

national image. Equally distressing is the fact that \$400,000 of taxpayers' money was spent on the destruction of a hero's credibility without proof or even accurate information.

If the facts as presented in the film were substantiated, then no matter how much it distressed my colleagues and me to have our hero cut down, or if, to quote the editor of the U. S. *News and World Report*, "The NFB tore Bishop to shreds more effectively than any German Fokker," we would have to accept the facts and live with the shattered image of Billy Bishop.

However, in this case, it is unacceptable that Bishop's reputation be destroyed by a film director's poetic licence to shape the truth to fit the story he is relating. The National Film Board, as I quoted earlier, said that the film has a "substantial fictional element," and, certainly, the scenes taken from the play, *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, were fictional. Speaking of fiction, some of the supposed war shots in the film were identified by several U.S. television editors as Hollywood. A Soviet film-maker recognized a famous scene from a World War II Russian movie of Stalingrad under siege. That scene is from another war—there is absolutely no justification for calling this film a documentary.

● (1630)

One of many questions which comes to mind is: Who would be the first people to question the validity of an event which discredited them and represented a defeat? Obviously, those most concerned would be the German veteran flyers. Why did they accept and honour Bishop after the First World War if they thought he was a fake?

Honourable senators, this is not a political matter. In fact, there is no such element in it. I am not merely running to the defence of a friend, though Billy Bishop was a friend of mine years ago. I want to have this film thoroughly examined because I believe it is doing a disservice to our country, and if there is one place where the reputation and well-being of the country should be protected, it is in Parliament.

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear!

Senator Molson: I have tried to explain the serious objections to this vehicle of character assassination and have tried to understand the ambition of its producer, who said he was "merely trying to suggest that generals who run wars have to create heroes in order to sell those wars to the public."

One may ask why someone would produce a film like this. The answer is simple and normal: A young man trying to make a reputation can do so easily if he attacks a sacred cow or, at least, something that is well known or admired. This desire for recognition certainly explains the attack on Bishop.

War should be condemned always, but many of us who have seen war are better informed than a producer who has not seen any of its horrors or implications. It might be reasonable to suggest that he has done Canada a disservice. There are many who could paint the whole hideous face of war without resorting to fabrication, deceit, or the destruction of anyone, hero or other, who offered his life for his fellow Canadians.

Honourable senators, I move the adoption of this motion.

[Translation]

Hon. Arthur Tremblay: Honourable senators, I think the comments just made by Senator Molson to explain the purpose of his motion were such that I hardly need elaborate further on its substance. We are all aware that the motion and the subject it concerns raises some extremely delicate questions, some of which Senator Molson already mentioned, and there are others as well.

I wonder whether at this stage, it would not be appropriate to adopt the Senator's motion for referral to the Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, for appropriate consideration in committee or more appropriately, as the Senator said himself, for consideration by the sub-committee of the Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, responsible for examining matters relating to veterans' affairs.

Once the issues have been examined in greater detail, at that stage honourable senators would be able to explore the avenues suggested by the senator and to consider the substance of the matter.

Before getting involved in a debate on the substance of the motion, I would be quite willing to suggest that the Senate decide forthwith on the referral to committee, unless other senators are reluctant to intervene immediately in the debate on what we could call, more or less accurately, the National Film Board affair, as described by our colleague.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, regarding the point raised by Senator Tremblay, I understand what he means and I could follow his line of reasoning. I support the suggestion that we should not get into a debate on the substance of the matter, or as to whether or not the facts prove that the film was wrong.

However, I wonder whether it would be a good idea to keep this matter on the agenda for two or three days, and to consider only whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to committee. Personally, considering the points made by Senator Molson, I think it is a good idea. At the same time, we would be creating a precedent in taking a matter of this kind under advisement and referring the matter to committee.

Perhaps other senators might wish to contribute to the debate, just on this question. I agree it is a waste of time to get involved in a full debate on the subject of the film itself, and then to start considering the same subject again in committee.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I think that at this stage, we should give senators who want to take part in the general debate on the main motion a chance to do so. At the end of the debate, Senator Tremblay could present a motion in writing to refer the subject to the appropriate Senate committee.

[English]

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault: Honourable senators, I support this commendable and constructive initiative of Senator Molson. While the National Film Board has achieved many notable successes in its history, the Billy Bishop "production"