

*Government Orders*

I think there are exceptions to this that we have to deal with in Canada, as in any other country. When I think of the great Maggie Smith, John Gielgud and great actors from various countries in the world, when we have the opportunity to have them in our midst, we should be grateful and take that on.

However as with any profession, the kings and queens if you will, are few and far between and the vast majority of the performers are good, solid, journeymen professionals who can do the job. There are just as many in Canada as there are in any other country.

The particular fear surrounding 22(2) is that Canada is opening up its cultural borders in this particular area when other countries are closing theirs down. We have to create a balance that supports our own home grown actors, who are as fine as any in the world, who are envied the world over. We have to set up a situation whereby there would be reciprocity between different countries. We can do this, but we have to say to our own actors: "You are good enough. We do not need to import someone. When productions are being done in this country, you are going to have the first shot".

The Canadian Conference on the Arts, in speaking of the creation of the Canadian Council on the Status of the Artist, has called for the council to be managed at arms length from the Department of Communications and any other government department or agency for it to be the most effective. We support this and we are sure that this will be the end result of the creation of the council.

The Liberal Party supports the bill, but really hopes to see improvements at committee stage because we feel it does not go far enough. It only marginally improves the socioeconomic status of Canadian artists and does not fulfil the government's own promises in response to the standing committee's report of December 1989.

What is missing are taxation provisions, bankruptcy protection, compensation for public use of art works and access to social benefit programs. Artists are still waiting for the government to take action on the income averaging provisions.

The standing committee recommended that artists be given the right to stabilize their income by setting aside a

part of their artistic income in an artistic account on which tax liability would be deferred and that the Income Tax Act be amended accordingly. The government only promises to examine income averaging provisions as it seems to be its view that such allowances already exist through liberalized RRSP rules.

• (1800)

The response of the Canadian Conference on the Arts is that the RRSP solution is seriously flawed. RRSPs were created to provide pension incomes, not to serve as an income averaging device. This is a very specialized situation and one that needs a very specialized response. Bill C-7 does not address the government's commitment to protect artists' royalties from the bankruptcy of producers.

On the recognition of the right of compensation for the public use of artwork, the bill remains silent on the right of compensation by the government for the public use of works of art.

Clause 2(e) recognizes the importance of compensation but it does not provide for any formal recognition or mechanism so that that compensation may be paid.

With regard to the access of social benefit programs, many artists are self-employed and unable to benefit from health or income security plans and unemployment insurance plans. That is why the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture recommended that proposed legislation give artists who are represented by certified professional associations the right to be an employee for unemployment insurance purposes on that part of income generated from salaried employees. The UI Act should be amended accordingly and the Minister of Communications should explore the demand for and the viability of establishing private group benefit plans for creative artists.

That is what the need is, Madam Speaker, and I know how well you know that.

The government's response to the first recommendation was to continue to examine the eligibility criteria of the UI program with a view to expanding coverage to artists within the framework of the UI Act.