

Non-Canadian Publications

though the hon. member for St. Paul's is obviously not among them.

I want to deal with another point made by the hon. member for St. Paul's. He said that there is no board of censorship, and he is quite right. It may well be that the word "censorship" or the concept of "censorship" as it relates to the tax aspects of this bill is a harsh word to use. Perhaps it is too strong. But the Department of National Revenue, in terms of its power to make arbitrary decisions, subject of course to the appeal process, is indeed strong and it can have a profound effect on what will be printed and what will not be permitted in any magazine. This is the way tax policy is used, and in those terms let us not fool ourselves in this House: this bill represents an intrusion into the right of publication or the right to put on the printed page what a publisher might like. This happens and is the natural course of events.

● (1630)

Surely the government is not taking the position that when the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Basford) talked about 80 per cent content, he was talking through his hat. He was saying, when he said that, "This is how the government of the day is going to enforce its decision, acceptable or otherwise, and only the future will decide the results within Canada.

It should be clear from what I have said that I view these publications from a different point of view. Let me say at the outset that I think this is perhaps one of the most important pieces of legislation with which we have had to deal in this parliament. It goes a long way in affecting the rights of people who hitherto have been granted certain rights under the law and in terms of those rights have made certain commitments and undertaken certain obligations. Before parliament or anybody else tinkers with these things, for however good the purpose to our country, we must consider each case on its merits. I do not believe the minister has done that when he lumps the two publications together. As a result of lumping the two publications together, I think there could very well be a great injustice done in the one case and I hope to have some suggestions to make in respect of that matter as we continue this debate.

The purpose of the government is laudable. The government has said it wants to aid the Canadian publishing industry and it is concerned about the inundation of our newsstands by foreign publications.

Mr. Roberts: Aren't you?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes, of course. That is what I said. If the hon. member had been awake and listening, I am sure he would have heard me say that I share those concerns. I think the government is attempting to begin some form of policy for the Canadian publishing industry, but this statute can by no means even be classed as a fair beginning to that policy. There are so many things to be done for the Canadian publishing industry, in terms of positive things, that I regret very much the minister has chosen, with all the fanfare of his speech at Trent University and his speech here in the House on May 8, to come forward with one negative proposal for an industry that is crying out for assistance

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

from its government. I cannot think that the Secretary of State for Canada is so lacking in imagination. If he is, I cannot think that there are people in the public service of this country who are so lacking in imagination they feel they should attack this great problem of an emerging Canadian industry by using the negative, retributive forces of the tax laws in this way.

Because of the magnitude of the problem, there ought to be a willingness on the part of the minister to compromise in this situation. It is that spirit of compromise, and its importance in dealing with something I do not think is really partisan in the traditional sense, which caused the hon. member for Cochrane and the hon. member for Vaudreuil to say what was on their minds in respect of the matter. I commend them for that and I am rather proud to be associated with them, even though the hon. member for St. Paul's perhaps found their streak of independence somewhat not to his liking. Most members of the House would echo the many sentiments expressed by those two members of the Liberal Party.

Our duty is to examine each of these cases on its merits and examine the law on its merits. We ought to review the principles which should be considered in respect of the application of the law. If we find they are wanting, then the government and the Secretary of State should be prepared to move. For those who view the statements of the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens), when he was replying to a short statement in the House, as closing the debate on the consideration of this policy, I would ask them to read the statements again. He said very clearly that one of the important aspects that ought to be considered was the whole effect on Canadian employment and those who were dependent in one way or to some degree or another on the continuation of these publications.

The hon. member suggested we should consider the effect it might have on those people if these publications were not allowed to continue in their favoured position. He was concerned, as well, about the monopolistic effect this legislation could have in terms of the benefits it will confer on what has already been acknowledged to be a publishing giant in this country. He was concerned, and I think he said this by implication, very much about the effect, if any, this is going to have on the development of smaller periodicals as well as the development of opportunities for Canadian writers and craftsmen within those institutions.

We are not just legislating here for ourselves. We are going to be affecting these institutions in one way or another. In fact, we are going to be affecting the whole industry in Canada, I respectfully suggest. We must ask ourselves whether in terms of those who are participants now and in terms of those who look forward to careers as participants in the publishing industry, directly or indirectly, including artisans and suppliers, this legislation is reasonable as presently framed, particularly in terms of timing. I hope the Secretary of State is asking himself this question in view of the statements which have been made in the House today, coming as they do from all quarters.

There is one other matter the Secretary of State ought to remember. In terms of the effect or the prospective effect of this legislation, the Secretary of State or anybody else