

Arts advocacy groups in Canada have managed to influence public policy and government priorities, and have produced significant outcomes for the arts community. A major issue is the need to nurture Canadian culture and give full scope to Canadian creators and performers. The creators and performers working in faculties of fine arts of metropolitan universities, as well as other kinds of arts academics, are concerned that outlets essential to their work are being reduced by the recession, and are becoming active in advocacy groups. If the arts are to continue to flourish in Canada, advocacy groups will have to assume an even more dynamic role in the future.

Arts Advocacy in a Time of Economic Crisis

Problems and Opportunities in Canada

Introduction

Over the years, advocacy groups in Canada have managed to influence public policy and have produced significant outcomes for the arts community and its audiences. There can be no doubt that in the complex issues facing society both today and tomorrow, such groups will need to play an even more important role in shaping public policy than in the past.

A major issue in Canada is the need to nurture Canadian culture and to give full scope to Canadian creators and performers. The creators and performers working in faculties of fine arts of metropolitan universities and other faculties that include art departments, as well as in colleges, are concerned that the outlets essential to their work are being reduced because of the recession. Other kinds of academics, such as those concerned with various forms of arts education, in addition to art and theater historians and musicologists, are also experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining sufficient funds to support their research and scholarship. At the same time, the spaces available in university and college programs to accommodate the performers and creators of tomorrow, as well as other kinds of art academics are declining. It is no wonder then that advocacy has become so important for many people working in the area of the arts in universities, not to mention those in a wide variety of organizations in the arts community.

In Canada, higher education is financed by the provinces through transfer payments from the Federal Government. Although this mechanism has ensured a high level of support for Canadian universities and colleges for a long time, all budgets for institutions of advanced education are

now in decline, largely because of the recession which has reduced the revenues of governments.

The principal lobbyists on the part of universities and colleges are the presidents, assisted by board chairmen. In addition, the institutions have consolidated themselves into four regional associations with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) acting as a national advocacy body. All such advocacy associations are forcefully making arguments for sustaining advanced education as a very high priority in the budget allocations of provincial governments.

The size of the budgets allocated to the various faculties of any institution depend on the success presidents and boards have in obtaining annual funds at a high level from the provincial government concerned. However, the size of allocations is also determined by individual mission statements, and the priorities and accompanying strategies that flow from them, as well as by student numbers. While certain faculties, such as medicine, engineering, science and management, can attract very substantial amounts of money from the private sector for research purposes, this rarely happens with faculties of fine arts. Nevertheless, all such faculties and arts colleges are constantly seeking funds from the private sector for capital costs and a variety of other purposes. Such assistance, however, does not solve the problem of declining base budgets. Advocacy groups are extremely concerned with cultural policies, and not only with those of the Federal Government. For example, in the province of Alberta, in 1992, several provincial ministers recently appointed by a new premier made ill-considered remarks about the value of the arts to society that suggested a negative change in cultural policy might be in the offing. The arts community, including strong representation from metropolitan universities and other institutions of advanced education, formed an alliance and devised strategies that produced positive outcomes.

Symbiosis Between Faculties of Fine Arts and the Arts Community

A symbiotic relationship exists between the arts, as they continually evolve in the community through the activities of galleries, performing arts organizations, film companies, and so on, on the one hand, and institutions of advanced education concerned with the fine arts, on the other. Furthermore, many extremely important arts events take place on the campuses of universities, and many faculty are well known figures on the Canadian and international arts scenes. Within academia, the contributions of faculty to provincial, national, and international cultural life are considered as the equivalent to research and scholarship. Indeed, without the outlets for scholarship provided by organizations in the arts infrastructure of Canada (such as concerts, broadcasts, and exhibitions), it would be extremely difficult for many arts academics to sustain their careers. It is therefore not surprising that faculty become anxious when cutbacks affecting important organizations in the arts infrastructure plague Canadian cultural life year after year.

Sources of Funding for Arts Organizations

In Canada, cultural activities are financed to a substantial extent by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as the private sector. In spite of some notable exceptions, the contribution of private wealth in Canada to the development of culture is not of the same order as in the United States. Furthermore, Canada has not experienced as long a history of philanthropy in the arts as has

the United States. During the 1990-91 year, the private sector donated \$33 million to the arts and cultural industries in Canada. Twenty million came from businesses and \$13 million from charitable donations to non-profit organizations.

In 1990-91, all levels of governments spent \$5.9 billion on culture. Of this, the Federal Government contributed \$2.9 billion, or about half; of this, in excess of \$1.3 billion was spent on broadcasting alone. Provincial/Territorial governments spent \$1.8 billion while those at the municipal level spent \$1.2 billion. Obviously, ticket sales are also important as are other sources of earned revenue, such as broadcasting rights payments to independent television and film companies.

The Recession and Government Agencies

The most important federal funding agencies for those working in the arts in advanced education are The Canada Council (CC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The former is of particular importance to performers and visual artists, and the latter to scholars, such as art and theater historians, and musicologists.

Such provincial funding bodies as the Alberta Arts Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles du Québec, also play an important role, and at the municipal level the Toronto Arts Council and the Conseil des Arts de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal are examples of funding organizations that make a significant contribution to local arts scenes.

As a result of the recession and annual cutbacks in grants, nearly all the major orchestras in Canada have deficits, as do theater and dance organizations. In addition, galleries and museums are laying off staff and reducing programs, and the film industry is experiencing particular difficulties. In part, this situation can be attributed to cuts in federal government subventions to agencies such as the CC, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which for many years has been the largest single employer of creative and performing talent in the country. Furthermore, the future of the SSHRC is not unfolding as expected, and this will have an impact on academics hoping to obtain grants for scholarly activities. Rather than receiving a short term annual increase of \$4 million as promised by the Federal Government, the budget of the SSHRC will remain frozen for the next two years.

Cultural Policies and Arts Advocacy

There is a growing demand on the part of advocacy groups that governments have coherent inter-related arts policies arrived at through input from the arts community and the public. The Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), the largest and most powerful lobby group for the arts, has recently produced a *Blueprint For Our Cultural Future*, which is intended as a tool for those working in the arts to use when discussing cultural policies with candidates of all political parties in the next federal election. Flowing from policies are priorities, so it is not surprising that these too are an intrinsic part of discussions with politicians.

In the belief that all too often politicians regard the arts as peripheral, especially in a time of economic crisis, the arguments brought forward by most lobbyists have little to do with the intrinsic worth of the arts themselves. Rather, they are concerned with the importance of culture to the economy and as an ideal vehicle for providing employment at a low cost because of the labor intensive nature of the arts

and some other areas of culture. The Federal Government is not infrequently reminded that for its investment of \$2.9 billion on culture, there is a direct return of \$650 million to the federal treasury, and that a reliable estimate by the CCA of the yearly return to the Canadian economy is \$17 billion. Furthermore, the annual growth in the cultural labor force since 1971 amounts to 122 percent compared with 58 percent for the total labor force.

Another important aspect of Canadian cultural policy is concerned with the elusive area of national identity and Canadian cultural sovereignty, and governments tend to stress this at regular intervals. However, when there are conflicts between industrial policies and cultural policies, the latter do not always win the day.

Arts Advocacy Groups in Canada

There has been a long tradition of arts advocacy in Canada. It was the lobbying of Graham Spry and Alan Plaunt and the Radio League which led to the establishment of public broadcasting under the auspices of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission in 1932, and its successor the CBC, which began operations in 1936. There can be no doubt that the creation of the CBC and its subsequent enormous support for the arts was one of the turning points in the cultural development of Canada.

Something similar brought about the establishment of the CC. The Federation of Canadian artists came into being in 1941, and in 1944, representatives of this organization, as well as sixteen other arts groups, arranged a march on the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, to present a brief asking for public support of the arts to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, a parliamentary committee put in place to determine the directions of post-World War II Canada. Finally, the Federal Government created the Massey Commission which was asked to make recommendations concerning the many dimensions of the artistic and intellectual life of Canada. The Massey Commission's report appeared in 1951. One of its most important recommendations was that a body be created for the encouragement of the arts, letters, humanities, and social sciences, to stimulate and encourage development in these areas. The result was that the Federal Government brought the CC into being in 1957 -- a development that helped bring about an explosion in the artistic life of Canada and countless outlets for academics working in universities.

In 1977, the areas of the social sciences and the humanities were moved from the CC to a newly created body called the SSHRC, and since that time academics working in these fields, including those in certain aspects of the arts, have had broad opportunities for subsidized scholarly activities.

Founded in 1945, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), which has already been mentioned, has received substantial subsidies over the years from the Federal Government, in spite of the fact that it is not infrequently critical of government policies and actions.

Within academia, the Canadian Association of Fine Arts Deans (CAFAD), consisting mainly of arts administrators and academics from metropolitan universities, came into being in 1976 to provide a forum for the exchange of information in the area of fine arts education between institutions of advanced education, and to undertake projects of mutual concern to the membership. However, this organization has increasingly assumed an advocacy role in relation to the reorientation of CBC policies and proposed or actual cutbacks to the budgets of the CC, the SSHRC,

and the CBC. In addition, it has sent briefs to the Canadian Radio Television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the Canadian regulatory body concerned with these areas, on various matters, including the restructuring of the Canadian broadcasting system, and to the Department of Communications on copyright matters, the Status of the Artist bill, the training of artists, and other issues. It has also sent briefs to the CC and the SSHRC suggesting how their programs can be fine tuned to improve services to academics working in the fine arts and humanities. It should be noted that CAFAD members, as well as other academics working in the arts in metropolitan universities, serve on boards of major performing arts organizations, galleries, and museums. Such boards have assumed important roles in the promotion and development of the arts in both the private and public sectors. They also play an important role in the area of arts advocacy.

Advocacy organizations have learned to work together in dealing with crucial issues. For example, in 1991, CAFAD co-operated with the CCA in a conference dealing with proposals concerned with reshaping Federal Government cultural policies affecting the arts, and has frequently been in touch with this organization on issues that relate to the fine arts in academia. Together with other lobby groups, CAFAD has been vocal in demanding television channels in English and French for the arts, and has brought its views forward to the CBC, the CRTC, and the National Arts Centre, the only organization so far willing to carry the responsibility of establishing such channels.

An Aborted Attempt to Establish a Super Agency

Recently, advocacy organizations, such as the AUCC, the CCA, the Western Canadian Deans of Arts and Science, the Canadian Conference of Deans of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and CAFAD, worked together with great success on a particularly important issue. In November 1992, the Federal Government introduced a bill to merge the CC and the SSHRC, together with the international cultural and academic relations programs of the Department of External Affairs and International Trade. According to the Federal Government, this so-called super-agency, to be known as the Canada Council for the Arts and for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities, was expected to bring about administrative efficiencies at a time when the Government is concerned with reducing the national debt. However, advocacy groups, including CAFAD, were convinced that virtually no research had been undertaken by the Federal Government to assess what savings, if any, in administrative costs, would be brought about by the merger.

As the weeks passed, the issue received considerable attention in the media, where mounting criticism extended to the civil service for allowing the merger to go through the system unchallenged. At the same time, advocacy groups renewed their efforts to make their views known to members of both the House of Commons and the Senate. In fact, four arts organizations -- the Association of Canadian Orchestras, the Canadian Association of Professional Dance Organizations, the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, and the Professional Opera Companies of Canada -- combined to commission a study from a highly reputable consulting firm. The study showed that because of the loss of taxes and the loss of ancillary economic activity, cuts to performing organizations receiving grants from the CC would have the net effect of increasing rather than decreasing the national debt.

Although objections to what was deemed to be an ill-conceived merger were expressed in the House of Commons, the bill was approved and sent to the Senate

where it was expected to pass in spite of the grave reservations of some senators. However, enough senators paid attention to the views of university and arts organizations advocacy groups, and the unexpected happened. The bill was narrowly defeated in spite of the appointment of a new senator by the Government a few minutes before the vote in an effort to ensure passage. Nothing like this had previously occurred in Canadian history.

Budget Cuts and the Metamorphoses of Canadian Cultural Life

The debacle over the attempted merger of two cultural agencies was simply one part of the metamorphosis of Canadian cultural life with which academics and professionals in the arts outside universities must be concerned. In December 1992, the then Minister of Finance, Don Mazankowski, announced in Ottawa, as part of an economic statement, that the arts would be cut \$80 million, representing a 10 percent reduction, spread over the next two fiscal years. Furthermore, a 3 percent cut in administrative costs of government departments and agencies was added to a recent 2 percent cut. Only agencies and government departments making grants and contributions were affected. These reductions were in addition to a cut to the CBC of \$150 million, spread over two years, beginning in 1994-95.

The CC was hit with an \$8.7 million reduction. This was a severe blow, as the Council's parliamentary appropriations have been declining in real terms since the mid-1980s. This new cut is damaging because it is the CC that provides subventions to performing arts organizations, galleries, and museums. The Chairman of the Board of the CC has pointed out that as a percentage of operating budgets, CC grants in May 1992 represented approximately 12 percent of operating budgets compared with 17 percent ten years earlier. This detail, which of course does not take into consideration the recent cut of 10 percent, is significant because, in a recession, it is not easy to make up money lost from declining CC grants from other sources, because provincial grants are likely to decline as provincial governments try to deal with accumulated deficits, and municipal governments also find themselves struggling in difficult economic times. At the same time, the private sector is being buffeted by the recession and accompanying economic restructurings and adjustments that are taking place at the national and international levels.

While there may be some exceptions, generally speaking, arts organizations have tried to help themselves by raising ticket prices, although they obviously cannot exceed certain limits. They are also improving fundraising skills, while reducing administrative costs. However, performance seasons are being reduced, and other drastic actions have been taken to further limit operating costs. This in turn, has led to a re-examination of mandates and opportunities for new kinds of cooperation between arts organizations. It is possible that, in the future, there will be some amalgamations and the chance for new beginnings if certain organizations fail.

Arts Advocacy in the Future

Arts advocacy groups are not always demanding new money, but very often a wiser use of that which is available. An example of an opportunity awaiting investigation and possible action by arts lobby groups is described in a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto, which points out that around the time the Federal Government was cutting the CC by \$8.7 million, it was announcing it would forgive a \$35 million loan to a struggling private maker of gun powders and plastic explo-

sives. The company claims that this subsidy has saved 578 jobs. The newspaper compared this figure to the effect of the Government's cut of \$80 million in the cultural sector which, according to the CCA, could cost as many as 8,400 jobs. This example points to the fact that governments have difficulty in grasping the economic impact and the job creation aspects of the arts and cultural industries, and that lobbyists will have to continue to work hard to try to change this situation.

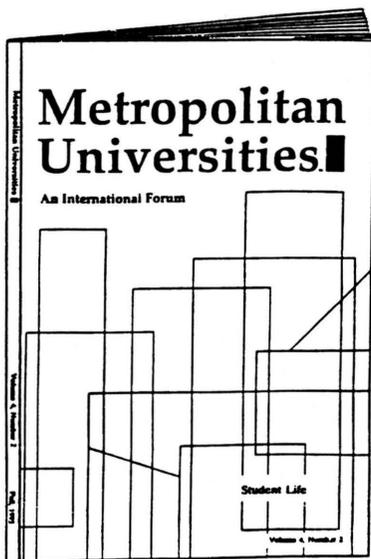
In the future, advocacy groups will have many opportunities to continue to deal with other important areas of cultural policy. For example, except for Phase 1 of revisions, passed in 1988, that ensure moral and economic rights for visual artists, Canada's copyright legislation, which dates back to 1924, is in urgent need of revision. This is an area that is of great importance not only to the arts community in general, but also to universities and colleges.

Arts advocates have a vital role to play, for example, in presenting arguments in favor of the arts within the wider sphere of culture, as part of their input into the restructuring of the Canadian broadcasting system now being considered by the CRTC. Furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the arts in related areas, such as broadcasting regulations, and new interpretations of the Broadcasting Act of 1991 need to be made in favor of Canadian performers and creators, as well as to promote diversity and public access.

In terms of searching for new sources of money, advocacy groups have been trying to persuade the Federal Government to come forward with tax incentives that would encourage individuals and corporations to invest in such areas as films, recordings, and book publishing. A modest tax on blank audio and video tapes has been proposed, and other possibilities for raising money for culture need serious consideration.

Of prime concern are any government structural changes in the administration of culture which are made without consultation with relevant constituencies. Recently, culture was moved from the Department of Communications to a newly created ministry called Heritage Canada. By monitoring this development, advocacy groups will be able to determine whether or not culture has moved up or down the totem pole of priorities, and be able to act accordingly.

If, as a result of arts advocacy, Canadian cultural policies can be more coherent, better coordinated, and up to date, and if available government monies are used more innovatively together with those from new sources, the development of Canadian culture will be better served, with a wide range of outlets for performers and creators both inside and outside universities and colleges. In addition, there will be considerable scope for other arts academics to balance this development with complementary research and scholarship valuable to the understanding of the place of culture in civilization.



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