

Chapter 8

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS

Cultural exchanges have increasingly become recognized as an important element in Canada's bilateral relations with countries around the world. Canadian posts abroad actively assist Canadian artists in organizing performances or displaying their work, using knowledge of the local scene to help ensure the widest possible exposure.

Academic and public affairs programs promote a better understanding of Canada as a democratic federal state committed to its bilingual and multicultural heritage, and as a reliable trading partner.

Cultural policy

Canada concluded a cultural agreement with Italy in 1984. This brings to six the number of bilateral cultural agreements which have been signed by Canada, the other five being with France, Belgium, West Germany, Mexico and Japan. Less formal arrangements for dealing with cultural exchanges have been concluded with several other countries, and this number is expected to expand.

In March 1985, a seminar organized in Washington, DC, brought together public affairs officers from Canadian posts in the US, headquarters officials from the Department and representatives from the private sector to discuss ways in which the Department and the private sector could work together to present Canadian cultural events abroad. The results from the seminar were encouraging, and similar seminars may be held in other parts of the world.

In 1984, Canada accepted an official invitation from the Netherlands to have the arts of Canada featured at the 1985 Holland Festival. This led to the largest single cultural project ever undertaken by External Affairs abroad; during one month of concentrated artistic activity, well over 100 Canadian artists put on dozens of performances and exhibits in and near Amsterdam, resulting in the most extensive media coverage ever devoted to Canadian arts abroad.

UNESCO

Throughout 1984, Canada joined in a major international effort to promote much-needed organizational change within UNESCO across a broad spectrum of its activities. One vehicle established by UNESCO's Executive Board, of which Canada is a member, was a Temporary Committee with a mandate to recommend reform measures. The Director General established internal working groups on personnel, the budget, evaluation, public information and a critical examination of the program.

By the end of 1984, the US had withdrawn from UNESCO, while the United Kingdom and Singapore had given notice of their intent to withdraw. Canada, on the other hand, judged that initial progress on reform was satisfactory, and

that therefore it would be better to continue to work vigorously for reform from within the organization.

Arts promotion

In 1984-85, the Department provided grants to over 185 professional performing arts groups or individuals, visual artists and writers to enable them to undertake international tours. All disciplines were involved, including music, dance, theatre, painting, video art, sculpture, architecture, film and literature. Cultural organizations from all the regions of Canada contributed to the growing international appreciation of Canada's achievements in the arts. In addition, the Department helped to sustain existing markets and build new ones for promising artists by underwriting travel costs for both Canadian and foreign impresarios, curators and publishers interested in promoting Canadian talent overseas. It also subsidized a number of major international cultural events convened in Canada to enable the organizers to invite foreign guests. Some 60 overseas institutions received donations of recent Canadian literature in the two official languages as well as copies of Canadian periodicals devoted to developments in this country's literary and artistic communities.

Although Western Europe remained the principal marketplace for Canada's cultural community, the Department, through its grants program, encouraged increased activity in the United States, Latin America and the Pacific Rim in keeping with Canada's evolving trade interests.

Among those groups which received subsidies during 1984-85, some of the most significant were Les Grands Ballets canadiens which performed in the Far East, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in Los Angeles during the Olympic Games, the Danny Grossman Dance Company in Latin America and Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal in Africa on a return visit. The Caravan Stage Company of British Columbia performed on the American West Coast and the Theatre Sans Fil of Montreal performed in Eastern Europe. In the visual arts, Canada was represented at the Venice and Sydney Biennials and the Basle Art Fair; General Idea of Toronto presented its works in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, an exhibition of works by Alex Colville travelled to Japan, Hong Kong, China and the United Kingdom and the Firestone Collection of Canadian landscapes began a circuit of eight European countries. Among literary figures who travelled overseas with departmental assistance were Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson who visited Europe and Cuba, Gaston Miron of Montreal who lectured in France and Ireland, Aritha Van Herk of Calgary who visited Western Europe and Antonine Maillet of Montreal who lectured in Washington, DC.

Organizations which received financial assistance for major international conferences held in Canada included the Canadian Music Council in connection with its World Music