

*Canada Council*

● (1750)

I am sure that the Hon. Member must agree that we must continue to support our artists at this time because in all of their manifestations, even the ones we do not like, they are our voices. Perhaps they are not like the voices that are raised day in and day out in this place, but they are our voices that perhaps can have a greater effect in many ways than some of the voices we hear in the House of Commons. They help us to look to the future.

I think the point which must be stressed with respect to the criticism of the Canada Council grant to the particular writer involved is that the Hon. Member failed to point out the fact that this particular writer has written a number of books which I am sure the Hon. Member has not had the opportunity or perhaps the inclination or interest to read. Perhaps he should read them. He has taken one particular area out of context, if you will, to make his criticism. I would suggest to the Hon. Member that in order to have a better view of this particular writer's craft and his ability to communicate, he should in fact look at the entire works of that writer.

As I mentioned earlier, the Canada Council does in fact work at arm's length. I believe that all Hon. Members would have to agree that the jurors who base their decisions on the grants that might be awarded are people with a strong representation of the professional fields which they do represent. I suggest that the Canada Council does merit our support in many ways. It merits our support to the point that when we study the Applebaum-Hébert Report much more will be said about it. Hopefully, Parliament will see fit to increase the awareness and financial support not only for the Canada Council but for all areas of art and culture in the country.

Again, I refer to what the Hon. Member for Perth had to say about the fact that this is an economic debate because this does involve dollars and cents for artists as well as for the communities which many of these artists support through writing, theatre groups and music. Symphony orchestras are an example of community support. Theatre London in my area receives support in many ways from the Canada Council. It should be encouraged to give greater support.

I will conclude with those remarks, Mr. Speaker, and trust that the Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings will look at the entire work of this particular artist and not just at one particular sentence. I must refer to the Stratford Festival. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that if the Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings were alive in the days of Shakespeare, he would not have been able to stand up and espouse the greatness of the Stratford Festival, which we all know encourages and highlights the works of Shakespeare. Yet I do not hear any criticism of some of the words used in the great Shakespearian plays. The intent of what Hon. Members opposite have said is rather questionable. Again, let us support the Canada Council however possible.

**Mr. Ellis:** There is no argument.

**Mr. Burghardt:** The Hon. Member says he has no argument, yet he stands before us to criticize the handing out of funds to this particular artist. These artists are only doing their work.

**Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West):** Mr. Speaker, the motion presented to the House by the Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Ellis) deals with a very specific matter but it does provide an opportunity to consider the work and the organization of the Canada Council.

In responding immediately to the words of the Parliamentary Secretary with respect to the Canada Council, I want to make it clear that we are here to ask what the Canada Council can do for Canadians, not what Canadians can do for the Canada Council. The challenge we have is to examine the work of the Canada Council to determine if it is fulfilling its mandate or, indeed, if the Canada Council in this day and age of restraint should have a mandate from the Parliament of Canada.

Just to deal briefly with that point, I remind Hon. Members in the House that this is the twenty-fifth year of the operation of the Canada Council, which I understand was organized in 1957 with a \$50 million grant. I recall that this grant seemed like a large amount to turn over to the arts in those days of the low dollar values. However, 25 years later, the budget alone for 1981-82 of the Canada Council involves \$62.8 million in expenditures. We are dealing with a relatively vast organization.

I was impressed by the words of the Parliamentary Secretary when he said that we can rely on the Canada Council to make arm's length decisions on matters affecting the arts across Canada. One could also ask what the relationship of the Associate Director and Director of the arts division, Mr. Timothy Porteous, is to the Government of Canada. If I am not mistaken, his claim to fame is that he is a personal friend of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I wonder if they occasionally talk about matters pertaining to the arts.

My purpose in rising today is to deal particularly with the current situation between Canada Council and the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra. The Atlantic Symphony Orchestra has been a very important part of community life in Halifax and across the Maritime Provinces for some time now. The closure of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra was announced this year. The problem is that the financing for this symphony orchestra is not available. I want to ask the Parliamentary Secretary and those who deal with the Canada Council to have the officers responsible conduct an immediate investigation in an attempt to save the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, in accordance with their mandate, in order to provide that important community service to the City of Halifax, the Province of Nova Scotia and all of the Maritime Provinces. Only through action such as that will the Canada Council fulfill its mandate and serve not only the people of my Province of Nova Scotia but all Canadians.

**Mr. Doug Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, in the final two minutes I would like to elaborate on one of the major points