

[English]

Mr. Dwyer: Perhaps I might first say that the request for a travel grant for this American artist, Ralph Ortiz, was made in the normal way from a reputable art gallery—one of the best, a private gallery—in Vancouver. When the request for a travel grant was received it was treated as all such requests are treated, it was sent to three consultants who are experts in the particular field of the visual arts for an opinion as to whether assistance would be justified. These were two quite distinguished artists in the Vancouver community and the curator of a major public gallery elsewhere in the country. All three of them recommended that this grant should be made. Consequently, since the sum was modest—and of course the Council and the officers at that time had no way of knowing exactly what form this manifestation would take—the grant was given.

If I may anticipate what I think must lie in the minds of the hon. members, the question would be why was this advice given to us? Perhaps I might also say that one problem of the Council is that it is, as it were, a servant of two masters. It has a responsibility to the interested public to see that it is provided with the things that it likes and enjoys and, of course, a vast amount of our funds are used for that particular purpose. But I think the Council also does have laid upon it by Parliament a responsibility to the artists themselves, and this will mean that from time to time we must take into account the *avant-garde*, experimental, controversial and sometimes bizarre things which are being done. This particular manifestation was one of those. From time to time, it seems to us, that if we are to fulfil our function in permitting these experiments to be tried, as they have been in the past, we shall from time to time do things which are not appreciated, not understood and which appear very disagreeable.

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): Could it be that there are many people attached to the arts who feel that if they do not go along with something that is *avant-garde* that they are being old-fashioned and therefore they must permit all kinds of art. Does this enter into it?

Mr. Dwyer: I think there is a measure of progress in the arts as there is in all of life.

But I think in this particular case people felt quite generally that something which had been done quite extensively in London, in England, in the United States, in New York and Berkeley, California, could be tried here so that people here could test the validity of the kind of thing that was being done.

I wonder, if the Chairman would permit me, if I might just read two very brief things which I think might interest Mr. Stewart as a musician because they give an example of the problems of the *avant-garde*. Here are two very brief phrases from criticism about *avant-garde* music. Here is the first one:

All impartial musicians and music lovers were in perfect agreement that never was anything as incoherent, shrill, chaotic and earsplitting produced in music. The most piercing dissonances clash in a really atrocious harmony, and a few puny ideas only increase the disagreeable and deafening effect.

And now another very brief quotation of *avant-garde* music criticism:

In search of ear-rending dissonances, tortuous transition, sharp modulations, repugnant contortions of melody and rhythm, he is quite indefatigable. All is brought forward to produce the effect of bizarre originality, the strangest tonalities, the most preposterous combinations.

I quote those because the first one was written in Vienna in 1806 and describes the first performance of Beethoven's overture of "Fidelio", and the second one was written in Berlin in 1933 and describes a concert of Frédéric Chopin playing his mazurkas. With those in the back of our minds, I think that perhaps we neglect the *avant-garde* at our peril.

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Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): Your point is very well taken, Mr. Dwyer, but I would like to register my feeling. It is sometimes difficult to recognize what art is, but I do not think it is ever difficult to recognize a "nut" and I think that is the category that fellow would fall into. However, that is a personal opinion.

Mr. Dwyer: Well, we will accept that.

Mr. Martineau: May I interject one word here? No one, I think now, or very few,