

Supply

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I would rather not comment on the integrity of this Government because it would take more than ten minutes. Unfortunately the Minister was not here when I mentioned the promises made by his Government this year and last year, over the last seven or eight months, and in their quest for the crown which they finally got with a majority of 211 Members. The representatives of the Progressive Conservative Party did make promises to the cultural community, but who cares about promises now! The Minister himself lacks the courage to speak up in Cabinet and remind his colleagues of the promises made to the cultural community. I am a woman of my word and I will keep my promises. You have no right to talk about integrity, for I have kept my promises, but broken promises is all we have had from the Progressive Conservative Party since September 4.

I can assure the Minister that the Liberal Party is a new Party, but he is not aware of that phenomenon. I know he is old, Mr. Speaker, he is talking about events dating back 60 years, I know he is old. Well, I was born in 1952 and I will tell you about something that has radically changed the image of Canada—the age of telecommunications which began in the 1960-70 decade, that has changed the image of Canada, and it is in that respect that we feel threatened by the United States. It has nothing to do with literature dating back to 1920, as the Minister claimed. I could take it upon myself to suggest that he might review his historic facts before talking about an artistic revolution that began way back in 1920. Indeed the problem created by the American threat began with the advent of television, but I realize he is much too old to appreciate that.

[English]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, what encouraged us today to put forward this motion for debate, which has been an excellent debate from what I have seen and heard over television, was that it had become clear over the years that the state of the cultural community in Canada had been deteriorating. I am not prepared to point fingers at a particular Minister, but I do point them at the Government generally. In the economic statement of November and the general discussion, the cultural community has, by and large, lost any faith it had in the Government in terms of supporting it in any real way. Having said that, I want to direct my comments to the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) along the same lines as the Minister.

Over the last five years, I do not know if there would be hundreds, but there would certainly be dozens and dozens of groups of artists of one kind or another who came to Parliament Hill, lobbied and made the case that most of the members they represented were living in a state of poverty. That went on for years and years. I support many of the points the Hon. Member made, but what does she have to say about the fact that it was the Party that she represents today, when it was in government for many years, that had these delegations coming time after time, month after month, year after year,

explaining how their members were living in poverty as they tried to develop their artistic talents and to provide the cultural fabric for Canadian society. Does she not find herself to be a little bit hypocritical today by standing up and not accepting some of the responsibility for the fact that these cultural agencies are in such turmoil?

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two fundamental issues that the Hon. Member is forgetting. First, the statement which was issued by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) deals with a direct cut to the artistic and cultural community which is almost double that which is being levelled at other communities across this country. That is the substance of the motion introduced by the Hon. Member's Party and that is the substance in part of what we must address today.

The second issue, one which unfortunately no government Member has had the courage to address today, is the issue of the arm's length relationship which was sacrosanct. Liberal Governments did not interfere with the arm's length relationship between the arts community and the Government. In fact, it was through the initiative of the Minister of Finance that the federal Government is now setting up a hit team to go into the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to determine where the cuts will be made. That arm's length principle is a principle which this Government guaranteed in its promises to the people before September 4, of which this Party is proud. That is the sum and substance of what we have to discuss today, the arm's length relationship and the Conservative Party's move to make cut-backs to the arts community that are double those he is making to other communities.

Mr. St. Germain: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) that it has been an interesting debate. However, it absolutely amazes Canadians right across this country when somebody like the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) gets up and says that her Liberal Party operated at arm's length. I question the integrity of anybody who would make a statement like that. That is irresponsible.

Ms. Copps: Put the facts on the table.

Mr. St. Germain: I was in this House. I saw what happened. I saw the appointments.

Mr. Gauthier: Put the facts down.

Ms. Copps: Put the facts on the table. Don't challenge my integrity unless you are prepared to put the facts on the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order.

Ms. Copps: Don't challenge my integrity unless you are prepared to put the facts on the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order.

Mr. St. Germain: Mr. Speaker, an arm's length approach is something for which this Party will strive. It will be seen in the near future. It is being seen right now. Let's go back—