

Author Paul Audley discusses Applebaum-Hebert Report

Speaker bemoans dire state of Canadian culture

SHEREE-LEE OLSON

Nine people were present at Bethune Gallery on Thursday for a talk by Paul Audley on "The Failure of Cultural Policy: A Look at Applebert." But Audley, the unruffled author of *Canada's Cultural Industries*, spoke less about the Applebaum-Hebert Report than he did about the dire state of Canadian culture in general.

Canada has become a "laughing-stock" in international circles said Audley, citing a new definition of the word "Canadianization". Once used to signify the infusion of specifically Canadian content, it can now mean the complete elimination of such content in Canadian-made productions geared to U.S. markets. In broader terms, with the steady erosion in Canada's cultural industries of Canadian ownership

and control, "Canadianization" disturbingly recalls "Finlandization".

Audley, who professes "no academic qualifications to deal with the economics of the communications industry" has nevertheless written publishing policy for both the federal and provincial governments, and for the Association of Canadian Publishers. Having "fallen into" policy writing through a sense of frustration while working in the book publishing industry, Audley said his approach is "pragmatic".

Primary flaw

Not only has Applebert lost that pragmatism, he said, it is "schizophrenic": "the most impressive thing about Applebert is

its lack of any internal cohesion." His primary flaw is the separation of "arts policy" from "cultural policy", and of cultural policy from "communications policy." Applebert, said Audley, is a series of biased reports. "Their position of film (for example) is the private producers' position," which means there is little mention of the short subjects or documentaries for which Canada is internationally known.

Audley's strongest criticism was of the well-known Applebert recommendation to phase out public sector (CBC) television production of anything but news. Applebert is wrong, he said, to think the "marketplace" (private sector production) will produce what the public wants. Studies have shown that this is rarely the case. "You can't tell what there's a demand for

until (a variety of) shows are produced," claimed Audley.

Also under attack by Audley were a few "major myths" current in the cultural industry. One is that there's no public interest or demand for Canadian cultural products. "When we've had the proper budgets to produce something good they always outsell exports. *Maclean's* outsells *Newsweek* and *Saturday Night* outsells *The Atlantic Monthly* six to one," he said.

Networks competing

Another 'myth' is the notion that TV channel proliferation will result in programming diversity. Studies have shown that "in commercial TV, the more channels, the less diversity." Networks competing for the same audience and advertising dollar programme the same big-name shows. "Has Pay TV led to variety or diversity? Their aim has been to provide more sex and violence than the other networks. This kind of thing brings everyone more and more into the frenzied scramble for audience share."

Audley offered a few "pragmatic" strategies for helping Canada's cultural industries acquire more money. These included sales tax and levies on foreign imports and tax incentives for those Canadian publications that generate more original editorial content. "For newspapers, it's always cheaper to bring in the foreign service than produce our own. You can have all of the Associated Press wire service for half a million a year." An incentive policy similar to the Research and Development tax credit policy in the manufacturing sector would reward

newspaper chains like Southam, which generates 25 percent more editorial content than Thompson. Audley said his book discovers an additional \$200 million for Canadian production, just by "moving money around."

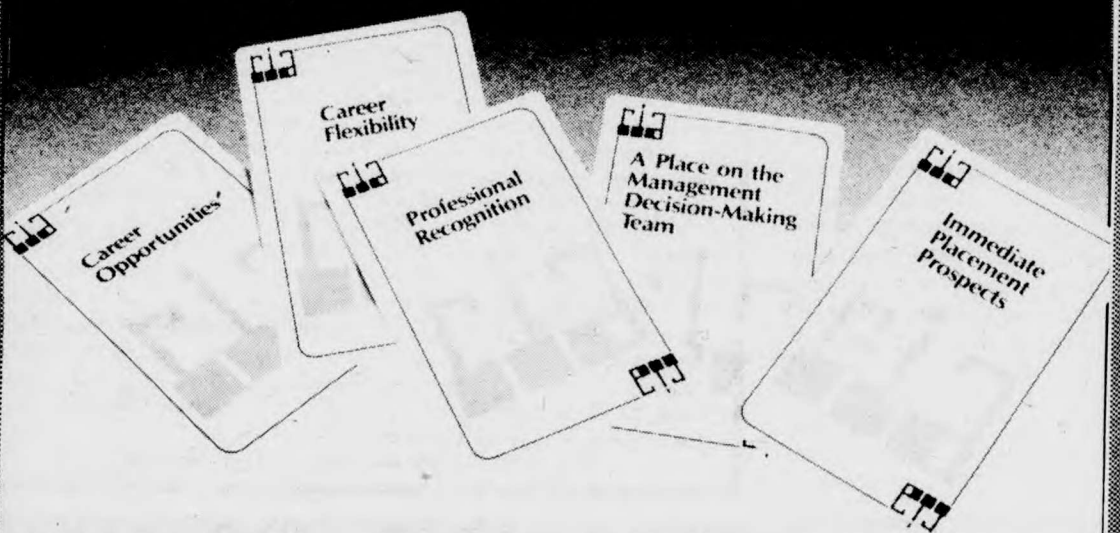
Thwart U.S.

Finally, Audley criticized the Canadian government which is, he implied, afraid to thwart U.S. interests in Canadian cultural concerns. A federal policy he in fact helped write, aims for 50 per cent of sales in publishing to be Canadian-controlled, but is largely ignored. The Federal Investment Review Agency ignored it to allow a U.S. newspaper chain to take over Random House Canada "with absolutely no benefits to Canada - we got nothing culturally, and nothing economically. There were Canadian buyers (Audley was one), but FIRA wouldn't talk to them. The government has a policy but it folded up under Reagan pressure."

Unlike Britain and Europe said Audley, "there's no real sense of cultural life here. Seats on the CRTC are given as favours." Outside of the CBC, to get a "Canadian" classification on a production, the 1968 Broadcasting Act "only requires that money be spent by the private sector, not that they represent the cultural life of Canada, Canadian content or character."

To Audley, "a Canadian production is what a Canadian decides to produce when he doesn't have to get his money elsewhere. The problem is to protect the right to decide."

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Musical benefit for Amnesty International

MICHAEL MONASTYRSKYJ
The Glendon College group of Amnesty International will host an evening of music to raise money for Amnesty's Relief Fund for Refugees. The event will take place at an east end club, the Trojan Horse.

Amnesty International is a world wide organization that works on behalf of people whose rights under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights have been violated.

Its work with refugees is limited to those whose rights are in danger.

The musicians performing on Wednesday are David Campbell, All Together, Heather Chetwynd, Rick Fielding, David Welch, and the Musical Group of the Latin American Cultural Workshop.

Many of the performers were contacted through a network known as Musicians for Social Change. Welch, who belongs to the network, says, "We're collaborating with the Trojan Horse in setting up shows, and we hope to re-organize the club as a place for progressive/alternative art, mainly music."

Admission to Wednesday's show, which starts at 7:30 p.m., is \$3.00. The Trojan Horse is located on 179 Danforth Avenue, just east of Broadview subway station.

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