

Non-Canadian Publications
AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, before we recessed for the dinner hour I was saying it seems that in every part of our economy we believe in competition but that in the world of writing the bill before us and the actions of the government would seem to suggest that competition is not good.

Perhaps, though, on reflection, there may be an element of consistency in the government's approach. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has suggested the time is coming when there will be increasing governmental interference in the lives of ordinary Canadians. From this point of view it might be said that the legislation we are being asked to approve is consistent with government policy.

If for one maintain that competition in the world of ideas, in the world of the arts, in the world of writing, is a healthy state of affairs, just as it is in the market place. For support I would simply turn to someone whose words will, I am sure, be accepted more readily than my own, although my own, I feel, ought to be accepted readily enough. I refer to the noted essayist, Matthew Arnold. In an essay entitled "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" he wrote:

It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it and to produce fruit for the future it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word—disinterestedness. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called "the practical view of things"; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism really has nothing to do with.

The hallmark of fertility of thought and fertility of writing is summed up in the word Matthew Arnold uses, namely, the word disinterestedness.

It occurs to me that in order to understand the effect this legislation might have in future years we might project ourselves into the world of Gulliver's Travels. Gulliver was a model of the rigid Englishman who thinks that the world is his oyster and that everything centres upon his world. This was his belief until he began to travel.

The first unsettling experience he encountered was in the world of Lilliput where he met a race of people who thought in very much the same way as himself. They believed they enjoyed the best of all cultures, the best of all lifestyles, that everything they had devised was little short of perfect. When Gulliver came along they were obliged to revise these impressions. Until then there was no basis of comparison which they could use; they had no way of knowing whether their culture was really a superior culture or not. When Gulliver arrived they recognized instantly that they were, in fact, a very inferior race, a very diminutive race, not in the matter of size only, and that they had by their insularity frustrated the growth of their culture.

Later on Gulliver resumed his travels and went to the world of the Brobdingnagians. These were giants and they, too, thought their world was perfect—that there was no

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

culture better than theirs. Again, though, they had no true basis for this judgment because they had not come into contact with members of any society other than their own until Gulliver arrived. But as soon as Gulliver landed on their shores, a basis for comparison existed. As I said a few moments ago, Gulliver himself had felt there were no achievements superior to those of his own culture, but when he saw the giants he was obliged to recognize that his world was, in fact, narrow and circumscribed.

My point is this: if we insist on drawing artificial boundaries we are eliminating contrast, we are eliminating conflict, and in this way we are eliminating growth and the possibility of perfection.

● (2010)

An hon. Member: What about comparing the Yahoos with the Houyhnhnms?

Mr. Friesen: The hon. member asks if we are going to compare the Yahoos with the Houyhnhnms, and we might because it would be a very apt comparison. I suppose we do have some around, but we should probably leave them for another discussion. But if we draw these narrow boundaries of nationalism the day will come when we, in our pygmy fantasy, will look at our culture like many of the Lilliputians and, without thought of comparison, say, "We are the very best there is; there is none better". While that happens the world passes us by. While this happens to our culture, our writers and journalists, who are the exponents of our culture, the expression of what we think and believe, have no way, if we are in splendid isolation, to sharpen their faculties and skills because they are isolated unto themselves.

I would ask the members of this House whether they think that the *Manchester Guardian*, an English newspaper, became a good newspaper because it studiously practised an insular editorial policy? Did the *New York Times* become what it is today because it had a paranoid fear of foreign correspondents? These kinds of barriers are never a sign of virility and strength; they are always a sign of decay and fear, a kind of cultural egotism based on fear of comparison.

How are the Canadian people to sharpen their critical faculties if all Canadian publications are the products of an inbred journalistic society? Critical faculties are developed by comparison. Let the people read, let the people compare. Let them decide what is Canadian and what is good.

Let me turn now, Madam Speaker, to some of these practical realities of which we have spoken. The Secretary of State addressed his caucus and I should like to make reference to that address. He said:

While any potential economic dislocation caused by the change in the Income Tax Act would be short-term, it should not be forgotten that some individuals may, certainly, suffer financial loss. One cannot dispute *Reader's Digest* on this point—

I ask the House to take note of this next statement:—and a conscious trade off has to be made between these effects and the policy objectives of the government.

Do hon. members realize just what the Secretary of State is saying? The jobs of writers, typesetters, lumbermen, pulp workers, printers and delivery people are to be a