

First, a look at the crowded intersection between cultural affairs and foreign policy. The Canadian cultural community is a vibrant one: in the performing and visual arts; in creative and scholarly writing; in peaks of excellence from rock music to handicrafts, in team sports and board games. That cultural community, which today embraces a strong industrial component, has numerous international interests.

They look abroad for centres of comparison, for critical audiences, for the prestige of a European tour, for markets, for employment opportunities, for access to libraries and archives, for tournaments and competitions. They welcome incoming visits from foreign countries of exhibitions, orchestras, and touring companies. That two-way traffic is rightly considered essential to sustaining vitality and high standards in the cultural community.

Well, where does foreign policy fit? What is the role of government and of the Department of External Affairs? The government's stated aim for international cultural relations, or cultural diplomacy as it is often called, is not only to develop the flow of cultural manifestations to and from Canada. It must also ensure that the funds spent on cultural promotion are spent in accordance with and in support of our nation's foreign policy goals.

Examples at the margin are straightforward. The government is not going to finance or facilitate an evening of Canadian theatre in South Africa before a whites-only audience. Nor send the RCMP musical ride to North Korea. But there are more central areas of contention. Should we only finance cultural tours of Western Europe and the United States, admittedly the centre of much that is excellent in our culture, and exclude the range of other countries, in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, with whom we are working to develop closer ties?

And can our cultural manifestations, without in any way compromising their integrity, serve to draw international attention not only to themselves but also to a more congenial image of Canada as a mature political and economic partner? This is not to press culture totally to the service of the state, as is done by some countries. But it is to recognize that cultural diplomacy is a thoroughly modern instrument of foreign policy.

Such a rationale, broadly interpreted, underpins the work of the National Film Board, and animates another under-valued asset: the International Service of the CBC. The objectivity and independence of those organizations clearly demonstrate that government has never taken an Orwellian approach to cultural funding. And their good work shows the ability of cultural instruments to serve the interests of the country as a whole.

Just as culture can never be captured by foreign policy — and governments are involved in only a small percentage of total cultural exchange — so foreign policy must also resist capture by special interests such as the cultural community. (You will judge from that comment my reaction to the recent proposal of a separate Agency to operate international cultural relations.) We must work together in resolving our respective country and audience priorities, and in matching manifestations to markets. We must also open our minds to the cultural ties expected from us by influential Third World countries, reassess the role of exchanges in East-West relations, and balance our "rocks-and-logs" image in Japan or Brazil.