

Non-Canadian Publications

has now been set which can be said to be dangerous in both its intent and conclusion.

As I listen to the debate I wonder why the government is so hell-bent in moving the way that it is, keeping in mind the legitimate concern that has been registered not only on this side of the House but by members of all parties. They have indicated to the government that it should slow down. It is moving in the wrong direction. The government is moving in a direction that the future will unquestionably show was wrong and which cannot by itself, in terms of this bill, save Canadian periodicals.

In conclusion I have no hesitation in supporting the amendment of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway. I ask government members in particular to listen to what the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway and the hon. member for Ontario have indicated because I believe they are on the right track. Being on the right track I respectfully submit that this bill should be sent back, withdrawn, and redrafted in order to bring about principles and attitudes that are consistent with the needs of the Canadian consumer, something the government has completely ignored.

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Madam Speaker, it was not my intention of speak in this debate, but I was moved to do so by virtue of some of the rather unfortunate comments made by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) in attempting to answer the very legitimate and pungent complaints and observations raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen).

Members on the government side have made a real attempt to misconstrue the points raised by members on this side. The great majority of those in this House are certainly interested in trying to promote and encourage the Canadian publication industry. We want to encourage the vital publishing industry of which this country is capable.

As pointed out by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), this particular piece of legislation was brought forward by the government through the process of closure. In my estimation and observation, there has been a manipulation on the committee side. It is an indication that the government is rather uncertain of its position. It would very much like to curtail the debate that is taking place, not only in this House but in the media and among the people of the country.

There are two facets of this debate that bother me. One is the crux of the complaint raised by members of the opposition. Through the government's negotiation with *Reader's Digest* and its decision with regard to Canadian content, the fact is that the matter is simply up for grabs in negotiation with the government of the day.

Even though I have only been here a short time I find it obvious that the amendment presented by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) and the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) is absolutely essential if we are to have any semblance of reasonable application of the law respecting the publishing industry in Canada today.

I do not care how many ways government members argue that this is not censorship and that they are not interfering with the publishing or involved in determining

[Mr. Alexander.]

which publications will be published in Canada. It is obvious from what happened with regard to *Reader's Digest* that there is a great degree of flexibility, that the government can, and in fact will introduce into its application just who can get tax credit for advertising in Canada. Therefore this is a very unfortunate situation that we face today.

As a member of the Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments I spend a lot of time considering regulations. I thought I was put on that committee as a form of punishment for a new backbencher because every week I am faced with mounds of regulations. The committee looks at regulations in an attempt to see whether they are in fact authorized under the governing statute, whether they in fact carry out the principles of natural justice, or whether they are arbitrary and ultra vires of any particular act. My experience on that committee leads me to believe that wherever possible we should be as specific and explicit in our laws as we can in the statute, as opposed to leaving the matter to legislation through order in council and regulation. This is what we are experiencing at present.

● (2120)

There is no definition of what constitutes Canadian content or of what constitutes a Canadian publication. What prevents the government putting forward a straightforward definition of Canadian content in percentage terms? Why not do so and leave the interpretation of such a definition to the courts, as opposed to a tribunal or to the discretion of the minister at any particular time?

The publishing industry is a large one and we realize that a fair amount of money is being made by successful magazines. I suggest that if we allow the government's proposal to go forward we may find that the stakes are sufficiently high as, possibly, to produce a backroom situation involving members of any particular administration with respect to obtaining a favourable interpretation of what constitutes a Canadian publication so that a magazine can obtain tax benefits by conforming to the definition. The proposition being put forward by the opposition is a reasonable and sane one. I commend it to members on the government side. It is not what one could call a big deal. We are simply asking the administration to put its definition into a statute and to take it out of the realm of arbitrary decision by a cabinet minister.

I am surprised that more members on the government side are not coming out in support of this view, that they are not coming forward to "give Ottawa a jolt", or perhaps to "give Ottawa a Holt!" I commend the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway for her actions in connection with this bill, a responsible move on her part to bring some sanity to the legislation before us. I should like to see more hon. members supporting her stand.

I am not normally convinced that editorial comment should dictate the policy we adopt in this House but I am impressed that editorial pages are increasingly questioning the wisdom of the government in persisting in its present course of action. I am sure that when the announcement was made confirming that an arrangement had been reached between *Reader's Digest* and the government making it possible for *Reader's Digest* to come within the