

Cultural Assistance Policies

such a wide range of theatre experience is available to audiences is very important.

My point is that the issue is a complex one. A thriving arts scene requires the participation of amateurs, semi-professional—which I have always understood to mean “pre-professional”—and professional. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between them.

Let us talk for a moment about professional employment in the cultural sector. The term “professional” signifies full time employment at a high salary after a significant level of training and experience.

Does that mean that the Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver actor who is between plays and television commercials and finds work as a waiter is not a professional actor? Is “professional” defined as earning the wages of a doctor or a lawyer which are classified as professions by employment agencies?

A principal dancer in the National Ballet of Canada, and we are talking about household names here, in 1984 earned \$573 a week, or approximately \$30,000 per year, before deductions for rehearsal clothing, ballet shoes, and so on. Is the principal dancer of Canada’s largest ballet company any less professional than the physicians of this country, especially after equal years of training and professional performance experience?

In the 1984 study: *What Jobs Pay*, by Paul Anisef and Etta Baichman, some very interesting statistics underline the point that, in the cultural sector, salaries are not reflective of professional training and experience in Canada, unlike our neighbour to the south where movie stars like “Rambo” Stallone are rumoured to make \$20 million for one violent picture. In the report it states:

Of the 5,963 paid-up members in Actor’s Equity, only 25 to 28 per cent are usually working at any given time. Only 15 per cent of ACTRA’s 6,800 members (including actors and writers) are fully occupied in the profession. In March, 1983, 54.7 per cent of ACTRA members earned less than \$3,900, 73.9 per cent earned less than \$8,000.

In an average first year with Canada’s major ballet company, a dancer earned a minimum of \$311 a week. The minimum weekly salary for opera singers performing in town, with our largest company, the Canadian Opera Company, was \$421 a week. The average annual income of dancers with modern dance companies in 1980-81 was only \$6,000. Certainly, in recent years there have been some slight improvements to keep up with inflation, but the net disposable income has not increased.

One last example. Recently, a visual artist visited the Department of Communications and indicated that she had sold almost \$60,000 worth of work in the last fiscal year, but her take home pay after deducting the costs for studio and supplies was only \$6,000. What physician or any other professional would stand for that?

In other words, in spite of subsidy, because of the volume potential in the Canadian market-place, because of low ticket prices and fees for service, because less than 10 per cent of

Canadian businesses give to the arts, the word “professional” in the arts means paid somewhat, some of the time. This country has a lot more work to do here, and the Government is committed to help in this area.

What about semi-professionals? What do they earn? Or have they decided that, by choosing to be semi-professional, they can balance their regular income from more regular sources with the opportunity to express their creativity on a frequent part-time basis? Are they really apprentices, artists in training, not yet trained sufficiently to be able to earn full-time work?

Finally, what does amateur mean? It does not mean poor quality, that is clear. To me, amateur means joy, the joy that comes from volunteering one’s time and talent, a passion for self-expression strong enough to compel participation.

Amateur cultural organizations are essentially volunteer organizations. The actress in a local amateur production may some day decide to work semi-professionally, but today she is volunteering in order to be able to participate in the performing arts and to experience the thrill of a live audience. Occasionally, there is a live audience in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, but it does not look as though we had one this afternoon!

Cultural activity is supported by all levels of government, some better than others. Traditionally, the federal Government has supported primarily, although not exclusively, the professional sector, as the Hon. Member pointed out. Through our support to cultural agencies such as Telefilm, the Canada Council, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to museums and galleries across the country, and through the many programs sponsored by government Departments, we provide close to \$2 billion a year in support of our nation’s culture—\$2 billion is a significant sum of money.

We accept our role because of the value we place on Canadian culture. We encourage other players, particularly the private sector, to increase their participation and join us in promoting the development of the arts in Canada at both the amateur and professional levels.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to speak on this motion. It is a very interesting motion and I congratulate the Hon. Member for putting it forward, and for taking us away from the general to talk about a specific issue which is getting funding for the Hillsborough Girls Choir. As the communications critic for my Party I learned something in listening to the Hon. Member’s speech on how he attempted to get funding for what is no doubt a very good cause.

Today I had a meeting with a young man who works for a band called L’Insolite. In English it means “unexpected”. It is a drum and bugle corps band from St. Jérôme, Québec. It is a world-class band just like the Hillsborough Girls Choir. The band has 65 youths age 13 to 21. In addition, the band has 20 young instructors who are not paid, and another 15 people who