

Federal support of cultural development examined

Secretary of State John Roberts recently addressed an audience gathered to celebrate the inauguration of the University of Calgary's faculty of humanities.

Excerpts from his speech, concerning the Government's role in fostering the development of a national identity, are presented below:

...The last time I was in Calgary to deliver a speech, last May, I spoke to the Canadian Cable Television Association. I suggested to them that television should be a means to enlightenment and understanding, an instrument to express our Canadian experience and to support our culture and not, as it is today, primarily a mechanism to generate profits by marketing American products and programming. I received a polite but very cool reception. My message was not what that audience wanted to hear.

I was not too surprised. But it did reflect what is, to me, a continuing and puzzling phenomenon — the lack of pride, the lack of concern, the lack of commitment to Canada and things Canadian that are demonstrated by so many of us. The cable companies both respond to and help develop an appetite for American programming. In a whole variety of areas — television, films, publishing, records — Canadians have turned outside their own country for the creativity of others and for the values and standards by which they judge their own.

Obviously we should be open to the best that other countries produce; we do not want to create in our own country a kind of Iron Curtain against the art and thought of others. But so often this reliance on what comes to us from others seems to reflect an uncertainty about ourselves and the Canadian identity, a belief that what others do must somehow be better, a lack of confidence that in Canada we have reached standards of international excellence, a doubt about ourselves and what our society stands for.

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This dependence on others for our picture of ourselves — a phenomenon I do not find at all in young people in Canada — is all the more disturbing because it does not correspond to the reality of this country. I was talking a moment ago of cultural creativity — Canadian achievement in the past ten or 15 years stands comparison with the best being done in other countries. Indeed, in many cases, Canadians are the standard by which others are assessed. Whether it is in the

quality of artists like Robert Charlebois, Karen Kain, Jon Vickers or Kate Reid, museums like the Glenbow, theatres like Tarragon, Stratford and the Citadel, films like *J.A. Martin, photographe*, and *Who has seen the Wind* — the range is impressive —, there is a cultural renaissance in Canada of extraordinary accomplishment.

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In 1951, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, known as the Massey Report, undertook what I consider to be a landmark task. The Canadian Government charged the Commission with the study of the human and spiritual resources of our country. It was a unique undertaking, and it established in the minds of Government and the people of Canada the importance to all of us that our country and its people be more than an assemblage of physical resources. It argued that we have to consider the nature of our society in terms of its human aspirations and objectives. Let me repeat the major statement made by that Commission.

"It is desirable that the Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions; and about their national life and common achievements; that it is in the national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feelings, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life, rural as well as urban."

That was 30 years ago!

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Protect Canadian content

I have in the past stated that, in some of the arts, Canadian culture is an "endangered species". It is true to say, as the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation did, that no country in the world encourages the massive intrusion of a foreign culture that Canada does. Some statistics will give you a sense of the dimension of the problem.

In Canada, children of school age spend more time each year watching television than they spend in school. Of that television that they watch, three out of four

hours in Canada are American television programs. In some Canadian cities, four out of five hours that they watch are American television programs.

In publishing, two-thirds of the books sold in Canada are sold by foreign firms. Imports, largely from the United States, of books to Canada, amount to 70 per cent of the sales in the Canadian market. In English-language fiction, three-quarters of the sales are of books that come from foreign authors. In text-books, United States-controlled publishers dominate the market, accounting for something like 72 per cent of the sales by the top 20 publishers. Those are the figures for 1975.

In periodicals, only one out of four periodicals bought in Canada is a Canadian periodical. In the record industry, only 4 per cent of the dollar sales in records in Canada have Canadian content. And, in films, out of an industry of somewhere between \$220 million and \$240 million a year at the box office, the rental for films made in the United States is between \$60 million and \$70 million a year. The rental for films produced in Canada is just over \$3 million a year.

Those are some of the statistics that underlie the concern we have that our cultural industries, in the distribution of our cultural product, do not provide in Canada an opportunity for the Canadian voice to be heard.

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...Last November, I announced that I had directed that the Department of the Secretary of State re-examine the role of the Federal Government in encouraging artistic and cultural development in Canada and in responding to the artistic and cultural needs of Canadians. "Arts and culture" in our country corresponds to a deep-felt human need. It is not a frill, but the core of our experiences as Canadians. It is the fullest expression of our collective sensibilities. Government must, therefore, be concerned about it in order to make decisions about not only how we want to spend public funds but how we can help develop the richest, fullest possible cultural life. The findings of the study and the recommendations will be published in the form of a policy statement by the Secretary of State before — I hope — the end of the year....

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I think this task force is necessary and timely for a number of reasons:

First, in view of the current climate of economic restraint, we must examine the