

*Bernadette Renaud*

Contrecoeur, January 31, 2011

The Honourable James Moore  
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages

The Honourable Tony Clement  
Minister of Industry

Dear Mr. Moore and Mr. Clement:

Bill C-32 aims to give free access to authors' and artists' creative work online and in schools. Why? It would seem the answer is to meet consumer demand.

With that kind of logic, I am looking forward to having free Internet access. Just like all other consumers, I should have a right to this service. I should also have the right to a computer without having to pay since I need one to access the Internet and, according to Bill C-32, the Internet is now a basic necessity. In the same vein, why wouldn't I have the right to a television for free, since it would allow me to view creators' works? And why stop there? What about free public transit and free pharmaceuticals? After all, health care is essential for consumers. I would also appreciate free educational services, courses, training, plus materials, even at a university level—they are, after all, *educational*.

And shouldn't the service by MPs and ministers elected to serve the population be free, too? If these people are working for the good of the community, if their services are helping people, then why should they be paid? And yet, far from working for free, MPs and ministers are paid very well, and even have a generous pension plan to retire on. Why is this the case? Because, even if you are working for the population, you are performing a service. It is a fundamental human principle: all work should be fairly paid. *The same is true for authors and artists in all disciplines.*

When I quit my job as an administrative secretary to become an author, I left one line of work for another. I have been a full-time author, writer, and sometimes screenwriter for 35 years now. It is not a hobby: it is my **day job**. When I am doing research, when I am working on outlines, writing a draft, or polishing, fleshing out, changing or correcting the text, reading it over again and again, writing multiple versions before finally deciding on a single final product, **I am working**. When I am immersed in the often-arduous creative process, day after day, drawing on all of my experience, I am giving up both the salary I could be making at another job and my time—months, sometimes years of my life—for a single piece of writing, and I have to hope that the final product will find an appreciative audience. Only at that time will I finally receive payment for my work. I sincerely hope that my published work will be sought after for a long time, and thus that I will receive payment from it for a long time. It is right and it is fair.

Unlike you, who receive a salary for doing your job, artists and authors depend on public interest to sell their creative works—with all the insecurity that entails—for their income. The public is interested? They get an income from royalties. No public interest? Little or no income from royalties. And yet, work was done! Without being paid. Each creative work is a financial risk for the author or artist.

As you can see, for authors and artists, royalties are their livelihood. And, just like all other workers, they have the right to earn a living from their work. Royalties are their income in the short term, medium term and, if their creative output is read or watched long enough, the long term as well. This long-term income is all the more appreciated because writers have no pension fund. Honest people will agree that, logically, authors and artists have a right to continue to collect royalties for their creative works, especially if they are not short-lived, but stand the test of time.

And yet now you are proposing legislation that would deprive me of my income? An act that would deprive all artists and authors of their legitimate earnings? I find it hard to believe that such a discriminatory, degrading and contemptuous measure could be put forth by the highest democratic institution in the country, our elected government. And in a so-called democratic country, besides!

This act would be daylight robbery! Stealing the salary of a group of workers and enacting the measure in legislation! And to do what with it? Re-appropriate the funds to the industry? It is contemptible for a government to bow to industry pressures and propose and defend such a measure in a democratic country.

The industry has a capitalist and VORACIOUS APPETITE.

The government has a DUTY and a RESPONSIBILITY to protect workers.

Creative workers—authors and artists—have a RIGHT TO BE PAID for their work:

-for the duration that their work is being used

-no matter who is using it (public and private use)

-in any format (book, CD, film, online, etc... current and future technologies)

-everywhere, without making geographical distinctions.

Consumers have basic rights: the right to a roof over their heads for their personal safety. Does that mean that the federal government will vote in favour of legislation to make construction materials free?

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