

Fruits of our labour can be sweet: York F.A. Dean

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 significant role in the creation of policy). Natural though it may be, it requires a thorough and comprehensive examination from the outside in order to right what might become a serious imbalance of responsibilities.

Such a comprehensive study might well concern itself with a number of issues critical to Canada, today and tomorrow. What, for example, is the responsibility of support agencies for leadership in the arts in addition to service? Who is responsible for the articulation of frequently inarticulate community needs and attitudes? And who, if anyone, is responsible for leading communities to higher levels of artistic and self awareness? How does a nation like ours create an art which is responsive to the needs and desires of its people in the face of a media-shrunken global village, in the face of a next-door neighbour who spews his art all over our lawn (but who also offers us a high level of immediate material gratification and a similarly high level of physical defense), and in the face of a nationality based on diversity — geographic, ethnic, economic, linguistic?

And how do we cultivate such an art — such a spiritual sense of self — without turning negative, sour, defensive — all postures which are antithetical to the production of great art?

SOUR POSTURES

How, further, does a highly industrialized nation like ours, its people facing greater freedom from the immediate concerns of getting through life, how does such a nation enrich those growing moments? Do we allow ourselves to turn more to various social opiates: drugs, liquor, mindless hours of television viewing, or equally mindless and unproductive conspicuous consumption of ever more obsolescent material goods? Or do we re-order our priorities to allow — no, to encourage — ourselves to feel ever more comfortable with ourselves — to allow us greater and fuller understanding of our very being — to allow personal and collective contemplation and celebration to become a part of our national ethos, not once in a hundred years, but continuing — daily — forever?

Which brings me to the second major undertaking which I believe Canada must initiate: the arts and education. Never has this country conducted a major examination of the place of the arts where they are most desperately needed and where they are today most conspicuously absent; where their absence has ramifications so enormous that most further attempts at arts education are remedial at best, downright dismal at worst. I am, of course, speaking of the place of the arts in early childhood education.

CADRES OF TEACHERS

We must break the cycle of exposing our children to a cadre of teachers generally ill-

equipped to deal with the arts (notice that I refrain from saying that they should teach the arts) and pressed by their local authorities to return to the basics (whatever the are if not creativity and communication); teachers who proceed with the best of intentions to inhibit more often than not the child's native curiosity for thing-making, for creative play, for celebration of self. Thus the child grows through adolescence to adulthood not only ignorant of other kinds of communications available to him for his own creative and imaginative purposes, but even more often fearful of all that is non-verbal, non-quantitative, not amenable to intellectual discourse.

The horror for me is that most of us have come through that very educational system — a system from which we still take the teachers of our children and our children's children. How do we break the inhibiting circle to allow our youth to grow in ways which most of us — because of our own education — cannot even begin to imagine? Attempts in this area have been spasmodic, uncoordinated and too few — generally unproductive...

WE LEARN BY DOING

It is, then, an intensive examination of the place of the arts in elementary education that we must undertake if the arts are to achieve a central position in our society — if we intend to celebrate our being rather than to decry it. For, as Plato observed in the Republic some 2400 years ago, "the direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life". His brightest pupil, Aristotle, some years later offered the corollary for the arts in education: "For the things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing."

The task ahead is formidable. The problems are enormous — in number, in quality, in complexity: the inertia of big governments, the political dangers of bold leadership, the confusion of bureaucratic structures and who does what, the constitutional complexities of the British North America Act and the attendant federal-provincial tensions, our geographic dispersion and our ethnic diversity (both our strengths and our weaknesses), our concern for unity in a divided nation which might not survive, our understandable fear of domination from the south and the growing anti-Americanism which accompanies that fear and feeds it, the sheer size of our communications and educational networks and systems.

But the need is great and pressing. We can drift forward into the next century or we can step out under imaginative leadership to assess our potential and to establish our priorities. The task seems overwhelming — but the fruits of our labour can be sweet. Only the future of our civilization is at stake — and the arts are at the very centre of that future.

In late October, 1963, just a month before his senseless death, John Kennedy, then President of my former land, addressed the student body at Amherst College in his home state:

"When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his

existence. When power human truths which must ser-corrupts, the poetry cleanses, ve as the touchstone of our for art establishes the basic judgement."

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