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PRESALE CLOSING: APRIL 29.

Ontario culture is political says Gerstein lecturer

By TONY CARTY

York's annual Gerstein lecture series ended last Tuesday afternoon when Dr. Peter C. Swann, executive director of the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation in Montreal, spoke to a most attentive audience in Osgoode Hall Law School's Moot Court. The theme for this year's lectures was "The Learning Environment."

A former professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto, Dr. Swann began his lecture by pointing out that the complexities of his topic were such as to defy simplistic definition. He soon zeroed in, however, on the treatment of culture in Canada. For this he had no praise.

Dr. Swann indicated that our non-formal institutions will need to become more central to society in the future. Our institutions of learning, such as universities and colleges, ought to play a much more vigorous role in making widespread our awareness and appreciation of culture.

"We have not faced up to the cultural and central role of the universities," the Oxford-educated lecturer pointed out. He felt that the universities will definitely move to the left on the political spectrum. "The economic inequalities of education as they apply to the lower levels of the population" ought to be rectified, he said.

STAGNATION FOR THE 70's

The university should be the prime force, "the dynamo of culture" in society; if not, they will simply fall back even more to a stage of irrelevance. A former visiting professor at York and one-time director of the Royal Ontario Museum, Dr. Swann observed that in retrospect the sixties appear to have been times of intellectual and social stimulation, while the seventies seem a period of stagnation. "Everyone seems concerned with survival and survival is not exciting." We continue to educate people, however, for positions which are not available in a technologically advanced society. In these times universities have become "little more than timid prisoners of government."

The author of six books on Japanese and Chinese art, Dr. Swann noted that institutions such as libraries, art galleries and museums should be treated as centres of education. When we charge one dollar for entrance to a museum, that effectively prevents the lower third of the community from visiting it and these are the very people who should be visiting these places. Education should be far more open to the public, he said.

'POLITICAL CULTURE'

In comparison to some European countries such as Sweden, "we suffer as second-rate in our artistic endeavours, despite our af-

fluence." In a specific reference to Ontario, the distinguished lecturer noted that we have a ministry of culture, so that "culture has become political" but on the lowest possible level of importance. Governments adopt a nineteenth century attitude of 'noblesse oblige', and too often these ministries are run by second-level civil servants whose bureaucratic attitudes do not help the situation.

"Why is it that Quebec is so far ahead of us," asked Dr. Swann. For the French, "culture is all-important." He pointed out that in Quebec there are lively theatre and film industries. Everything there revolves around culture and we have nothing to parallel the "creative force" that that represents.

We have a council for the arts, the lecturer noted, but this is rather dominated by the corporate interests who contribute to it, not without their own selfish interests in mind. Almost no one from the world of the arts sits on its board, "a rather peculiar bridge that doesn't reach the other side, some might say." Dr. Swann ended his lecture by hoping that some day Canada would have a ministry of culture which would do for Canada something similar to what André Malraux did when he was Minister of Culture in France. He hoped too that "cultural democracy would come to Canada as did industrial democracy."

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