watch". I suppose that every tourist who goes to Holland visits Amsterdam to see this painting, and for the same sort of reason every tourist who goes to Paris visits the Louvre first to see the "Mona Lisa".

It was my opinion that the National Gallery, which really is not very old and which I think has never spent more than \$100,000 on any one acquisition, might benefit in very many ways from being the setting for a very fine jewel in the world of painting. I do not know that the owner of the painting in question would be prepared to sell it to Canada, or whether the price I have suggested it might be worth would be acceptable to him. I do not believe that most Canadians feel this kind of investment is a bad one. After all, billions of dollars are spent each year in this country for many different purposes and I cannot believe that because an expenditure is not made on one hand, all expenditures on the other hand or for any other purpose should be withheld.

I am looking forward to the arrival of the new director of the gallery, who is to start tomorrow. I hope to have some conversations with Dr. Boggs and members of the board about this painting or a similar kind of project. To my knowledge Canada has not

[Miss LaMarsh.]

rejoiced in being the recipient in its gallery of gifts such as the Hirshhorn gift to the U.S.A. Indeed, Dr. Buchanan who died recently and was a member of the board, saw fit to leave his collection to his native province of Alberta. I think hon. members will have noticed lately that individuals have been leaving similar collections to their provinces. This happened recently in the case of the province of Ontario. I would hope that Canadians would be encouraged to leave their treasures to the country so they would become national treasures.

I cannot think of any better way to teach people that Canada has an appreciation for the very finest objects of art than by providing a home for a work of art such as this. It seems to me that, as the Bible says, man does not live by bread alone, and we need a goal in our cultural life which perhaps does not exist at the moment. Canadians often think they do not deserve the best that they are second rate and the best that is in the world cannot be ours. I know that voting money in this amount for such a purpose is not very common for this or any other country. But if this amount of money was spent on something which could be put on display next year at Expo, it would be a terrific drawing card and would be the diamond in the sceptre of the National Gallery's existence. Indeed, it might even begin to pay for itself. The acquisition of this painting has commended itself to many people, and I would be very happy to know what the hon. member had in mind and whether he believes it would be a good thing for Canada to have.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): Mr. Chairman, I only raised the point because the minister has an uncanny ability for making pronouncements which catch the public eye. This announcement in particular, for some strange reason, seems to have evoked a fantastic response, certainly in my experience, both pro and con. We have seen much the same reactions as the minister has outlined. The minister said she was sort of flying a kite in this suggestion. I was wondering whether she is still flying the kite, or have any steps been taken to make a positive offer for the purchase of the painting?

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Don't incite her to make another speech. Let us pass this bill.

• (7:10 p.m.)

Miss LaMarsh: The kite is still in the air so far as the government is concerned. I will