

concrete initiatives to help that segment of the arts community.

While Private Members' motions rarely, if ever, pass through this House, as I said earlier, I would like to see this one go through the House and referred to a committee. From what I could see before I got up to speak, with the number of Liberals jumping up and down trying to catch the Speaker's eye, I doubt very much that will happen this afternoon.

● (1530)

I would like to say a few words about the important roles which artists play in Canadian life. Workers who are engaged in the arts and are essential to the cultural life of Canada often have earnings which make it difficult for them to provide for the necessities of life. In addition to these difficulties, there is the fact that public access to the arts is being eroded by inflationary pressures and the high unemployment we have in our country today.

If that were not enough to contend with, there is an increasing tendency on the part of Government at all levels to reduce its support of the arts; and as the Estimates which were tabled in the House recently show, this Government has again restricted its own level of expenditures to the arts. Surely it is in the interest of our country that policies be brought forward to ensure that professional workers in the arts receive a just remuneration for their work.

It is equally important that artists receive adequate protection for their creative products by assisting them with information and resources to improve the business aspect of their work. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, the time has long passed when there should have been measures brought before this House to strengthen the Copyright Act and provide real protection for those engaged in their field of work.

Despite its many statements to the contrary, this Government's commitment to promoting the artistic community over the years has been relatively non-existent in reality. It has failed miserably to develop an industrial strategy for the publishing industry, for broadcasting, films and recordings. It has done virtually nothing in the area of increasing Canadian ownership of production and distributing facilities, let alone increasing the share of the Canadian market for Canadian productions. We are still awaiting policies, Mr. Speaker, which would clarify and strengthen the definition of Canadian books and of what Canadian programs mean. The same applies to films and recordings. If those policies were brought forward they would go a long way toward expanding and improving employment for Canadian workers in the cultural industries.

Surely the time has come when Government should adopt taxation policies which would encourage and expand Canadian cultural creations and their subsequent availability to the public. If Government were clearly to indicate it had a serious commitment to the arts, then it would clearly be seen to be doing something rather than simply talking about it. Passing this motion today would be a strong indication that the Government at long last is prepared to make that kind of commitment.

Creative Artists—Income Tax

However, the responsibility rests not only with the federal Government but also with other levels of Government. The federal Government can initiate discussions with provincial Governments; for example, there is a need for a greater degree of co-operation with the cultural agencies of provincial Governments to fund community artistic endeavours. In my own constituency there is a burning need for improved facilities and training in the visual and performing arts. At present, there are numerous groups experiencing difficulty because of a shortage of on-going operating funds. I am sure that many, if not all, Hon. Members in this House know of similar situations.

If there were improved co-operation it could not but help increase opportunities for people to attend exhibitions and performances in their own communities. I might add that it would contribute to the strength of the community. Greater co-operation would also provide the opportunity to make adequate funding available, so as to provide grants which would keep admission prices at affordable levels. It could also bring the arts into the schools and make the arts more accessible to smaller communities in the country.

The rights of performers in film, television, radio and audio recordings are not protected under the Copyright Act. The only rights these workers have to ensure their art is protected is that which is provided under collective agreements negotiated by their unions, such as the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists and the Musicians' Union.

With the advent of new technology for distribution of reserved performances such as video discs, satellite transmission spanning the globe, home video recording machines and the like, it is becoming increasingly clear that monitoring such use of performance materials would present major problems for the unions. Enforcing performers' rights certainly would require the support of legislation.

For all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that this Private Member's motion would find its way into a committee where we could examine it more thoroughly.

Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to take part in this Private Members' discussion. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Argenteuil-Papineau (Mr. Gourd) for his foresight back, I believe, in the fall of 1981, when he brought to the attention of this House through this Bill his concern for the artists of Canada. This concern has been brought to bear as well by the importance which the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, or the Applebaum-Hébert Committee, has placed on the status of artists. Indeed, the matters raised by my colleague in 1981 and by the motion which we are debating today are crucial to the well-being of Canadian artists, to the state of Canadian culture as a whole, and thus to the quality of life of all Canadians.

Canadian artists do not just help us understand our culture, they create it. Whether it be in the visual or performing arts, in the heritage area, or in the cultural industries such as film, sound recording or book publishing, the federal Government,