

terms, personalities, companies, festivals and organizations.

The nature of the encyclopedia necessitates political perspective, thus leaving the project open for criticism. WECT could conceivably be seen as a politicization of theatre, rather than a reference work on theatre as theatre. It has become increasingly obvious over the years, however, that it is impossible to understand a country's theatre without understanding its political and social context. The national entries in the encyclopedia aim to identify the significant aspects of individual countries in order to gain a clearer insight into their theatre.

Confrontation with political difficulties is not unusual. "I am aware," states Rubin, "painfully aware, of the national sensitivities that are involved, of the different political realities and political systems around the world. We want to respect these, but we also want this encyclopedia to have international credibility and integrity." Several problems have already appeared in the project. "The African editors were the first ones who have said that there must be entries on Athol Fugard (a South Africa playwright) and some of the work in South Africa," says Rubin. "The Quebecers have said 'what are you going to do with Quebec?'" Rubin turned the question back to them and the Canadian National Committee is currently dealing with the situation.

"People have said from the beginning, 'this is an impossible project. It will die because of the politics, it will die because you won't be able to maintain integrity, it will die because there won't be any funding.'" But Rubin continues, "If I thought this project had to be stopped merely because it was impossible it would have ended in '79."

The International Editorial Board found itself caught in the web of international politics last November when it held a meeting in Dakar, Senegal. Two of the editors, Ghassan Maleh from Syria and Horst Seeger from the German Democratic Republic, were detained at the airport upon arrival until visas, unavailable in their own countries, could be obtained for them. The next day they were joined by Peter Nagy of Hungary who, while carrying a diplomatic passport with a valid Senegalese visa, was told his visa was 'incorrect' and was not allowed to enter the country until it was settled. The next three days were spent by Rubin and others in an attempt to solve the problem. Phone calls were made to UNESCO and to the office of the President of Senegal but nothing was done to have them released. As one of the three editors pointed out, they were "two Reds and a terrorist." Three days later the three editors returned to Europe without ever having set foot outside of the Dakar airport. The following day the remaining editors officially cancelled the planned meetings to show their solidarity with their three colleagues.

International politics also played a role in fundraising for WECT. The first grants for the project came from UNESCO in 1984, key to starting the ball rolling. Since that time, however, UNESCO cutbacks have been dramatic. The departure of the United States and Britain, among other countries, from UNESCO, has resulted in the loss of approximately \$45-million worth of grants to the organization. The US alone represented approximately 23 percent of UNESCO's budget. The result for WECT has been the dwindling of an anticipated \$50,000 for the years 1986 and 1987 to the sum of \$5,000.

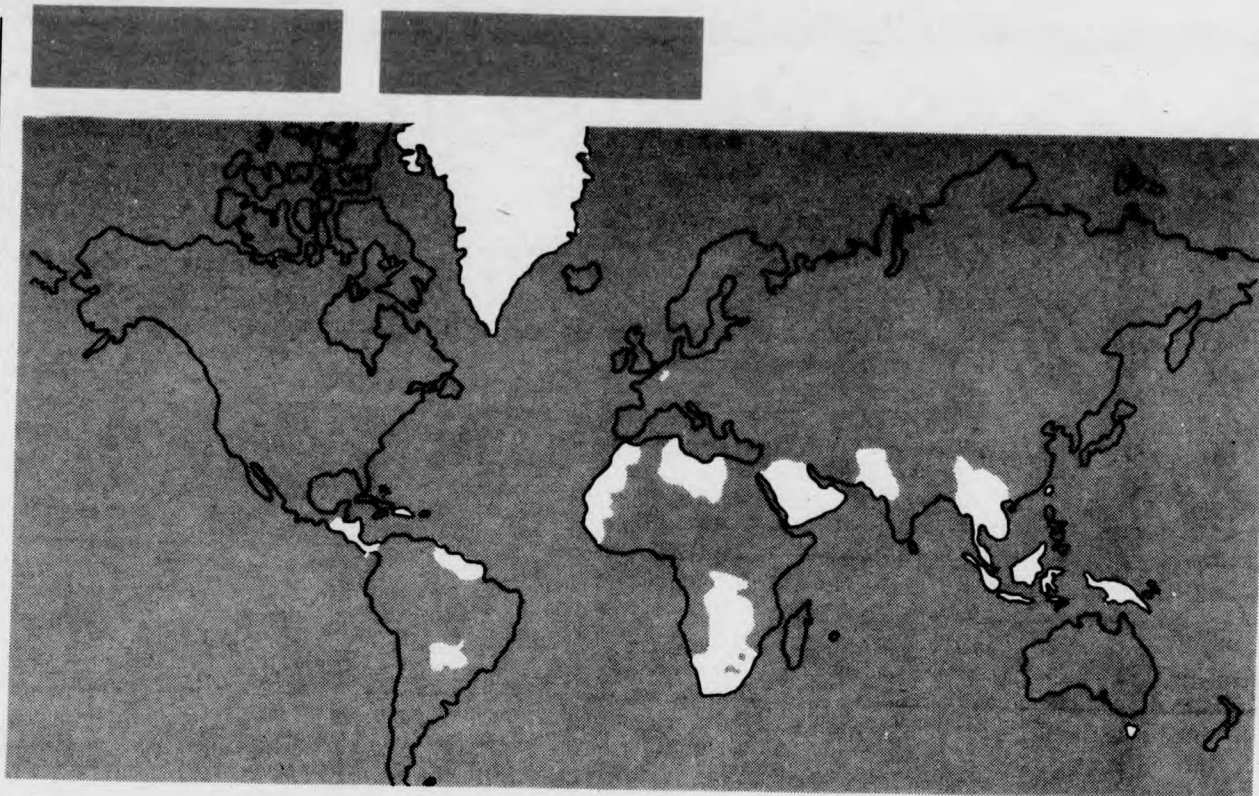
Fortunately, the department of fundraising has been a highly successful one for the project. According to Rubin WECT already has \$7-800,000 in "more or less committed money. For the long-term we're in good shape," says Rubin, "in the short-term we're still trying to nickel-and-dime it to get all the pieces together." Money for the project has been coming in from all over the world, including donations from the Ford Foundation, the Department of Communications in Ottawa and various governments in Eastern and Western Europe. But WECT finally has its own fundraiser, Mary Martin, considered one of the best fundraisers in the country. Martin graduated from the theatre department at York about 12 years ago and, according to Rubin, "she had already turned down a number of major projects and would have turned this down if it weren't for York."

Rubin is currently negotiating with several companies to turn WECT into an international computerized data-base system. Accessible throughout the world, the system will allow for corrections, updates and further developments. The seven-year project will not be left on library shelves to collect dust.

Two weeks ago the American National Committee held a meeting in New York. What happened there reflects the dynamic qualities of WECT. Patricia Keeney-Smith, York professor, poetry editor and theatre critic for the Canadian Forum and member of the Canadian National Committee, described the event: "What emerged was a vision of the American theatre which more or less championed what, until recently, have been fringe elements of American theatre—neorican theatre (New York Puerto Rican theatre), Chicano theatre, black theatre, women's theatre—all the so-called fringe groups that are now moving into the centre and are responsible for the energy of American theatre. It was virtually unanimous that this was what should be talked about in the encyclopedia. The encyclopedia should reflect those changes in American theatre, thereby exploding expectations that American theatre is Broadway-centred and that all you talk about are playwrights such as Edward Albee and Arthur Miller. We got to the point where someone said, 'Who's going to write about Arthur Miller?' and there was nobody."

"But that's a very healthy state of affairs. Of course the central figures of American theatre will be talked about, but the balance is being shifted and that's where the encyclopedia is really unique. It's at the forefront of what's happening now and what the future direction of theatre will be, while at the same time it's chronicling the past and allows us to see where each particular country comes from."

The publication of WECT is scheduled for 1991. At that time an English edition will be printed and the manuscript will then be sent to a French publishing house. Royalties from the first edition are hoped to cover the costs of the second. But countries across the world are clamoring for editions in other languages. German, Russian, Spanish, Chinese and Greek editions are all being requested, and there is hope for them all. Not only does WECT encompass the world in its creation, it promises to be a permanent and accessible fixture on the doorstep of international theatre.



Opposite left: Ousmane Diakhate, African Editor; Moussa Maiga, editor from Mali; Philippe Rouyer, Western Europe editor. Top: unshaded areas indicate countries not involved in the project. Above: African playwright Wole Soyinka from Nigeria and ITI Secretary-General Andre Perinetti from France. Right: natives of Senegal. Below: WECT editor Don Rubin (left) and newsletter editor Patricia Keeney-Smith.

