

Government Orders

from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada on November 30, 1992. It states:

As Canadians look to the 21st century and their place in a research and innovation-intensive world economy, the federal government is turning back the clock to the 1970s with its recently tabled Bill C-93. The bill would wind up Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and transfer its programs to the Canada Council.

SSHRC was transferred out of Canada Council in 1978 after much consultation and study. This move recognized the growing importance of social sciences and humanities research to Canada's over-all science effort and gave it the profile and autonomy it needed to survive and thrive.

Lumping the social sciences and humanities with arts, 14 years later, does not make much sense, especially at a time when SSHRC has already developed partnerships with other research councils in order to find interdisciplinary solutions to our pressing medical, industrial, environmental and human resource problems.

Research in the social sciences and humanities is crucial for our understanding of and adaptation to the rapid social and technological change inherent in an emerging service and information oriented society.

• (1430)

This was a quote from Dr. Claude Lajeunesse.

The communiqué continues: "The proposed changes were announced in the February federal budget without any prior consultation or public study. The government provided no rationale for this takeover other than general references to cost saving". The minister responsible for the Canada Council is admitting that savings from the change will be limited.

The bill also proposes to transfer the International Academic Relations Program from external affairs to Canada Council. We are concerned", states the communiqué, "that such a move would hamper Canadian university participation in international knowledge networks. The federal government should be facilitating this participation, not creating potential road blocks, if Canada wants to attract its university world class scholars and be plugged in to international research".

I think that emphasizes fairly clearly that this community is very concerned. The thrust of what they have been doing over the last 14 years will be watered down by their coupling with the arts community and the Canada Council. I think that is a valid and reasonable fear.

It is also clear that the arts community is concerned about various cutbacks and are concerned about the thrust of their direction and where it will be going with the consolidation of their area with that of humanities and social sciences.

The Association of Universities and Colleges also points out a number of concerns about being taken over by Canada Council. These are valid concerns and should be put on the record. It is concerned that the integrity of the SSHRC granting programs will not be maintained after it is part of the predominantly arts and cultural agencies. It is also concerned about the role that it will have as one of the key players in Canada's over-all science and technology effort and are concerned that this effort will be substantially diminished.

It is concerned about the growing collaborative links to other research granting councils and that these links could be threatened. That is a valid concern because as you work up a network, you work up a trust among a number of different universities and a number of difference agencies. When your trust is watered down, your viability is not only questioned but also the link between what you are doing and what you want to accomplish and how much you can add to the over-all research is also watered down and questioned.

It further points out its concern that social science humanities research continues to be funded from moneys allocated for Canada's science effort and that these moneys be used exclusively to support research. Of course, it points out that the minister responsible announced a 4 per cent per year increase in SSHRC for the next four years which began on April 12, 1992.

It is further concerned that other research agencies, such as the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Medical Research Council, will also eventually lose their independent status. I think these are real and valid concerns.

I should also briefly quote from a couple of letters that we have received with respect to this proposal. In a letter from the International Council for Canadian Studies to the Prime Minister dated November 23, Hans-Josef Niederehe, the president, has stated: "Our concern is that contrary to its intention, such a transfer will in fact prove costly and ineffective. The cost effectiveness of the