

THE ARTS INDUSTRY AND OUR LIFE STYLE

Toronto Canadian Club, March 4, 1974

-- Pauline McGibbon

Thank you, Mr. Chairman:

It's not every Canadian woman who gets an opportunity to stand in for an Academy Award winner -- before such a distinguished audience, to deliver her own lines, and not to worry about Actors' Equity accusing her of non-union activity.

I am indeed sorry that illness prevented Miss Joan Crawford being with us, and share your hopes for her speedy recovery. But as a "long-time member" of the Canadian Club -- ever since the day women were admitted -- I am also honored and delighted to have been selected by the producers and directors of this show today to play the part of "The Other Woman" -- a title and role which in these circumstances Donald shouldn't mind.

When I mentioned the title of this talk -- The Arts Industry and Our Life Style -- to my secretary at the University, she said, "I can understand 'Life Style' -- but 'Industry'? Is that the right word to use in connection with the word 'Arts'?" I laughed and said, "Yes". But I wonder how many of you also would question whether it is the right word. Perhaps you wince at the phrase "Arts Industry", repelled by its commercial ring and any suggestion that people like Leonardo da Vinci, Bach and Shakespeare were industrial workers.

Nevertheless, I think it is important to define what is happening today in Canada, particularly in Ontario, in the Arts as an industry -- an industry that has so much influence on our way of living -- our life style.

Without boring you with statistics, a look at the increases in museum attendance, expanding audiences for the performing arts, and indeed the rapid

growth of all art forms show the number of people participating actively or passively in the Arts rapidly approaching those involved in sporting activities. For example, the Toronto Symphony has 5,000 more subscribers than the Toronto Maple Leafs.

So -- an immediate question: Why does the Symphony require heavy subsidies and sustaining funds when the Maple Leafs make a profit? In this particular case one can, of course, argue that a major symphonic work requires an orchestra of 90 unionized players of great skill and with expensive training. Furthermore, it is simply not possible to enjoy symphonic music in a hall seating more than 3,000. Therefore, unlike the Gardens or a stadium, the audience at any one time is comparatively small.

This is even more true for the theatre. A clear case is the O'Keefe Centre, an auditorium with approximately 3,000 seats, a number of which, alas, are difficult to see or sometimes hear from. This applies particularly to plays where hearing the lines, seeing the faces, and having the sense of intimacy and relationship between the audience and actor are vital to one's full enjoyment.

So, on the cost side, one recognizes limitations to the size of audiences that can be accommodated as well as certain unalterable conditions in many of the art forms if they are to work.

Something else to be remembered: it is extremely difficult to increase productivity in the Arts. If I may use music again as an example, it takes four highly trained people only about 20 minutes to play a Beethoven quartet -- a far cry from a six-hour day. But that does not cover the years of practice required to develop their expertise. Is there any reason that they should not be paid as well as other skilled professionals in our society?

It is estimated that a major symphony orchestra is, in effect, losing about

\$100 a minute from the time the conductor raises his baton. I have used the word "losing" because, unfortunately, this has been the way it has been regarded by so many people in the past. While it is very important that the non-profit organization should strive not to lose money, there are other reasons why it should remain alive and healthy. Like a library -- an institution we no longer question and indeed would be rather shocked if somebody suggested it should make a profit -- other arts organizations perform a community role of education, recreation and entertainment.

One can justifiably describe them as public service institutions.

Secondly, they provide considerable support within the economy of this country, this province and this city. Interest of governments at every level in the cultural life of citizens is important. The province of Quebec took the lead many years ago. Then the Federal Government by Act of Parliament established the Canada Council. Today a number of the provinces and some municipalities have Arts Councils; Ontario has one of the best. Their assistance is necessary to help close the gap between spiralling costs and the private sources of support for these non-profit organizations.

Now in this Province, in Toronto we sit at the heart of the English-speaking part of this country's art centre and communications centre. Toronto is recognized as a prime generator of this country's artistic life. It has been estimated that artistically related profit-making and non-profit activities in Ontario are becoming close to a billion dollar industry.

Thousands of people are employed in broadcasting, the record industry, orchestral music, dance groups, theatres, etc. It would probably be safe to say that a large proportion of the approximately \$2 million distributed to the non-profit arts industry by the Ontario Arts Council returns to the Ontario Government through taxes. The total value of institutions devoted to the arts in Ontario

represent a multi-million dollar investment. One has only to think of the land values of the Arts facilities in Toronto alone to recognize this fact.

Non-profit cultural organizations form the economic base for the additional profit-making "Arts Industry" now mushrooming. This includes commercial broadcasting, the record companies and the film facilities. The non-profit sector provides this base by maintaining a pool of experienced professionals, by stimulating an appetite for art consumption, by attracting tourists, and in a broad sense providing a quality of life that attracts industry and its employees, thereby helping employment in this country.

To deal with this last point first, Stratford of course is the outstanding example of how artistic and cultural amenities help to attract industries to communities. According to the Stratford Chamber of Commerce, their new industries number 23.

By no historic accident are the main production centres for both the CBC and CTV located in Toronto. The availability of professional supporting personnel is a very important factor: from actors, dancers, musicians, painters, and writers; to camera men, hairdressers, make-up men, costume and set designers, and directors; to lighting and sound technicians and allied personnel. Radio and television production provides employment for several thousand people. When we hear the CBC criticized, let's remember that over the years it has been a source of strength to our cultural life, and in truth, a source of nourishment to many, many of our artists.

Last night we saw the first instalment of a superbly produced TV production

of Pierre Berton's "National Dream". Contemplate for a moment the vast involvement of many talents in a work like that. Contemplate further on what it can do for the thousands of Canadians who see it.

The spin-off from the Arts activities generates and sustains million-dollar businesses in the sale of goods and services. How many musical instrument manufacturers, music publishers or sales outlets would remain in business if our arts organizations did not provide orchestral, band and musical services? What is the economic benefit of our museums and galleries to the sale of art and art supplies, books, hobbies and science kits? What is the relationship between orchestral concerts, be they classical or rock, upon sales of records, hi-fi equipment and musical instruments, or between a fine art gallery exhibit and the sale of paintings and amateur art supplies? No accurate accounting is available, but clearly the non-profit organizations maintain and generate a great deal of economic activity.

In addition, they contribute substantially to Ontario's enormous tourist industry. Again, look at the success of Stratford, and the Shaw Festival, and the National Arts Centre.

The advertising spreads you see in "The New Yorker" and "Time" magazine urging Americans in particular to visit Ontario always carry a photograph of one of our performing companies. It is recognized by Queen's Park that, in addition to abundant natural beauties, this Province does maintain a high level of cultural and artistic achievement. And now we also have the gasoline advantage!

To this point I would say I have concentrated on the practical view of the Arts industry emphasizing its dollar-and-cents side -- but what about its subtle influence on the quality of our life -- and our individual life styles?

I would like to examine this question from the point of view of a Canadian citizen. I thought of using the word "chauvinist", but when I looked it up in the Oxford dictionary and saw that it really means a "bellicose patriot", it hardly seemed appropriate.

I do believe that there is something quite distinctive embodied in the word "Canadian" -- something worthy of preserving, furthering, extending. Each of us by our support of the Arts in Canada is really a custodian. As individuals we can do much -- about which I'll say something later -- but we can't do it alone. I would like to suggest that all areas of our cultural life warrant the fullest commitment of our government, our institutions, as well as ourselves.

It has been said, "Our culture is what we are. It is the character of our country ... If we preserve our natural heritage -- our rivers, mountains and forests, we have no less a responsibility to preserve our human accomplishments -- our theatres, music, art, literature and history."

Now on a thoroughly practical level and being realistic, Canadians are admittedly consumers of American culture, both popular and classical. The situation is not, it would appear, resisted or resented by most Canadians, despite the fact that our constant exposure to "The American Way" subtly or substantially moulds our values, our view of the world, our careers, our leisure activities and general lifestyle.

However, provided we remember what we are -- Canadians, through-and-through and coast-to-coast, these other influences will only serve to enrich our lives, and we can reject those aspects which do not complement our basic Canadian attitudes.

You and I know that there has been development of a thriving and distinctively Canadian culture of a very high order -- that's our culture. To name some of our Artists -- the Festival Singers, Le Théâtre de Nouveau Monde, our three Ballet

Companies, the Canadian Opera, Northrop Frye, Robertson Davies, Harold Towne, A.J. Casson, Gerald Gladstone, Anne Murray, Gordon Lightfoot, the Stratford and Shaw festivals, the symphonies now located in so many of our cities, and on and on.

But in all these areas of the Canadian Arts we run into the overwhelming problem of finance. Many Canadians have been generous with their time and their money; some of them, both men and women, are in this room today: and governments, federal, provincial and municipal have provided an increasing, if still insufficient, measure of support for cultural activities in Canada.

Artificial or mandatory measures to step up Canadian artistic or cultural output would, I believe, be both impractical and undesirable. The offerings from south of the border and abroad will no doubt continue to appeal to Canadian tastes in a wide range of fields. And I believe we should be anxious to preserve the opportunities for excellence, stimulus and reciprocity, which come with the exchange of ideas and achievements across boundaries. Good fences may make good neighbors -- and there certainly comes a point at which the fences become too high -- but let's not forget what's on this side of the fence!

This means that we as Canadians will have to be more receptive to developments in the arts within our borders. And this means with our purses, although there will be experiments that some of us will find distasteful, or failures that will annoy, as well as successes that will inspire our applause. We have to offer our artists, in whatever fields, the rewards and opportunities their successes or potential deserves, and commensurate with those they are offered elsewhere. Our institutions and governments must be looked to for increased efforts in supporting cultural development.

Unfortunately we make only the feeblest attempts to project ourselves abroad -- yet look at the acclaim with which our ballet companies have been received in other countries. And now Stratford in Australia.

We should be sending more acting companies, orchestras and artists overseas.

Thanks to the new Art Bank Purchase Plan of the Canada Council and the new policy of the Federal government on Canadian books, more of both of these will be found in Canadian embassies and offices abroad.

The Vancouver Symphony hopes to go to China this year; the Toronto Symphony will soon embark on its European tour. Bon voyage to them and bonne chance to Canada!

For their part, our artists, and I use the term broadly, who aspire to leadership and renown in the cultural field will have responsibilities and challenges to meet. They should be wary of the expectation, born of impatience, that success can or should come quickly. For themselves and the wider community they seek to represent, the tests to be performed will require a vigorous application of an old fashioned virtue which has been a little out of vogue in recent years and I refer to the work ethic.

No doubt about it: Canada's non-profit and profitable artistic and cultural endeavours make a very real contribution to the economy of our country. But even more important than this, the Arts industry gives expression to values -- the things we feel are important in our lives. Unfortunately, many Canadians are not sufficiently aware of these two very significant contributions, with the result that today the arts in Canada, faced with the competition of our neighbor to the south, are struggling for their life.

I suppose, in the final analysis, we come to the words of Senator Forsey -- "you either really want it, or you unreally want it. If you really want it, you are willing to pay the price for it -- otherwise, you unreally want it."

What are some practical ways that individual Canadians can support the Arts? Well, I'm sure no one in this audience needs any suggestions. But just

on the chance you'd like some advice to pass along to an uncommitted person, here's goes. As a starter, urge a friend at least twice a month to buy a ticket to a live play or a live concert. (Toronto is chock full of good, young play groups.) Then phone your friend the next day to see how he, or she, or both liked it. Suggest to your friends that they do this twice a month as an act of faith in things Canadian and an investment in their own enrichment. They can make play-and-concert going a vital part of their lives. The common people in Shakespeare's time and in the days of the old Greek dramatists seemed to have no problem in this regard. Then, let's add to plays and concerts, say, quarterly visits to our museums and galleries.

Second, everyone should try to see at the very least two plays each at the Stratford and Shaw festivals this summer -- preferably in a theatre party with friends. Make your reservations early to ensure good seats.

Next, consider making a donation or donations -- modest or substantial -- to some arts group -- e.g., the Symphony, the National Ballet, the Canadian Opera, the Festival Singers, Toronto Workshop Productions, or some organization just getting started. You're letting them know you're thinking of them; you're involving yourself psychologically more than in being a spectator. Once again, it's a case of self-expenditure for self-enrichment.

Finally, encourage your company -- or your wife's company, or your husband's company -- to respond to appeals for funds from arts organizations, just as it undoubtedly supports hospitals and United Way campaigns. If some particular group appeals to you, write the company president on its behalf. Don't be shy.

It will be interesting to see in the months ahead if the governments at all levels really recognize the contribution of the Arts to the quality of life of Canadians, as well as the economic value of this rapidly growing industry. It will be equally interesting to see if we as ordinary Canadians really discover our own places within the country's Arts and find our own greater enrichment there.