

The Canada Council

During the 1950's Canada became increasingly aware that the Continent was getting ever more homogeneous.

Coincidentally Isaak Walton Killam and Sir James Dunn, both men of extraordinary riches, died and left the treasury more than \$100 million in death duties. This enabled Parliament to carry out the recommendations of the 1951 Massey Report on the arts and sciences to help the country develop a stronger national culture.

Fifty million was set aside for a university building program and another \$50 million went into an endowment for the arts, humanities and social sciences. (The value has since more than doubled.) Parliament organized the Canada Council to administer this endowment and disburse its interest, giving money to artists — literary, visual and performing — and social scientists and to the organizations through which they operate.

After five years the government decided this revenue — which now amounts to \$5 million — was unrealistic for a country that wanted to keep its talent at home. Since then the subsidy has been increased every year until today it is \$38.8 million for 1972-73.

The government actually underwrites every aspect of art, not only through the Council, but through the National Film Board and the Canadian Film Development Corp.; the Canadian Radio-Television Commission and the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.; and the National Museums and their close affiliate, the National Library and Archives.

The Council, however, covers the whole range.

The humanities and social sciences now receive two-thirds of the Council budget. In the 1971-72 budget, twenty of the full \$35 million budget went to the humanities, with most of it going directly to scholars. Individual artists received about two million of the \$12 million budgeted for the arts, and the rest of it went to organizations that hire artists.

For four years the Council spent \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year on art, building up its own collection, which was shown throughout Canada and last year sold at a profit to the Department of External Affairs for exhibit in their embassies around the world.

Individual artists and scholars are chosen each year by two unpaid juries — the first doing preliminary screening, the second taking the final choice. For some art forms, the juries go across

Canada, to New York or even to Europe to judge the contenders. Established artists receive awards of up to \$7000 for a year's sustenance, while younger ones are given bursaries as high as \$4000.

Although the arts receive the bulk of the nation's attention, the bulk of the money goes to social sciences and humanities.

To the occasional, spirited dismay of some members of Parliament, the grants have gone not only to probe more deeply into Canadiana, but to study such diffuse subjects as Buddhist scripture, small farming in the Carribean, new religion in Gabon and the bibliography of neo-Latin literature in 17th century France. Nevertheless, the Council continues to fund such subjects, on the basis that the scholars themselves are Canadians or Canadian immigrants and that scholarship, in any case, has no national limits.

Most Council-supported efforts, though, are definitely national. The Council has become the catalyst for Canadian culture, its friends say, and the grants it gives have strengthened the concept of the country itself and the new nationalism growing in Canada today. Emerging artists winning only small grants ten years ago are recognized producers today and fledgling repertory companies have transformed shaky experimental shows into viable and generally still experimental shows today.

Perhaps the Council's most important contributions to the arts have been its development of regional theatres, most of them built in the last decade with federal and provincial monies. Although the city of Montreal and the province of Saskatchewan had their own councils before 1957, there is now government money channeled to the arts in every border province and most of the major cities.

Road tours enliven many of the remote areas, with the best of the crop going to the big cities. They go to the stylistically dramatic new National Arts Centre in Ottawa, which averages an extraordinary sixty-eight percent subscription sale; to the huge O'Keefe Theatre in Toronto — after the Kennedy Center the second biggest theatre in North America — and to the Place des Arts in Montreal, where the majority of the productions are in French.

The Council has its critics, too.

Some say the Council gives too much to uncertain ventures. Others say it only supports "safe" bets, leaning to the more established, less