

Cultural Property

is necessary to guarantee successful implementation of this legislation. The amendment which is now before the House at the report stage was discussed, and I think favourably endorsed, by members of the committee from all parties. However, we were not able to deal with it at the committee stage because it required a new royal recommendation, which is before us now, plus the amendment.

The purpose of the amendment is simple. It is to increase the number of members of the board, to allow the board to have increased flexibility and also greater administrative efficiency. I thank hon. members on all sides of the House for their co-operation, and commend to the House the amendment and the bill.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to start by saying it is a pleasure to be able to speak on this bill and offer endorsement of what I believe is basically a good piece of legislation. This is really, in essence, what one might call apple pie legislation, but I think it is good apple pie so I believe there will be support for it in the House. There are, however, a number of concerns about the bill, although they are not absolutely devastating, which ought to be aired at this time and perhaps given further consideration as we study the whole complex question in the field of culture and cultural development.

First, as a basis for this discussion, I wish to say that no country really knows the limits of its greatness without taking time to establish what are its roots. Any policy or legislation which assists a nation in preserving its history and protecting its culture is the type of legislation we should all underwrite. I think it is particularly important in a country as young as Canada that we should do all that is important for the preservation of its history. In fact, many people hardly think of Canada as a nation with a historical reference. There are many people in this nation who can almost remember back to the time when this country was started, and on that basis Canadian often conclude that we do not have a historical past, when in fact history is simply human beings in progress. There must be a period in which that progress develops so that we become fully appreciative of that which went before.

So, speaking on this bill, we note there are two principal purposes put forward. The first is to protect us against unwarranted exports of treasures deemed to be of national historic value and, second, to establish a tax advantage for those collectors who assist in developing collections that are in the national interest and which are to be displayed. Having said that, I wish to digress for a few moments in talking about culture and the protection of culture. First of all I wish to underscore something which I think is of tremendous importance. Culture has no rights or wrongs except as judged by other cultures. The sets of values we have across the world are always in conflict when one culture views another. But these conflicts do not exist within the domain of right and wrong at any given point within a culture. So when we take a look at people in certain Mediterranean countries and in Spain, we note that there are people who stand extremely close and yet have different values. Sometimes we even chuckle at that, but the fact is it is the difference between cultures which

[Mr. Faulkner.]

makes this something we do not fully appreciate or understand.

My point is that culture is not a fixed identity but, rather, a process in motion which is always in a state of change. I wish to underscore the fact that once government enters the field of doing something about culture, it may run into the danger of starting to attempt to underline what is right and wrong in respect of culture, trying to define what it should be and telling its citizens what their values ought to be. I think the role of the government, clearly, should be simply to record and preserve for historical reference, without any determination to attempt to direct or dictate, under those situations, what our values ought to be.

● (1430)

While underlining that this is good legislation, one also recognizes that because the government now has some influence on what pieces of art, artifacts and cultural activities are good in the national interest, it certainly runs the danger of directing its citizens in terms of influencing them as to what values the government thinks it should have.

Another concern I have about this legislation is with regard to the words "in the national interest." It seems to me that when we consider a piece of legislation in regard to art, artifacts and our cultural heritage, we can certainly wonder at what point these things come to be in the national interest. If we could go back in our imagination for a few moments to some of the war pieces which might have been left on the Plains of Abraham immediately following the war, they would not have been of interest to the prairie provinces or British Columbia if for no other reason than the fact that those provinces had not at that time even been named.

What is of regional interest today may well be of national interest 50 or 100 years from now, but the type of legislation being put forth lends itself to emphasizing the national interest. When one really looks at what is happening in museums and archives today, a large part of the whole national development of the protection of culture is the succession of little museums and little archives dotted across Canada, many of them having particular emphasis on regional and local concerns. Many of these museums will have tremendous importance later in history but may not at the present time be appreciated as being of national interest.

I think the point ought to be made that this legislation does not go far enough in protecting the cultural values of Canadians because it means that something must necessarily be classified as being of national interest before it can be fully protected. Associated with that is another concern I have about this legislation, namely, what happens to the bits of information and artifacts which are protected in some regional place when they do come to be of national interest? If something is being preserved in a museum in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Quebec, British Columbia or the Northwest Territories and suddenly it is deemed to be of national interest, does this mean the local community will give up some of its own collection so that it may be preserved for the national interest? If that is so, I think it is another serious danger in terms of this