

on those who have to pay it. Many people called for all sorts of exemptions. Today, as a first amendment out of eight, senators opposite want books to be tax exempt.

Of course, I recognize that senator MacEachen wanted to be non-partisan, that he wanted to avoid diverting attention through the use of imaginary words and catastrophic situations.

Honourable senators and members of the public, you have to know that publishing, reading, culture and research do not exclusively belong to liberal senators. On this side of the House, we also want Canadians to be better educated, to acquire more knowledge and to undertake more research.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Poitras: Senator Hébert was talking before about books which are not selling.

On this side of the House, we have authors of books which sell!

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Poitras: When a book has value, whatever the price, it always sells and it is read.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Poitras: So, one diverts the question when one leads the public into believing that, on the one hand, we are for education, and, on the other, they know nothing and they will give up everything!

Senator Hébert has presented a number of arguments, saying that the great majority of publishings are supported either by the Communications Department or the Canada Council.

There are more than one way to support publishing. And, one does not necessarily have to go through the Department of Finance, but through taxes, our taxes on such or such item. I firmly believe that tomorrow our government will again find ways to help entrepreneurs, to help those who take risks, to help those who want to promote young writers. There are many other ways than taxation or non-taxation.

I can assure you, honourable senators, that our government will manage to accept the challenge to support all our publishers, that the Department of Communications, the Canada Council, and many others will find new ways to enable our authors to tell us what they have to tell us, and to inform us. Finally, in research, we will, as much as in the past, publish the findings of the research done here, so that we will support our very best researchers.

There is an attempt to single out the GST and make it responsible for everything. Let us not forget, honourable senators, that at the most this tax accounts for 10 to 12 per cent of the national budget. With a taxation package the government is trying to achieve in this term of office, and will surely succeed, a new tax system that must change as does the economy that can no longer develop the way it did fifty years ago.

[Senator Poitras.]

We must be open to the world. We must find new ways and new approaches. When talking about taxing corporations and individuals, we must remember that our corporations remain Canadian because individuals invest in them. They will do so as long as the corporations are profitable and survive. If not as the publishing companies Senator Hébert mentioned they will fall into the hands of publishers of foreign countries.

Honourable senators, Senator Hébert admitted it. The Leader of the Opposition was too scrupulous to admit the ultimate purpose of the whole exercise was to prevent this new tax to pass.

That is the objective, because these are stalling tactics. The purpose is not to improve to such and such a tax under the pretext of saving the publishing industry, books and culture.

In Quebec and everywhere else, the culture will live on. It will be supported by our two levels of government. I am convinced that with the GST or sales tax we will continue to grow, to make our culture known here in our country and abroad.

That is why I ask you, honourable senators, not to proceed with the amendment put forward today. It is a new partisan strategy. Having heard the last speaker, I think we must say it is demagoguery.

Thank you, honourable senators.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: Would Senator Poitras accept a question?

Senator Poitras: Yes senator.

Senator Molgat: Honourable senator, I think I heard you say, at the beginning of your speech, that it was a replacement tax. But there is no tax on books and other such printed materials at the present time. In this particular case, it would not be a replacement tax, but indeed a totally new tax. If you decide to impose a tax on something that is not taxed now, you can not call it a replacement tax or can you?

Senator Poitras: I think you need to be much more broad-minded to understand what I was driving at. At present, you and I and all our fellow citizens pay 18 billion on one tax. We pay it only on goods we purchase. In a new and more rational system, we are proposing a tax which, effective January 1st, will apply to one sector of the economy as well as the other, that is to say production of goods and provision of services.

At the same time, we will make sure that the burden of the tax will be fairly and equitably borne by everybody, and not by one single group. In that way, it is a replacement tax. It will not apply exactly to the same things, because the economy is not what it used to be 50 years ago. There were very few service-oriented businesses then. Today, there are more.

On various other points, that is also the difference I see in a replacement tax that will apply to different things. There are other means today to encourage entrepreneurs in the publishing industry and in other sectors of our economy.