

Non-Canadian Publications

to help form public opinion, to give public opinion a chance to jell.

It is unfortunate that closure was brought in at this time when the postal strike is on. *Time* and *Reader's Digest* must be operating under a dark cloud right now. The postal strike could not have come at a worse time for them. They mounted an extensive campaign among their readers asking them to write to their members of parliament, and of course they are free to do this. I am sure we would have received many more letters at the height of this debate telling us their opinions. Perhaps we would still have done as we are doing now, of course; perhaps not a single opinion would have been changed as a result of those letters. Nevertheless the public was entitled to have its views known.

Under these circumstances this was a bad time to use closure. Those who oppose this measure—and I am not one of them—have a genuine cause for grievance. The government would have been well advised and would have shown some sensitivity to have postponed this—not put it off indefinitely but to reach some agreement with the opposition and bring it back when the mail starts again. It might not be the greatest criticism in the world against the government to say this, but it shows the kind of insensitivity that exists on the government side.

Members of the opposition are no more foolish than members of the government. They know that if they talk too loud and long the public will turn against them. Debates cease in this House when the public says "Enough", and most of us are sensitive enough to listen. But the government does not have enough confidence in that kind of sensitivity between members of the opposition, members of the government and the public at large. I am not an opponent of closure and I think there are valid occasions for it, but this is not one of them.

I sometimes fear that my country is in danger of becoming an incestuous, intellectual ghetto. More and more the writers in this country seem to be talking about themselves rather than the events they are describing. I sometimes look at what is written about this country and wonder whether we see the same world. It is almost as though it is a village with a repertory company when seen through the journals and television that we have.

When we talk about providing stimulus and opportunity for people in the arts we are in fact talking about maintaining a very well kept but very small intellectual establishment. Perhaps I should not say this, but sometimes I wonder to what extent their nationalism is a self-serving way of maintaining their own positions and jobs. How many of them are living off their nationalism rather than off their talent? Politicians have many of these faults too, but they run the chance of being defeated; writers, good, bad or indifferent, go on forever. As much as anything else it seems to depend on who you know in this country rather than how good you are.

We have been very accommodating in this country to people in the arts. The hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) said he does not care how much money we spend. Well, we spend a hell of a lot of money on support of the arts and I have not seen much return. Maybe that is the way the arts are; maybe you have to put a lot of money in to get a little return.

[Mr. Saltsman.]

It seems that nobody in this country does anything unless they have a Canada Council grant in their pocket, or a LIP grant, or an opportunities for youth grant. Maybe artists should not be struggling, but it seems to me we have done a hell of a lot of pampering of our artists as a whole and it has not had much effect. We may only be raising a generation not of talents but of people who know how to fill out application forms.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Saltsman: We may be the most talented "application form filler-outers" in the whole world. Some people graduate through all the stages—they start with the Company of Young Canadians, go to Opportunities for Youth, then into LIP, and I presume if we wait long enough they will show up in the New Horizons program. Somewhere in between it would be nice to see them get their hands dirty. I am old fashioned enough to think that people should be working in the jobs that exist, rather than insist on creating their own jobs or otherwise they do not work.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, I am getting the wrong support over here. I will have to look at my notes again.

This debate will decide whether we can survive or cannot survive. From here on we do not want any more excuses about excellence in this country and about whether we can do something. I think we are entitled to be more critical of our people in the arts, and I for one intend to be more critical. We have coddled them in this country—and perhaps they needed it. It is like our manufacturing industry where we have done the same thing. We believe that you have to shelter our infant industries, but then the problem is that they never grow up. In some ways this has also been true of the arts.

We have some good writers but they are few and far between. There is a kind of self-consciousness, a kind of coyness, a kind of determination to be different amongst them. If the country wants to go one way they have to go another way. There is almost a presumption that if the majority of people in the country think one way, they have to be wrong. Some think the artist must be right and the people wrong. Often the artist does not fight on behalf of the people, but against the people. Perhaps that is the traditional role of the writer, thinker, poet, painter, and musician. All the same the people are entitled to have the intellectual establishment understand their viewpoint some of the time. People do not want to be treated contemptuously by those on the top.

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The trouble is that a certain group has consciously made itself into an opposition which opposes almost everything, and thinks it must be supported. In a sense, oppositions need people to oppose them. They say, "How can we oppose you if you do not oppose us?" In a sense we must provide the opposition. We have been made too comfortable culturally, and this must stop.

I shall conclude, as I am sure others want to participate in the debate, by recalling something written by Arnold Toynbee, the historian who died recently. The one thing in