

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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IN THE ARTS, LETTERS AND SCIENCE

An address by the Chairman, The Right Honourable Vincent Massey, P.C., C.H., entitled "What are we Defending", delivered to the Canadian Club, Montreal, June 11, 1951.

I have been concerned for two years with an unusual national inquiry which ... was recently completed.

...This has been a novel enterprise, carrying us 10,000 miles across Canada; but not the length of the journey, nor even the breadth of the task have given this inquiry its significance. This significance, it seems to me, is due to the interpretation given to what we were attempting by the 1,200 witnesses who appeared before us, and the 460 odd briefs which they presented. Our formal agenda was, of course, prescribed by the literal terms of the Order-in-Council which brought us into being; but this agenda was given vitality and realism by the public who understood at once with a sure instinct the deeper meaning of what we were about.

The submissions we received covered almost every part of our national life. Indeed, when it is realized that those appearing before us included the three largest religious bodies in Canada, the great trade unions, the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, the national agricultural organizations, the principal associations of women, the universities, national organizations of workers in the arts, it will be seen that most of the people of Canada were directly or indirectly represented. But we heard, of course, not only from national bodies. Wherever we went, local groups of busy people interested in the arts took the time to come to our hearings, telling us something of what they were doing, of their problems, and with a modest pride, of what their communities were able to do in music, in painting or in the theatre. Moreover, the members of the Commission itself, represented different regions of Canada and had had varied experience as Canadians. Though my colleagues and I not infrequently in our discussions had brisk and spirited exchanges of thought, we reached, I think, a striking measure of unanimity in our findings and in our proposals.

About the briefs I should like to say two things. In the first place, the great majority of persons making submissions were not professionally concerned with the arts, or literature, or science. They were ordinary citizens interested in these things because they attached importance to them. Secondly, the briefs showed a high degree of responsible thinking. What we heard came from serious minded persons whose approach to the problems was enthusiastic but