

*Creative Artists—Income Tax*

to the extent it can, must identify and resolve the unique financial problems faced by our artists.

The previous speaker, the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), mentioned his concern that the federal Government has not done enough in the fields of broadcasting, television in particular, as it relates to artists and performers. Obviously, he has put his thoughts and notes together without reading through the policy which was tabled in this House yesterday by the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) with respect to a new national broadcasting policy which, of course, states very emphatically that the federal Government intends to set up in one area, at least, a program production fund which would enable private independent television producers to produce better and more Canadian programming. This would, of course, help the entire artistic industry in Canada today.

The plight of the artist has always been with us. It has been acknowledged by international forums such as UNESCO, and by virtually every Government in the world right down through history. Often this plight is reduced to simple financial duress, but no less important are the lack of adequate facilities, the lack of appropriate training facilities and the lack of meaningful public involvement and recognition, as noted by the Applebaum-Hébert Committee.

The Canadian public has recognized that Canadian artists face financial difficulties. For example, in a recent poll analysed by the Department of Communications, three-quarters of respondents favoured Government financial support for artists. Indeed, the Government has over the years evolved a number of mechanisms to deal with a variety of the most urgent problems. Through the Canadian Council, a portion of the core costs of most of our "national treasures" in the arts are directly subsidized. Project grants are available to individuals and a number of sectoral assistance programs are in place.

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Efforts have also been made over the years to recognize and compensate for the dysfunction of marketing and distribution systems for our cultural products. The Department of Communications administers a major program of assistance to Canadian publishers, as well as a postal subsidy for books and periodicals, on the principle that it is a basic right of Canadians to have access to Canadian writing. I might also mention in this context the special program of cultural initiatives which assists the cultured community in Canada with the construction of facilities, improvement of management skills, and special projects of national cultural significance.

I remind Hon. Members of the papers that were tabled by the Minister of Communications yesterday, wherein he stated that we were setting out a definite financial program to assist private and independent television producers, which in the long run will affect the entire artistic life in Canada.

Before dealing with the particular problems facing the artist in Canada today, I will like to concentrate on some of the larger issues we must consider in this context. Most important, we must not forget that to a large degree the hands and minds

of our artists shape Canada's international reputation and our shared sense of ourselves as Canadians with a unique history and a promising present, together occupying a very distinctive and sometimes challenging piece of terrain called Canada. We can and do take pride in a successful European tour by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the many international awards won by the National Film Board. As a matter of fact, the current controversy which is going on in the United States has been created by films produced and supplied by the National Film Board. They have won many awards on the international stage.

We learn something about ourselves and our country when we gaze at a Group of Seven painting and its startling representation of the Canadian landscape. Our heritage lives and evolves through the continuing work of individual researchers who explore, discover and reconceptualize our past. In many ways, Canada is what it is because individual artists have crystallized new insights into the Canadian reality and communicated them to us, all of us. In short, art is the collective memory of our civilization and, in fact, any civilization.

But what status, what support, do our artists enjoy? Their lives and their families' lives to a great extent are riddled with uncertainties as to employment. They face high costs for training and materials, as well as related expenses for management, promotion and the like. And the financial reward?

The actual statistics are dramatic. Revenue Canada, in its 1982 edition of Taxation Statistics, ranks the average income of self-employed artists and entertainers fourteenth in its 15 occupational categories. Only pensioners lag behind artists, though they pay proportionately more income tax than fishermen, farmers, investors and pensioners.

Most artists lack the basic protection provided by pension plans and Unemployment Insurance. The Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley) earlier referred to the salaries or fees earned by Canadian artists. According to data supplied by the joint Department of Communications-Statistics Canada Cultural Statistics Program, only 23 per cent of Canada's 3,000 or so professional actors were employed full time in 1979. Around 35 per cent reported a total income from acting of less than \$5,000. Nearly 60 per cent earned less than \$10,000. These figures portray not just a financial crisis, but an artistic one. In order to supplement their incomes, these artists must spend time and energy on activity outside their chosen profession, time and energy which cannot be spent trying to achieve artistic excellence.

The situation is essentially the same for writers. A Department of Communications study on Canadian freelance writers revealed that one half of full-time writers earned less than \$7,000 from their craft in 1978. Similar figures can be cited for every artistic discipline. Overall, individual artists earn on average an income which is below the poverty line for a family of four. This is why I feel it is so important that we discuss in detail and in all seriousness the motion before us presented by the Hon. Member for Argenteuil-Papineau.