

problem, the government takes the easy, Philistine approach: "If it walks, we will tax it!" That is the approach.

● (1630)

In the government's mind there is no difference between a Xerox copy and prints which are produced in Eskimo co-operatives and native co-operatives throughout this country. This provides them with the only income they have, and it is a vital source of income. If that is not unbelievable, I do not know what is.

Where has the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox) been? Has he been here to defend this policy? Has the Secretary of State come in here and said that the reason the government is doing this is because of its view as to what art is? Has any member of the government said that this is an aspect of its cultural policy?

Mr. Riis: Not one person has spoken.

Mr. Rae: The minister has not spoken in this debate, and yet matters of tax are fundamental to a cultural policy. The government has moved in all sorts of areas to encourage production in certain media because it is concerned about what happens to Canadian artists, because it is concerned about Canadian jobs and because it is concerned about the impact of the American mass media on our way of life, our sense of identity and on the way in which we express ourselves in the world. Yet when it comes to a very simple and basic problem as to whether to tax artists who produce original prints, the government takes the basic and simple Philistine approach. That is what I have called it; it is probably too good a word for it. The government is not even conscious in the sense of understanding the nature of the distinction. The government just says, "Go ahead, we will tax it". It is easier to tax it than not to tax it, and this government cannot be bothered making a distinction.

All I can say about this proposal by the government is that it is so inane and flies so much in the face of what makes any sense that I can only hope and expect that, because of its inanity and its absurdity in the face of what is needed and what makes sense, the government will have to change its mind, if not this year then next year. Posters will all have to be changed. All the concepts will have to be changed. All the exhibits in Canada and the rest of the world will have to be changed. The government will have to tell all the art gallery dealers and all the cultural historians that really an original print is not a work of art but a piece of manufacture. The government will have to say that what the Inuit are producing is not art but simply mechanical reproduction, that they are engaged in manufacturing and might as well be producing nails, bolts, nuts or screws rather than expressing their heritage, their culture, their concern and their humanity in a unique way. To say that an original print is not a cultural activity, not an expression of a way of life and not an expression of one's humanity is absurd.

This is a small thing. It will not add a lot of revenue. But in a small way the government is doing just what I have said and

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it deserves to be ridiculed for it. It deserves to be condemned for it. It deserves to be the subject of publicity. We should let the artistic community know that when it came to make representations on a very simple matter, on a very fundamental matter, on a matter which is not one of earth-shattering or treasury-shattering principle but one which is absolutely fundamental to one's notion of culture and one's appreciation of cultural life, this government sat on its hands and did nothing. Let the record show that. I am glad the record will show that.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, we support the amendment and, in the interest of getting on to more important parts of the bill, I trust that we will move expeditiously toward the next clauses.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I will not hold the House up for long, but I do want to say that man does not live by bread alone, and surely to goodness we do not expect a painter to repaint the same scene time and time again. If his only means of making a living is through original prints, surely it is unfair to tax them. If we do that, we kill initiative and kill creativity.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I confess that I am somewhat amazed at the reluctance exhibited by the member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) in his effort to explain to us the cultural policy of the New Democratic Party and to link it up with a 9 per cent excise tax. I suggest it is not only a matter of making the distinction between what is a work of art and what is not, but rather of wondering what is the best government policy to support the arts and encourage artists to create original productions.

Precisely because the government is always endeavouring to tailor its cultural policy to all artistic circles in Canada, it has set up the Applebaum commission which is studying the problems inherent in artistic circles and will make its recommendations to the government. We will see what recommendations the commissioners make in their report. Will they say that the cultural policy ought to be geared to the excise tax and that encouragement to the arts should be restricted by repealing the excise tax on materials used by artists, or else will they recommend that the government expand the significant measures already being implemented both by the Secretary of State and by other organizations such as the Canada Council, and that we make more extensive use of those mechanisms with a view to promoting artistic production in Canada? I think it is within such a broader scope that we must examine how a government can lend its support to the artistic community and to the production of works of art instead of concentrating on a 9 per cent excise tax on a given production.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.