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**The Federal Government
and the Politicization of the Canada Council:
Exploring the Fine Line Between
Accountability and Interference**

By Mary M. Johnson, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

**Mass Communication Program
School of Journalism and Communication**

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
April 3, 2000
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Thesis supervisor

Chair, School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University
April, 2000

Abstract

During the course of its history, the Canada Council for the Arts has struggled to maintain its independence. Three themes surface in the story of the politicization of the Council: interference, complicity and accountability. This gradual politicization has occurred not only as a result of government incursions but also at times through the Council's own complicity. The government has rarely seen its relationship with the Canada Council as one of interference. The role that the Council has played in this politicization has often been in the name of securing funding and its complicity has fallen under the guise of becoming more accountable to the federal government. The major dispute between the Council and the federal government has been over who should decide the policies and priorities of the Council. Although the Council has become increasingly politicized, it continues to play an important role and must maintain its legislated autonomy.

Acknowledgements

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Introductory Overview

"I will never interfere; the Canada Council is independent."¹

-- Prime Minister John

Diefenbaker

"Have I ever interfered with the Canada Council?"²

-- Prime Minister Pierre

Trudeau

The Canada Council for the Arts was established in 1957. The Act of Parliament that established it clearly states that the Council is not "an Agent of Her Majesty." It was to operate as an arm's length institution, independent of government direction and interference. The Council's mandate was to foster and promote the study, enjoyment, and the production of works in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The Council was granted independence in order to ensure that federal support would be available to the arts, without government control over the cultural development of the nation. During the course of its history, there has been a struggle to maintain this independence. The gradual politicization of the Council has occurred not only as a result of government incursions but also at times through the Council's own complicity. The government has rarely seen its relationship with the Canada Council as one of interference and is not, in fairness, solely responsible for the gradual politicization of the Council. Over the years, the Council, appointed members and staff alike, have been complicit in the

politicization process.

A small but revealing example of this gradual politicization occurred in 1981. For some time, the Department of Communications had expressed a desire that the Canada wordmark, the little red maple leaf and the bar that appears on all federal documents, be included on all Canada Council reports, press releases and cheques. This policy was viewed as a way to assert a beneficent federal presence in all the places that the Council touches. The Council's staff had resisted, but in the spring of 1981 both the Council's staff and its Executive, including chair Mavor Moore, relented and agreed. However, when the issue came before the appointed Board of the Council, it ran into fierce opposition. Some argued that adopting the wordmark would indicate that the Council had become part of the federal civil service. After intense debate, the Board defeated the Executive's proposal nine votes to eight and in the words of Robert Fulford remained "independent of government, at least symbolically."³ While this particular episode was not particularly threatening to the independence of the Canada Council, it typified the way in which gradual federal politicization of the Council has at times been supported by the Council's own members.

In principle, the Council could not lose its independence except through an Act of Parliament. In truth, the initiatives over the years that have threatened the Council have rarely originated in Parliament; they have been made within government departments, in Cabinet, or among the two

groups of civil servants who operate the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office.⁴ It has been these groups that over the years have formulated the key policy decisions that sought to politicize federal patronage of the arts and broaden government power over the Council. Although the federal government has no explicit right to influence the Council, over time it has changed its attitude toward the nature and extent of the Council's independence.

For its first eight years, the Council maintained a high level of independence. Its operations were financed solely out of an endowment fund, and though the government maintained formal ties with the Council, it rarely interfered with its operations. In 1965, however, the Council began to receive Parliamentary appropriations to supplement its endowment income. The endowment fund eventually became a minor factor in the funding of the Council. Indeed, the Council now relies almost entirely on the money it receives from Parliament to fulfil its mandate. The role that the Council has played in its own politicization has often been in the name of securing this funding. Generally speaking, the Council's complicity has fallen under the guise of becoming more accountable to the federal government. The Council has felt pressure to incorporate certain government goals into policy in order to ensure continued funding.

The Council's independence has been threatened not only for reasons of financial austerity but also because of government cultural policy issues.

Although the federal government has not successfully intervened in the awarding of Council grants, it has interfered with the Council's autonomy, that is, its ability to set its own policies and priorities. Over the years, the major dispute between the Council and the federal government has been over who should decide the priorities of the Council and the policies upon which its choices will be made.⁵ The arm's length relationship that existed between the Council and the government began to change as the government's approach to cultural policy changed. From the mid-1960s onward, the federal government has tried to create a unified cultural policy over all arts funding, and to set priorities for arts funding in line with that policy. This federal goal to create a unified cultural policy has, in part, led to the politicization of the Council and the compromising of its arm's length status. In some situations, the priorities set by the government have decreased the Council's power to fulfil its own mandate and set its own priorities.

Prime Minister Trudeau believed that control of the nation's cultural life was essential for the consolidation of political power. In 1968, Secretary of State Gerard Pelletier, responsible for the Council, emphasized that cultural policies were to be directed towards support of the government's overall principle aims. One of these aims was said to be democratization. When Charles Lussier, a Trudeau appointee, became director of the Council, he initiated his term with a warning that performing arts groups were to make

their programs accessible to a “wider public” in order to receive Council funding. The implication was that a politically required “democratization” might become a condition for artists to continue receiving public funds.⁶

This is an example not only of the government’s desire to increase its control over cultural policy but also of the Council’s participation in its own politicization.

The government has also influenced Council policy through the use of earmarked funds. Beginning in the 1970s, money earmarked for particular purposes began to be included in the Council’s annual appropriations. Soon the government began asking the Council to propose ways it could use new money to fund federal government objectives like national unity. In the 1970s, the government also began allocating funds to various government departments for the support of the arts. This step allowed each department to fund arts projects that met the specific requirements of federal government cultural policy. These departmental funds were often politically motivated, the granting of these funds was intricately tied to the world of politics, and direct departmental funding went largely to organizations or groups. The allocation of funds such as these did not threaten the independence of the Council, but it did put into question the role of the Council as the primary federal arts funding body.⁷ The Council was not opposed to these increases in arts funding; rather it felt these funds should be administered through the Council. As an arm’s length institution, the granting process would not be

politically motivated and a greater proportion of the grants would go to individual artists.

On several occasions, the government has made legislative attempts to effect change at the Council. Some of these attempts were successful and some were not. Although the Council has often fought against these legislative attempts to gain more control over its policy and procedures, there have been times when it has played a more complicit role in these attempts. In the mid-1980s, the government attempted to pass Bill C-24, legislating increased control of the Council. Both the Council and the cultural community opposed their inclusion in this bill and were in the end exempted from it. However, in the early 1990s, when the government attempted to pass legislation merging the Council with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), little opposition was voiced. At this time, the Council had little opportunity to consult the arts community on the impact this merger would have. As well as dealing with an \$8.7 million cut to its budget, it was consumed with housekeeping changes that would have to be made to make the merger work.

While the Council's members have always been appointed by the government, those appointments have increasingly been rewards for political loyalty and in recent years have given the Council an increasingly political character. This politicization has occurred as a result of the government's increasing tendency to appoint members who have no ties to the cultural

community and hold opinions in line with the government's own plans for policy and administrative change. Through the peer assessment system, the Council's board has deferred actual grant decisions to the judgment of artists. But it has retained the power to determine broad policy for implementing the Council's legislative mandate, and in recent years, government appointees have been pressured to move the Council's broad policy into line with government plans.

For many critics, the government has clearly compromised the Council's arm's length status. The Council's increased reliance on government funding has placed it in a precarious position. In order to secure continued funding, the Council has had to remain accountable to the government. In order to remain in favour with the government, the Council has often made decisions which have led to its increased politicization. As Patricia Best points out, "the fine line between *accountability* to those who fund, and *interference* by those who fund, leaves the Canada Council little room to manoeuvre [my emphasis added]."⁸ In order to preserve its arm's length relationship, the Council has struggled to maintain independence from government interference, but at the same time, has often been complicit in its own politicization.

The full story of this politicization cannot yet be told. Even for the early years of the Canada Council, archival sources are often difficult to obtain and partially censored. From the mid-1980s onward, it is particularly difficult

to obtain archival documents. However, the politicization of the Canada Council is too important a story to be left to a future generation to tell. We need to know as much as possible about it now if a dangerous but reversible trend is to be prevented from becoming a fait accompli.

To this end, I have not restricted my account to the period for which archival records are most accessible. Rather, using a variety of secondary sources, I have tried to splice together as accurate an account as possible of more recent developments.

Notes for Introductory Overview

1. As quoted in Patricia Best, "Canada Council ponders money problems -- and politics," Financial Post, vol. 76, 15 May 1982, p. 2.
2. As quoted in Best, "Canada Council ponders money problems -- and politics," p. 2.
3. Robert Fulford, "The Canada Council At Twenty-Five," Saturday Night, no. 97, March 1982, p. 41.
4. George Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada (Vancouver, 1985), p. 103.
5. Frank Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," Love and Money: The Politics of Culture (Canada, 1980), p. 89.
6. Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows, p. 107.
7. Audrey Forester, "From the CPR to the Canada Council," A Celebration of Canada's Arts 1930-1970 (Canada, 1996), p. 218.
8. Best, "Canada Council ponders money problems -- and politics," p. 2.

Chapter One: The Origins, Creation and Early Years (1957-65) of the Canada Council

Federal Government Involvement in the Arts before 1950

The Massey Commission did not mark the beginning of government or public patronage of the arts in Canada. There was substantial government support for the arts before the Massey Commission. While this support was not the result of an overall policy or plan, it did demonstrate that the government was willing to take some responsibility for supporting both national and private cultural organizations and was also willing to include artists in celebrations of national importance such as international exhibitions and Canada's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1927. This government patronage paved the way for the establishment of the Massey Commission in 1949 and the founding later of the Canada Council.¹

In the nineteenth century, Canada's governors general felt it their duty to give direction to the country's cultural life. They established institutions such as the National Museum (1842) and the Dominion Archives (1872), helped found organizations such as the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts (1880) and the Royal Society of Canada (1882), and during the early years of the twentieth century founded music and drama festivals.² They recognized the important role of national cultural development in both unifying an ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed population and in fostering identity and aspirations.³

Prime ministers and their officials frequently allocated public money to institutions like the National Gallery of Canada (1880) and the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts as well as to private cultural organizations like the Dominion Drama Festival and the Canadian Authors' Association. In 1907 an Advisory Arts Council was established to advise the Prime Minister and the government as to which works of art to acquire for public collections. About the same time, Percy Nobbs, a McGill architect, was hired to advise on how best to support cultural activity in general. Artists were hired during the First World War to record the activities of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium.⁴ Canada's Prime Ministers believed that the arts could help to uplift Canadian citizens, bring them into line with British ways of thinking, unify the country, beautify its cities, and act as a barrier to the flood of American popular culture. Before the establishment of the Massey Commission in 1949, the government had already introduced legislation dealing with copyright laws, periodical publishing, broadcasting, and motion picture production.

Maria Tippet suggests four reasons why government involvement in the arts was not more comprehensive before the 1940s. First, culture was perceived to be very much a part of education, and education was a provincial matter over which the federal government had no jurisdiction. Secondly, Canada did not have an acceptable model on which to base any government involvement in the arts. Britain did not yet have a government-sponsored

arts funding program, and the American Public Works Project of the 1930s was not looked upon favourably by Canada's prime ministers. Thirdly, the arts were viewed primarily as a recreational activity, not as a professional activity that required assistance. And finally, no direction from the arts community itself had been given to the government as to what role it should play with respect to the arts.⁵ Generally, the arts community was opposed to any government interference in its affairs; its main complaint was that Canada, unlike the United States, had no private patrons such as Rockefeller or Carnegie willing to support it.

Increased government support for the arts was precipitated by several events in the mid-1940s. In 1944 a coalition of arts associations and artists' groups made a historic "march on Ottawa" to present a brief to the Parliamentary Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. It wanted a government body to be established to promote the arts in Canada. In 1945 the British Arts Council was established, and shortly thereafter, the Canadian Arts Council, an arts lobby group, was formed. It began lobbying for a government agency modeled after the British Arts Council.⁶ The founding of such international organizations as UNESCO set a pattern for government involvement in culture. Other governments were establishing cultural agencies and Canada's membership in UNESCO required that it establish a commission, board, or ministry of art and culture. Domestic pressures also precipitated the need for increased government involvement in the arts.

There was a growing need to regulate new technologies such as television and to address the overcrowding of the country's universities.⁷ The cultural community, fast aligning itself with the new socialist party, the CCF, which posed a threat to the power of St. Laurent's Liberal government, was also mounting pressure for financial support.

Although the federal government had become involved in supporting the arts before the 1950s, its support was limited. A working relationship between the government and the arts community was practically non-existent. There was little consultation with artists by the government, and there existed no official route through which artists could make their concerns heard. There was no minister responsible for the arts and no official policy addressing support for the arts.

The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences

On April 8, 1949, the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent established the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, headed by Vincent Massey and Father Georges-Henri Levesque. Also known as the Massey Commission, its terms of reference instructed it to make recommendations on the "relations of the Government of Canada and any of its agencies with various national voluntary bodies operating in the field with which this inquiry will be concerned." The

Federal government had shown limited interest in the field of voluntary organizations. At the time, the main cultural expenditures of the government were yearly allocations to the National Film Board, the National Museums, the National Gallery, and the CBC. Assistance to non-government cultural organizations was negligible. Although twenty-four voluntary societies received some federal aid, only five of these organizations were concerned with cultural matters, and together these five received only \$21,000 of the \$791, 500 granted. In 1949 \$21,000 was shared between the Canadian Writer's Foundation, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and three learned societies, compared to \$15,000 for the Canadian Council of Boy Scouts and \$115,200 for military associations and institutes.⁸

The arts were widely considered to be unnecessary luxuries, but a shift in attitude was taking place. The Massey commission discovered this shift in attitude in both the cross-country hearings it conducted and in the critical studies it commissioned in the fields of arts and sciences. According to George Woodcock, moreover, "the commission created its own bow wave of interest, not only looking into needs, but making people think of them, so that by the time of the report's publication the idea that the community had a responsibility towards its arts and artists was accepted without serious opposition."⁹ The commission asserted that the cultivation of the arts was not a luxury but an essential prerequisite to the development of a stable national culture. It believed that the arts and letters "lie at the root of our life

as a nation" and thus felt obliged to address both the "spiritual foundations of our national identity," and the "foundations of national unity."¹⁰

The report of the Massey commission presented a overview of the cultural landscape of Canada at the time – one derived from hundreds of briefs, volumes of oral evidence, and numerous commissioned studies by authorities in various fields. The attention of the commission was directed to "institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life."¹¹ But the commission felt that the institutions in Canada that represented the arts and letters all suffered from lack of nourishment. It suggested that this was the result not only of vast distances, a scattered population, Canada's youth as a nation, and its ease of dependence on a huge and generous neighbour, but also on new problems arising from a wave of modern technologies.

The Massey commission considered the relation of voluntary effort to governmental activity as a focal point of its work. It emphasized the widespread concern about the preservation of the "voluntary principle" upon which most societies and organizations in Canada had been founded. It discussed ways in which government agencies could help voluntary societies to achieve their aims without interfering with their freedom. "There is general agreement," it said, "on the need to maintain individual initiative and a sense of responsibility and at the same time to take advantage of the economy of effort made possible by the services of certain governmental

agencies in the modern state."¹²

The commission heard a wide variety of views on the best means of achieving this goal. Many groups warned against too much government aid and the measure of supervision that would go with such aid. They felt that any help should be indirect in order to avoid paternalism and over-solicitous guidance on the part of the government. Although many local groups concerned with arts and letters neither needed nor wanted direct government aid (and could not, in some cases, even accept it), a large number thought that their own usefulness to the communities they served could be increased by judicious government aid.

There was general agreement among voluntary societies that the present system of rigid and meagre annual grants was not the best way to encourage voluntary effort. To a greater or lesser degree, they all suggested the need for an arts council that would provide more generous and more flexible public aid than in the past. The commission reported how the British experience of establishing an arts council had inspired great interest among Canadian voluntary bodies. The general desire was that any aid given should be administered by a body similar to the Arts Council of Great Britain rather than a government department.

The Massey commission felt there were two things that were essential to the growth and survival of the "less tangible but more enduring parts of our civilization." The first was the will of the people to quicken and enrich

their cultural and intellectual life. The second was money. The commission felt that a greater investment of money should be a shared effort by all governments, federal, provincial, and local. However, the commission itself had been instructed to examine only the federal field, and its recommendations stayed within that scope. Its task was not only to examine the state of the arts, letters, and sciences in Canada, but to make recommendations on how the federal government could aid the organizations operating in these fields. Its recommendations involved both administrative and legislative action and the use of public funds, both in capital grants and in annual outlay. The commission recognized that there were practical problems involved in the implementation of its recommendations, namely the availability of funds, and so kept its recommendations to a minimum. At the same time, however, it emphasized their urgency.

When we ask for the expenditure of money it is only because we are convinced that nothing less would achieve the end. . . [W]e have tried to propose the necessary measures through the simplest and least costly methods; but we have not for a moment lost sight of the paramount importance of strengthening those institutions on which our national morale and our national integrity depend.¹³

Many of the commission's recommendations for federal institutions and organizations involved both an increase in federal funding as well as increased autonomy from government direction in policy matters. With respect to the National Museum of Canada, the commission recommended not only that the museum be given adequate space, suitable facilities, and

funds for general education services, but that "control of its administration and the direction of its policies be vested in a board of trustees similar to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery."¹⁴ The establishment of a new museum to be called the Canadian Historical Museum was suggested and the commission recommended that "its administration and control like that of the National Museum be vested in a board of trustees."¹⁵ Similarly, it recommended that a National Library be established and that the "National Library Advisory Committee be reconstituted as a board of trustees of the National Library."¹⁶

The commission came to its conclusion and recommendations with regard to voluntary organizations on the basis of 106 comments from societies and citizens and five special studies. It pointed out that there were some principal difficulties encountered by the arts and social sciences in Canada. The problem seemed to be threefold: cultural activity within Canada, cultural relations abroad, and Canada's Relationship with UNESCO. There did not exist in Canada any government-supported body to do for the arts and letters and for the humanities and social sciences what the National Research Council did for the natural sciences. And unlike most countries in the world, Canada had no advisory or executive body to deal with the question of cultural relations abroad. It did not have a clearing-house or centre of information on the arts, and social sciences and there were many voluntary bodies whose work was of national importance but whose resources were

inadequate for their growth and survival. And finally, although Canada was a member of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, no national commission for UNESCO had been established.

On the question of how the federal government could properly and realistically contribute to the enrichment of Canadian cultural life, the commission found the example of the Arts Council of Great Britain to be of great use. The commission was particularly impressed with the Arts Council's awareness of the dangers inherent in any system of subvention by the central government to the arts and letters. In Great Britain a separate body existed to stimulate knowledge abroad of British culture and to foster close cultural relations with other countries. The Massey commission felt, however, that Canada's purposes could best be served not by setting up an additional body to promote the aims of UNESCO but by strengthening the work of organizations already in that field. The commission also believed that it would be undesirable to establish a separate council for the humanities and social sciences.

We think that the very important responsibility of encouraging these studies through a flexible scheme of scholarships and grants can best be carried out by an organization which will be obliged by its other responsibilities to keep in the closest touch with cultural affairs at home and abroad, and with universities, particularly with Canadian universities which, as we have seen, are the focal point for so many of our cultural activities.¹⁷

The commission thus recommended the creation of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social

Sciences. Its role would be to "stimulate and to help voluntary organizations within these fields, to foster Canada's cultural relations abroad, to perform the functions of a national commission for UNESCO, and to devise and administer a system of scholarships."¹⁸ The Canada Council would operate as an arm's length organization. "We should also consider it a misfortune," the report emphasized, "if this Canada Council became in any sense a department of government." At the same time, however, it recognized that "since this body will be spending public money it must be in an effective manner responsible to the Government and hence to Parliament."¹⁹

The commission asserted that it did not think that officers of the federal government should sit as members of the proposed council, but that the Council would undoubtedly need the expert advice of many departments of government. It also thought it advisable that the Council appoint advisory committees composed of voluntary organizations and individuals with specialized knowledge and experience. And it felt that it would not be practical or desirable to define in detail all of the duties of the proposed Council.

Maria Tippet argues that the recommendations set out in the Massey commission report "possessed an elitist moral vision of culture which left little room for Canadians other than those who belonged to the British and French charter groups."²⁰ However, as Woodcock earlier observed, "in the cultural desert of Canada at that time a group of men and women was needed

who could act the elitist role and decide what seemed to be good for the arts and suggest that what was good for the arts was good for the country.”²¹

Artists hoped that the report, in revealing the problems faced by the arts and artists, would generate the means to bring their work to wider audiences and lead to measures that would ease their economic hardships. Criticism of the report from artists was expressed mainly in the form of distrust for anything that seemed to put art and artists at the service of a political ideal.

Woodcock argues that if we give the Massey commission credit for the long-term consequences of its recommendations, it created a new environment for the arts in Canada and changed the general attitude of Canadians toward the artist as creator and performer. He states that the report of the Massey Commission was “one of the basic statements on which, since that time, the relationship between the state and the arts in Canada has been established. ...[I]t became a growing element of Canadian life that even the financial austerities of economic crisis have not been able to eliminate completely.”²²

It is true that the report of the Massey commission and its recommendation to create the Canada Council as an arm’s length organization played an important role in justifying and establishing government involvement in the cultural development of the nation. However, the arm’s length relationship that existed between the Council and the government began to change with the first appropriation the Council

received. Furthermore, the government's approach to culture through cultural policy has changed significantly over the years. Though the "financial austerities of economic crisis" have not robbed the Council of its independence, its independence has been threatened on numerous occasions, often for reasons more complex than financial austerity.

The Creation of the Canada Council

The Liberal Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, was not easily convinced of the merits of the recommendations of the Massey commission and was not particularly keen to implement any of them. He was particularly worried about introducing any new cultural programs on the grounds that doing so would be meddling in matters of education, language, and religion. He was concerned about populist criticism that the government was allying itself with high culture in a formal and extensive way. He also feared that "by fulfilling UNESCO's requirement to establish an arts' commission, Canada would be drawn too closely into an organization that some officials believed was infiltrated by communists."²³ There had already been charges that government cultural agencies like the National Film Board and private cultural agencies such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra had been infiltrated by communists.

Shortly after the commission's report was submitted, Vincent Massey, one of the strongest advocates for the creation of the Council, became

Governor General of Canada. He felt it was no longer proper for him to interfere in public policy by continuing to advocate the implementation of the commission's recommendations. Within the Liberal party, however, there were supporters for the development of a strong cultural policy. These included Brooke Claxton, St. Laurent's former Minister of National Defense, and Jack Pickersgill, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and adviser to St. Laurent, both of whom had played an important part in originally convincing St. Laurent to accept the idea of a Royal Commission. They were intent on not letting the proposals of the Massey Commission sit on a shelf and gather dust and so began to recruit some strategic allies.²⁴

In the summer of 1956, John Deutsch, a well-known economist and the secretary to the Treasury Board, remarked to Pickersgill that it would be a shame for the recent death duties on the large estates of Sir James Dunn and Isaak Walton Killam to be wasted on day-to-day government expenses. Amounting to more than \$100 million, Deutsch felt something special should be done with the duties. Pickersgill suggested that the money go to finance the Massey Commission's proposed Canada Council. Half of the money could be used to help universities through their present crisis and the rest could become an endowment fund to finance the Council itself. Pickersgill later recounted that he was so excited by this notion that he walked straight into the Prime Minister's office without taking off his coat and announced the brainwave.²⁵

Convinced of the merit of the idea, Deutsch told Maurice Lamontagne, St. Laurent's economic adviser, of his conversation with Pickersgill. Lamontagne in turn advised St. Laurent to put the money into arts and education. St. Laurent was already convinced of the need to assist post-secondary education, but was wary about putting money into the arts. In July of 1956, St. Laurent asked Lamontagne to suggest a subject he might speak about in an address scheduled in November to the National Conference of Canadian Universities. Lamontagne told him of Deutsch's idea for using the duties from the Killam and Dunn estates and suggested announcing the creation of the Canada Council.²⁶ Having already been approached by Pickersgill, St. Laurent consulted C.D. Howe, Minister of trade and commerce and Canada's virtual economic Tsar, about the idea. Although Howe was reluctant at first, he finally agreed, and St. Laurent told Lamontagne to prepare his November speech with the Canada Council in mind.²⁷

Two months after announcing the Canada Council at the National Conference of Canadian Universities, a resolution to establish the Council was moved. During debate in the Commons, familiar concerns were voiced. There were fears that the Canada Council would be infiltrated by communists. Some felt the national and provincial cultural institutions already in place were dealing adequately with the cultural life of the country. Other argued that culture should not be centralized under one institution.²⁸ John Diefenbaker remarked: "\$100 million for eggheads; six bucks for old-age

pensioners."

Despite his own concerns, St. Laurent gave the bill a vigorous defence during the Commons debate, "Governments should, I feel, support the cultural development of the nation, but not attempt to control it."²⁹ Brooke Claxton, the Council's first chair later remarked:

The submissions to the Massey Commission registered widespread support from numerous organizations for the Canada Council [and the] bill introduced by the St. Laurent government met with little opposition. The only contrary votes in the two Houses were given by eight Social Credit members on the score that something more should first be done for old age pensioners.³⁰

Examining the Commons debate, Robert Weaver observed that:

There was little wit, passion, or learning in that debate, and no sense of historical perspective whatsoever. Mr Coldwell condensed the history of patronage into one short paragraph and that was all. The Prime Minister, who conducted the resolution and the bill almost alone for the government, got his brief for his opening statement from the Massey Report, from which he did not diverge in any important particular. The Conservative spokesmen, while supporting the resolution, got no further than an attempt to make the financial accounting of the Council to Parliament part of their theme of parliamentary sovereignty. . . . [T]here was no real discussion of the state of the arts in Canada, and, except for the general question of finances, no real inquiry into the changing functions of the university in the community.³¹

The Bill to establish the Council was passed on February 15, 1957, and the Act establishing it received royal assent on March 28. The Council itself was to consist of a 21-member board and was to administer two funds: a \$50 million capital grant fund for universities; and a \$50 million endowment fund, the earnings from which would support a program for grants and

scholarships for the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The Council's mandate was identical to that proposed by the Massey commission: "to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in the arts, humanities and social sciences." How the Council was to do this was left undefined. The Act also indicated that "the Canada Council is not an agent of Her Majesty." Its relationship to the government was to be an arm's-length one. The Council was not directly responsible to the government and was not subject to political supervision or demands. The director, the associate director, and members of the Council's board were to be politically appointed. However, its employees would not be subject to public service regulations or to the rules and procedures of the Treasury Board. While the Council would set its own policies, it would be obliged to report to Parliament each year through the appropriate minister and to have its finances subject to examination by the Auditor General. It would also be able to accept gifts and to carry money forward from one year to another. This gave the Council a status somewhere between that of a public agency and that of a private foundation.

In October of 1956, before St. Laurent announced the government's plans for the Council, Brooke Claxton had received a telephone call from the prime minister asking him, on Pickersgill's recommendation, if he would agree to be the Council's first chairman.³² Claxton accepted and immediately went to work on getting the Council operational. He began by suggesting

names to St Laurent for the Council's director, board, and investment committee. He wanted general ability to be the main criterion of selection, rather than regional representation or specialized knowledge.³³

In the end, St Laurent chose Albert Trueman as director – the one man whom Claxton had not wanted.³⁴ Trueman had served as president of the universities of Manitoba and New Brunswick and as chairman of the National Film Board, and Claxton said he liked him personally. But he was worried that no one in the arts or academic communities seemed enthusiastic about his appointment.

The order-in-council establishing the Canada Council and naming its members and principle officers was issued on April 15, 1957. In addition to Claxton and the vice-chair, Father Georges-Henri Levèsque, nineteen members were appointed to the Council. They included well-known academics, businessmen, cultural figures and public figures. On March 20, 1957, Claxton had written to Walter Gordon that "getting the Canada Council set up is worse than forming a cabinet. This really is the damndest place for people to disagree whenever anyone suggests the name of someone for anything."³⁵ In the end, the Council was as carefully balanced as any cabinet. There were representatives from every province, four French-Canadians, and four women. All the members were either good Liberals or politically acceptable to the Liberal party. Some had no connection or experience with the arts and no preparation for judging questions concerning the arts or

learning. For Claude Bissell, who succeeded Claxton as chair, the saving grace was the Council's permanent staff. "Thank goodness," he wrote to Trueman, "we have this rock to fall back upon, since I can't honestly say that the Council collectively is as wise and informed as it is handsome and amiable."³⁶

Three days before the order-in-council was issued establishing the Canada Council, St Laurent called a general election. The Liberals were defeated and John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government was sworn in on June 21, 1957. Claxton later wrote that the establishment of the Council was one of the factors that led to the defeat of the Liberals. While the Canada Council did not "of itself induce many unfavourable votes," it was seen by Claxton as one of many things that made the government seem inconsiderate and arrogant. It was

another example of the government going ahead with something which it thought good for the people but which in fact was spending the people's money in ways they had never considered and on objects of which they might heartily disapprove. . . . However desirable it may have been, the establishment of the Canada Council was premature in 1956, and given the atmosphere of 1957 was an element, whether large or small is a matter of opinion, in the build up of sentiment hostile to the government on one of the main counts scored against it, the charge of arrogant indifference to the people's wishes.³⁷

David Bercuson claims that this was an exaggeration. The Canada Council was not an election issue, and Diefenbaker did not seek out Claxton's resignation.

Claxton had assumed that his five-year term at the Council would

proceed under the Liberals. When the Liberals were defeated, he asked Governor General Vincent Massey whether he should resign. Massey advised him that "it would be as much as to say that the chairmanship of the Council and the Council itself were political. Diefenbaker would probably be embarrassed by any such action."³⁸ Claxton stayed on as chair until his death in June 1960.

The Endowment Fund Years at the Council

Although Brooke Claxton was appointed as chair, he believed that the administration of the Council was best left to its staff. He adopted the role of "defender and spokesman rather than supervisor."³⁹ Trueman would do most of the work at the Council, and though the relations between Claxton and Trueman were never close, they had great respect for each other's dedication and ability. According to Bercuson,

Claxton did not try to dominate the administration. He relied heavily on Trueman's advice while Trueman would frequently consult Claxton on policy matters. Claxton insisted that the council follow Trueman's recommendations as closely as possible on the awarding of grants. Trueman contributed to policy discussions, but policy development was primarily the purview of Claxton and the council, with Claxton heavily influencing the early direction that the council took.⁴⁰

Trueman was mainly interested in the humanities and social sciences and left the arts side of the Council's workings to Peter Dwyer, the supervisor of the arts program. Born in London, England, Dwyer had always been

heavily involved in the arts community and, unknown to most, had been an officer with the British intelligence service from 1939 to 1949. He had held security-related positions at the National Research Council and in the Privy Council Office, but in the early 1950s began to move toward the arts.⁴¹ An integral part of the Council from 1958 to 1972, he became assistant director in 1963, associate director in 1965 and director in 1969. Under his leadership, the Council established a strong standard of consultation with the artistic community, set up a system of professional peer juries to advise on grants, and consistently turned to artists for advice on important decisions.

Trueman drew on the experience of major American foundations. In particular, Dean Rusk of the Rockefeller Foundation told him that there would never be enough money available to deal with all legitimate proposals; the Council would have to decide between competing projects. Often the Council's choices would be arbitrary, and it was thus important not to give reasons why decisions were made. Rusk also warned that organizations would approach the Council saying they were certain to collapse without assistance, and advised Trueman not to regard such misfortunes as operating principles.⁴² Funding decisions should be made on the basis of excellence.

Basing decisions on excellence was to cause difficulties for the Council. As a government-funded organization, it was required to take into consideration factors such as regionalism. There was also the question of whether it should support amateur and grass roots ventures or limit its

support to full-time professional artists and organizations likely to achieve a degree of national prominence. As Peter Dwyer asked "Do we water the field? Or the flower?"

The Council had what Gwyn has described as an "almost evangelical sense of mission" and succeeded, in its early years, because "the profile was kept deliberately low, the staff minuscule. For eight years, Dwyer and a single assistant ran the whole arts show."⁴³ The Council approached this time period as a time to "learn their jobs, develop as an institution, and make no noise. They asked for no favours, carefully invested their endowment, and dreamed of a more expansive future."⁴⁴

Partly as a result of "making no noise," the early Council went unnoticed by politicians as well as the public. According to Audrey Forester, it "functioned virtually as a private foundation."⁴⁵ The primary reason for its insulation from political forces, however, was the fact that all of its operations were financed out of income from the original endowment. As Frank Milligan points out, "in the absence of any annual demands on the government's expenditure budget, and of any appropriation items to trigger parliamentary debates, the politicians had little cause to interest themselves in the Council's operations."⁴⁶

Nonetheless, the Council did not keep itself entirely isolated from politics. The first meeting of the Council was held on May 1, 1957, at which Claxton proposed that the government use the Council to help plan for the

centennial of Confederation. In a letter to Diefenbaker on December 12, 1958, Claxton wrote:

This present letter is to offer the services of the Canada Council in any way that the government may see fit to make use of them in this connection. For example you might feel that you would like us to cause to be prepared for submission to the government a proposal for a national celebration and festival here, and for festivals coordinated as to time and, to some extent as to programme, across the country. We have in Canada today a group of organizations and individual artists of the highest standards who increasingly enjoy international recognition. Their services could be secured and planned so as to best employ them to reach the largest number of people in every part of Canada.⁴⁷

At a meeting of the Council in November of 1959, several members of the Council expressed opposition in this matter and suggested that the Council not take the initiative. Dr. N. Mackenzie expressed the opinion that if the government could push their responsibility on to anyone else, they would. "[The Council] should not be in a position of carrying the ball. The federal government in conjunction with the provincial governments is the body to take the load, to set up the committee, and to provide the finances."⁴⁸ He feared that if the Council took over responsibility for the celebrations it would consume all the time and energy of the Council and a considerable amount of its funds. Francis Leddy warned: "There may be some aspects of this celebration that we wouldn't want the Canada Council's name attached to."⁴⁹ He suggested instead that the Council's role be to make awards to people in the field of the arts, commission a symphony, or organize a cross-country tour for a good Canadian company -- something more in line with

the Council's mandate.

The Council quietly attempted to gain favour with the government. And according to Granatstein, "Diefenbaker generally treated the Council well, despite the coolness of some Opposition members in 1956-7 when the agency was created."⁵⁰ Diefenbaker did not, however, treat Trueman nearly as well.

When Claxton passed away in 1960, Claude Bissell, president of the University of Toronto, was appointed as chair. Bissell immediately took steps to increase the salaries of Trueman and his associate director, Eugene Bussière. As the Minister responsible for the Council, however, the Prime Minister had the final say and while Bussière's salary increase was routinely approved, Trueman's was limited to \$1 000. According to Trueman, it was later discovered that Diefenbaker had said: "Trueman's a Grit and his son Peter's a Grit, and writes columns in the Montreal Star criticizing me and my government. Why should I raise his salary?"⁵¹ Trueman's salary was not adjusted until the government changed in 1963.

Between 1957 and 1964, the original \$50 million of the University Capital Grants Fund grew through investment to about \$64 million. Of that sum, \$38 million was distributed in the form of 150 grants to universities. Approximately one third of that money, or about \$12 million, was used for arts buildings. The balance was used for halls of residence, libraries, classrooms, and auditoriums, as well as other buildings to house the fine arts,

architecture, and the social sciences. The Council took great satisfaction in this tangible evidence of its work. However, Trueman predicted that “unless additional sums are put in the fund, it will disappear in three or four years’ time.”⁵²

With support from the Council, by the mid-1960s there was a string of successful theatres across the country from the Neptune in Halifax to Stratford, to the Playhouse in Vancouver. There was also a boom in painting and sculpture. The country’s orchestras and ballet companies were becoming internationally known and respected. And about a fifth of the Council’s budget was going to support individual artists. Though all of this went on with little recognition from the public and politicians, it did not take long for the arts community to realize that there was an organization in Ottawa that believed artists were valuable members of society. In 1961, after viewing the rows of Council filing cabinets in its Ottawa office, Leonard Cohen marvelled: “Gee, all this for the arts?”⁵³

Until 1964, the Council’s scholarship and arts grants operations were financed by income from the \$50 million Endowment Fund. Its investment committee had little freedom to manoeuvre and operated under restraints intended to prevent accusations of recklessness. But despite these restraints, the return on its investments was quite good, given the healthy interest rates of the period.⁵⁴ It soon became evident, nonetheless, that there was not enough money to meet the increasing demands of the arts community.

Although the capital sum of the fund had increased by about 20 per cent through investment and two substantial gifts, by 1964 the Council only had about \$3 million to distribute annually. The fund, said Trueman, was being "pushed to the utmost limit of our present resources. The demand for scholarships and fellowships, particularly those in the academic sphere, is increasing at a rapid, even alarming rate, and will continue so to increase for some years to come... The Canada Council's income, however, is increasing very slowly."⁵⁵

Some believed that arts grants should be temporary and lead to independence; that subsidies should diminish over time. They argued that the Canada Council should help arts organizations get on their feet and then let them to pay their own way. But as Robert Fulford was later to explain:

A cultural subsidy almost never works that way. In fact, it goes in the opposite direction: the better a company gets, and the more acclaim it receives, the larger are its demands on the public purse... Almost everyone who becomes involved in arts subsidies begins by thinking they are temporary; almost everyone ends up resigned to the fact that they are permanent.⁵⁶

This pattern showed itself in the Canada Council's clients. By the mid-1960s, the Council was running into financial problems. It was becoming swamped with applications from artists and arts organizations. Every grant awarded seemed to create the need for more and larger grants. Everyone seemed to be short of money, and the Council realized that the endowment of the St. Laurent years was not enough to support the arts community in the way it

was mandated to do.

The Council's activities had stimulated escalating demands on its limited funds and its concerns began to shift away from whom to support toward how to find enough money to support the increasing artistic demands and expectations its success had produced. In November of 1960 it asked the Prime Minister to increase its income by \$500,000. For this to occur, the endowment fund had to be increased by \$10 million, and the Prime Minister rejected this option. As Bissell later recalled, "when we appeared before Diefenbaker to present our brief for money, he suggested that the council might take over sports and thus get more money and win wider recognition." Samuel Bronfman, a member of the board who was present that day, whispered hoarsely to Bissell "tell him we'll do it," but Bissell and Trueman refused to take this suggestion seriously.⁵⁷ Two days later, Bissell requested that the endowment might be increased by \$2 million instead. This request was also turned down. The economic situation of the country had deteriorated since 1957, the post-war budget surpluses had vanished, and the government felt it would be difficult to get public support for increases to arts funding when more urgent expenditures were needed to produce immediate employment.

In March of 1964, the Council asked the new Liberal government under Pearson to add \$10 million to the Endowment Fund in each of the following three years. In March of 1965, the government agreed to give the Council

increased support, but not in the form requested. A study was underway on university funding and suggestions had been heard that the humanities and social sciences be taken away from the Council. Until the government had the recommendations of this report, it did not want to make any final decisions. Instead of an addition to the Endowment Fund, it agreed to make a one time donation of \$10 million to the Council, to be spent over an unspecified period of time. This donation introduced a new method of financing the Council, that of making an appropriation for a period of years.

The Council's annual report for that year stated:

The Council is aware of the possible implications of this method, but is completely confident that its independence will not be interfered with, particularly since the grant is an unconditional one, designed, in the most general terms, to enable the Council to meet its minimum foreseeable requirements during the next few years.

The possibility of dividing the Council was unanimously opposed by the Council. It felt such a split would destroy the relationship between the arts and the humanities and social sciences. It thought the real problem was one of money, not of organization, and that the endowment fund should be increased so that the Council could better meet the needs of the humanities and social sciences.⁵⁸ The Canadian Universities Foundation agreed. It submitted a brief to the Prime Minister in March of 1963 in which it stated: "We believe the Canada Council to be the most appropriate agency for support of the humanities and social sciences and for the provision of funds for the improvement of libraries. But the income from its Endowment fund

is much too inadequate to enable it to respond to these needs."⁵⁹ For the moment, the government did nothing, and the Council continued to serve both the arts and the humanities and social sciences.

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Chapter Two: Secretary of State, Unified Cultural Policy, and the Canada Council (1965-1980)

The Canada Council and Secretary of State under Maurice Lamontagne: A New Relationship and Open Dialogue

When the Liberals returned to power in 1963 under the leadership of Lester B. Pearson, the department of Secretary of State began a period of reconstruction which included an expansion of its responsibilities. Various cultural agencies, including the Canada Council, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, the Board of Broadcast Governors, the National Gallery, and the National Museum were grouped together under the responsibility of the Secretary of State. Before then, different ministers had had responsibility for different cultural agencies. The Prime Minister had submitted the Canada Council's reports to Parliament. By 1965 the Pearson government had taken various steps toward transforming the Secretary of State into a ministry of culture of sorts. Schafer later pointed out that "without naming it as such, the government had established a Department of Cultural Affairs, with a minister who was to devote most of his time to the development of the arts in Canada."¹ As Woodcock later observed, although this development provided the Council with a strong voice in Cabinet, it also "threw into doubt the practical validity of the crucial clause of the Canada Council Act -- that 'the Council is not an Agent of Her Majesty.'"²

With Maurice Lamontagne's appointment as Secretary of State in

February of 1964, a sustained dialogue began between the arts community and the Secretary of State department, which was now responsible for cultural affairs. Organized by the Centennial Commission in collaboration with the Canadian Conference of Arts, "Seminar 65," which took place in January of 1965, was an example of this dialogue. Nearly 150 artists and representatives of government agencies were invited to attend the seminar. Lamontagne, accompanied by three civil servants, gave the opening address in which he asked for the participants' opinion on the advantages of establishing a Consultative Arts Council, similar to the Economic Council of Canada. He was in effect proposing that the Canada Council be linked more directly to the department of Secretary of State. Although participants did not reject the idea directly, they recommended that the Canada Council maintain its present role.³

The participants at Seminar 65 heaped praise on the Council for impartiality in its judgments and made two noteworthy recommendations. First they recommended that the Council continue to be the principal agency for distributing funds to the arts, whether from the government or other sources. Secondly, they recommended that the Council's revenues be greatly increased -- quadrupled -- preferably through increasing its endowment or, alternatively, through annual grants. The participants were aware that an increase in financing through the endowment would require a substantially larger investment than the government would be willing to grant. The

Council itself had made a similar appeal in March of 1964. Shortly after the seminar in March of 1965, the government made a one-time grant of \$10 million to the Council.

The Beginning of Annual Appropriations

This grant was intended to last for three years, but was in fact spent in two. In late 1966, therefore, Jean Boucher, who had succeeded Trueman as director of the Council the year before, sought the help of Lamontagne to obtain an additional \$17 million from the federal government to sustain its 1967-68 program, primarily for the support of the humanities and social sciences. The Treasury Board expressed concern at this seemingly significant departure from the Council's way of conducting its affairs. However, as Frank Milligan notes, "the regular processes of the Board were short-circuited and the request was carried to Cabinet where it gained a ready acceptance."⁴ By campaigning on the Pearson government's doorstep, Boucher obtained not only a \$17 million but also gained agreement in principle that the Council should benefit from annual parliamentary grants. The Council would no longer need to request special funds. It would receive financial support from the government on an annual basis through parliamentary appropriations. In a telegram sent to Canada Council Board Members on December 2, 1966, Boucher wrote:

Minister announced in the House today government decision to recommend seventeen million dollar grant next year and escalation subsequent years at same rate as Research Council. Minister's presentation curtailed because of business rush in the house unfortunately referred only to need for increase in funds for research programme. However if members are asked whether the arts programme will share in the increase their answer should be that there will also be substantial increase in that direction but my advice would be to avoid discussing the proportion that each programme will eventually get. I hope everyone agrees this is no small victory.⁵

The money the Council received each year in the form of an appropriation was termed an "Unconditional annual Government Grant." But it lead to increasing scrutiny in Parliamentary committees by M.P.s for whom the Council was now just another government agency.⁶ For his part, Boucher shrugged these concerns off, saying: "We may be starting to live a bit dangerously, but that's the difference between being poor but proud and rich but vulnerable."⁷

The decision to underwrite the Council's budget was based in part on the Council's inability to support both cultural production and the social sciences and humanities.⁸ It owed very little to devotion to the arts. Universities across the country had recently protested the federal government's apparent abandonment of universities to the provinces. At the 1966 federal-provincial conference, the government had announced a fiscal transfer arrangement to replace its direct grants to universities. According to Frank Milligan,

the approval of a large grant to the Canada Council, primarily for the support of research and graduate studies, had all the earmarks of an act

of appeasement, if not of atonement. But the Council was free to devote its parliamentary funds to both scholarship and the arts – although scholarship received the greater share – and over the next three years the arts continued to float upwards to a state of relative affluence as an indirect consequence of the popular esteem enjoyed by science throughout that period.⁹

The greater part of Council spending remained on education and research rather than the arts. From 1967 through to 1971, prosperous years of steady economic growth in Canada, only one third of the grants awarded by the Council went to the arts.

In return for annual appropriations, the Council agreed to submit its program spending plans to the Treasury Board – like any other government department or agency. Treasury Board bureaucrats would then assess its plans and arrive at an appropriation. However, they also insisted on apportioning beforehand the way the Council was to split these funds between the arts and the humanities and social sciences. The Council agreed to respect the fixed ratio arrived at by the Treasury Board for proportioning the funds, while retaining the freedom to spend as it wished within each sector. Eventually, what began as a painstaking analysis by the Treasury Board to arrive at the ratio, became ritualistic. As Milligan explains:

Support for the arts was calculated each year within a context that included such other activities as those of the CBC, the National Film Board, the National Museums and the National Arts Centre. Provision for the humanities and social sciences was settled by applying a more-or-less uniform (and more-or-less arbitrary) rate of increase to this part of the appropriation and to the granting of the Medical Council and the National Research Council.¹⁰

The particular nature of the Council and the activities under its

direction were not well understood by the Treasury Board and often led to conflict between the two bodies. In March of 1971, there was concern at the Council over the Board's interpretation of the budget forecast the Council had submitted for 1972-73. The main concern was over the Board's interpretation of what was an "A" and a "B" budget in the case of the Council. "A" budgets were intended to allow a department or organization to carry on the same level of services as the past year, while "B" budgets were to provide for the costs of new services or the expansion of existing services. As Dwyer explained in a memorandum to the Council, the officials of the Treasury Board had decided that "all grants or contributions made by any department or agency could only be accepted in an "A" level budget at the same dollar level as 1971-72. . . . [T]he philosophy behind this attitude is that all grants are controllable expenses, and that Treasury Board must maintain a right not to accept any increases in grants in the "A" level budget."¹¹ Because the Council's budget made provisions for increased costs and salaries of the Council's client organizations, it could not be approved.

In a letter to Al Johnson, Secretary of the Treasury Board, Dwyer expressed his concern over the way it was treating the Council as just another government department.

We are [...] dealing with a section of society that has for a long time been badly underpaid, and we have consequently been fighting a battle over the years to bring at least some of them up to a reasonable wage level. This letter is in effect a plea to you to be good enough to consider these problems and possibly discuss them further with your staff before

the decisions which we understand are to be made on Friday, so that a continuing form of assistance which is vital to the life of the arts and research in this country is recognized as an inescapable element of the New Year cost of carrying on the same level of service.¹²

After discussing the problem with the assistant-secretary of the Treasury Board and the director of the Social and Cultural Programs Division, Dwyer wrote a memorandum to the Council stating that the Treasury Board "appears to understand the difficulty and to be by no means unsympathetic."¹³ He reported that the Treasury Board seemed to recognize the impracticality of not allowing "A" Budget increases and that the Treasury Board would work toward a new general policy in this respect.

The Massey Commission had stated: "We should consider it a misfortune if this Canada Council became in any sense a department of the government." And for eight years, the original 1957 grant sheltered the Council from dependence. But as Granatstein points out, "if the government was to put up the money, as it began to do on a regular basis after 1967, clearly it could be expected to attempt to impose its priorities on the Canada Council."¹⁴

Audrey Forester explains that while its peer-evaluation policy had insulated the grant selection process from political interference, the Council "experienced growing difficulty in maintaining an arm's-length relationship with the government in the face of persistent efforts to subsume its policies and priorities within a unified framework of government objectives."¹⁵ The

new method of financing the Council through annual appropriations raised concerns among some of its administrators who were aware of the possibility of pressure being applied by outside forces. As early as 1960, six years before it received its first appropriation, the Council remarked in its annual report: "In the allocation of its funds, it is important that the Council remain a completely impartial agent attempting in no way to impose its own standards of taste." However, Jean Boucher emphasized that the appropriations were unconditional and stated that he felt assured that the Council's independence would be maintained. As Schafer later observed, "this event in the 1960s marked the beginning of a new relationship between the government and the Canada Council, which appreciably affected the evolution of federal arts policies."¹⁶

The Canada Council and Secretary of State under Gerard Pelletier:
Toward a Unified Cultural Policy

With the election of the Trudeau government in 1968, the Council was alternately "pummelled and ignored." It suffered under the antagonism of Gerard Pelletier, its own minister, who "persisted in his belief that the council was an elitist anachronism and chipped away relentlessly at its autonomy."¹⁷ It suffered the indifference of Pierre Trudeau, who placed the Council so low among his priorities that he let it limp through most of a year without a

director. And it suffered the competition of "upstart" organizations such as Opportunities For Youth and the Local Initiative Program which were showered with millions of dollars while the Council observed from afar.

In 1968 Gerard Pelletier was appointed Secretary of State. Holding responsibility for all cultural policies, Pelletier had a significant impact on the growth of the arts in Canada and on the government's relationship with the Canada Council. In a speech to the Montreal Board of Trade in October of 1968, Pelletier noted the Secretary of State's role as a pseudo-ministry of cultural affairs and outlined how the government had established many agencies to ensure the development of Canadian culture. He then announced the government's intention to co-ordinate all activities through a broad cultural policy. In other words, the government would no longer be content to pursue various cultural goals in a random manner.¹⁸

Pelletier proposed that cultural policy comprise three basic elements: clearly defined objectives; tools, instruments and means for achieving the set objectives; and planning with a timetable. Among the objectives later defined at the First National Forum on Cultural Policy held in 1970 by the Canadian Conference of the Arts were: democratization, decentralization, pluralism, federal-provincial cooperation, and international cooperation.

The Office of the Secretary of State was not happy with the Council's interpretation of its mandate and its continued determination to develop its own policies. In June of 1968, Peter Dwyer received a copy of a memorandum

sent from G. S. E. (Ernie) Steele, the Under Secretary of State, to the Minister on the subject of arts and cultural policy. Steele wrote:

I have had several indications recently that the functions of this Department in relation to the arts and cultural policy are not fully understood. In particular, for instance, it has been suggested that the Prime Minister takes the view that the Government has entirely delegated responsibility for arts and cultural policy to the Canada Council, and that the Secretary of State should not be making grants for these purposes. It is probably true that this was the intention when the Canada Council was established. If so, the fact must have been overlooked that a Government cannot practically delegate to an independent body the formulation of policy at the highest level. . . . [S]ince the Council is independent of Ministerial direction, there is no guarantee that its policies and priorities will always coincide with those desired by the Government.¹⁹

In its efforts to create a unified cultural policy for arts funding, the Secretary of State found the Council and its unique status to be troublesome.

Steele went on to explain that the government must retain the right to make grants in those areas where the Council generally does not make grants, including capital expenditures and the promotion of amateur arts and crafts, and that he had been working closely with the Council to ensure there was no duplication or conflict. He wrote: "The broad line of policy that has developed is that the Department should recommend grants only for purposes that are clearly of general national benefit."²⁰ The direction of this policy line was clearly at odds with the Council's own policy. The Council was not willing to substitute its standards of excellence for standards of "general national benefit."

While the Canada Council was not opposed to the awarding of such grants, it was not convinced that they should be distributed by the government rather than itself. In a confidential letter written in July of 1968 to Michael Pitfield of the Privy Council, Dwyer wrote:

You know that the Secretary of State's office has in the past made a number of grants to what may be described as "support" organizations in the arts or to organizations which link the arts with social interests - the Folk Arts Council, for instance. We would not wish to raise any objection to this, though we are not entirely persuaded that there is any very compelling reason why we are not left with the funds and responsibility. Of course, we fully recognize the important function of the Secretary of State's office in making policy and in coordinating relations between the various agencies and offices of the government concerned with the arts in ways other than that of subsidy.²¹

In May of 1969, Pelletier met with all directors of federal cultural agencies to reiterate his goals and objectives for cultural policy and to invite the directors to re-examine their activities in light of these objectives so they could coordinate their efforts toward common goals. According to Schafer, "the directors of the agencies were both pleased to find themselves seated around the same table to discuss common problems, and uneasy about their future relations with the government."²² It was understood that meetings between Pelletier and the directors would be held on an annual basis. Pelletier envisaged these meetings as the principle means through which efforts by the cultural agencies could be coordinated toward common goals.

On 17 June, 1969, the Cabinet agreed that the Secretary of State should prepare a proposal for an overall policy on cultural matters for consideration

by the Cabinet. The Canada Council drafted a memorandum to the Cabinet in which it suggested the need to establish certain principles within which a definitive cultural policy could be developed.

The agencies for which the Secretary of State is responsible or acts as a spokesman enjoy varying degrees of autonomy which, it is generally conceded, should be rigorously preserved. Nevertheless, there are areas of what might be termed Government policy in cultural matters which may not fall within the mandate of any of the agencies, or which rate only a low priority in terms of the constituting statute, or for which inadequate agency funds are available. Clearly, it would be contrary to the intentions of Parliament to use Ministerial authority for the approval of operating budgets as a means of putting pressure on the agencies in programming matters. A much less undesirable alternative would be to provide certain funds to be used by the Secretary of State for special programs of national character, after they have been approved by the Treasury Board or Cabinet, which would complement or supplement the programs of the agencies.²³

The Council agreed there were areas where it was appropriate and necessary for funds to be distributed by the Secretary of State. However, it did not want funds to be distributed in areas it was mandated to serve. Specifically, it felt that only the Council should make grants to individual artists and arts organizations.

The Council was concerned about the direction the Secretary of State's approach to a unified cultural policy might take and the impact it could have on the relationship between the Council and the government. In February of 1970, Peter Dwyer met with Prime Minister Trudeau to discuss the government's denial of the Council's request for additional funds for its Humanities and Social Sciences program. In confidential notes about this

discussion, Dwyer wrote that, after stating that he understood the reasons for the Cabinet decision not to provide additional funds,

I went on to say that the Council was nevertheless very concerned at the second part of the Cabinet Decision which emphasized the importance that the Government attached to a new approach to the Social Sciences which could provide answers to important national problems. The fact that this was a direction seemed to represent a significant shift in the Government's relations with the Council and an erosion of its autonomy – even though autonomy and an appropriation of \$24.2 million required a delicate balance. The Prime Minister said that he could see no reason why the Canada Council should be exempted from the current and general government requirement that expenditures of public funds should be directed to the present needs of our society. . . . I said that considerable funds were already being spent by other government departments and agencies for mission-oriented research which the Council's policy helped to make possible. To this the Prime Minister replied that he felt that the Council had a very reasonable case to make and that it should make it to the ministers.²⁴

According to Sandra Gwyn, however, by 1970 the lines of communication between Secretary of State Pelletier and the Council were virtually nonexistent: "Pelletier's strategy was to circumvent the council. He hardly ever asked for its advice, and sat down with its members precisely once in four years."²⁵ Although Naim Kattan, the Literary Arts Officer and a former colleague of Pelletier at La Presse, was able to convince Pelletier to let the Council administer a new million dollar fund for aid to publishing, almost all other new programs for the arts were channelled through freshly created bureaucracies.

The core of the problem was a conflict of cultural traditions. Although the Canada Council had been established as an arm's-length organization,

Gwyn claims that Pelletier saw culture as a sociopolitical tool and felt that federal cultural agencies “were to become arms of the body politic, implementing decisions taken by the minister and his staff.”²⁶ This approach was directly at odds with the British-derived principle of delegated responsibility upon which the Council was founded with the Council acting as a nonpolitical buffer between government and client.

In the early 1970s, Pelletier launched the Opportunities for Youth (OFY) program and the Local Initiatives Program (LIP). The OFY program enabled young people to undertake projects of their own devising, many of which were artistic and cultural. The LIP was intended to create jobs for the unemployed, and many young people obtained grants through it for artistic projects. These programs, which were essentially devised to create employment, also helped attain the objectives of democratization and decentralization contained in the federal cultural policy. The funds that were granted for artistic and cultural projects were distributed by offices across the country and were used primarily for amateur undertakings.

At the Council there were many hard feelings toward Pelletier and the new OFY and LIP initiatives. The OFY and LIP were lavishing money on cultural projects. Close to 20% of OFY’s budget went toward cultural projects and the LIP spent nearly as much on theatre as the Council itself did. According to Gwyn, “rather than grasp the initiative and try to meet Pelletier halfway, the council’s response was to retreat into itself, harping on its

independence, nursing memories of past glories."²⁷ The damage was not so much to the council's self esteem as it was to the "ecology of grant giving." As Gwyn explains, "the councils standards were those of excellence, professionalism and continuity. The new grants, awarded to groups with idealistic intentions and job-creating potential, made a mockery of those criteria and raised expectations that couldn't be fulfilled."²⁸

With Dwyer's passing in 1971, the position of director was offered to several university administrators, all of whom turned down the position. Trouble at the Council was rising. At stake was not just a \$40 million cultural program, but the shape and direction the arts in Canada would take. After drifting for fourteen months without a director, Andre Fortier was appointed director of the Council. A long time civil servant with a background as a statistician and administrator, Fortier did not have a strong knowledge of the arts, but had many good connections and both the Council's staff and the arts community were pleased with his appointment. Despite his lack of arts experience, Fortier had spent twenty years in government and knew "how and when to shake the money tree."²⁹ Fortier's stint in Pelletier's department had influenced his thinking: he planned to rid the Council of any elitist image and introduce more of a cultural democracy to the Council. Being a political realist, he decided that it was too late to take over the cultural

components of OFY and LIP.* Instead, he developed plans for alternate programs within the Council to address unemployment while maintaining the Council's traditional standards of excellence.

Beyond Accountability: The Use of Earmarked Funds

The 1970s brought another major change to the method of financing the Council when Pelletier implemented a system of allocating funds to arts agencies for specific programs. Money earmarked for particular purposes now began to be included in annual appropriations. This policy became problematic for the Canada Council, which is supposed to have an arm's-length relationship with the government. The first earmarked funds were granted in 1972 and were conceived of jointly by the Secretary of State and the Council. These funds were intended to subsidize the Canadian publishing trade, which was in a state of crisis. There were no political strings attached to the funds, but there was still some uneasiness over the potentially compromising effect earmarked funds could have on the Council's independence.

* Both the LIP and OFY were politically inspired and primarily aimed at solving unemployment problems. A secondary effect was the promotion of the arts. But these programs, and their resulting support for the arts were at the mercy of changes in government employment policy and by the end of 1975, when the principle of participatory democracy began to disappear from government policy statements, the programs virtually vanished (see Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows, p. 116).

Also in 1972, and under its own initiative, the Council established the Art Bank on a special allocation requested from the government. The Art Bank program had closely mingled advantages and disadvantages. It benefitted artists by providing a reliable major customer for their works. But such works would only be available for rent to government offices. As Woodcock explains,

the way the collection is administered takes art into the heart of the political realm, for instead of making the ... works it has accumulated available to the small-town galleries and museums of the hinterland, which would be an appropriate place for them, the Art Bank rents them to government offices, so that one can see them only when visiting bureaucrats. Art in these circumstances becomes an appendage of the workings of the state.³⁰

These initiatives ranked high on the Council's priority list and as a result the Council did not think control of its program had been pre-empted by the government. However, by 1977 the government was setting aside money under supplementary expenditure programs to further the objective of national unity. For example \$1.1 million was identified by the government as "thrust funds" to be used by the humanities and social sciences for prescribed purposes. The government also invited the Council to propose new activities that would contribute to national unity; these were to be financed out of a separate \$1.7 million supplementary expenditure fund. In each case, the Council was to propose the method of using the money, but it had to conform to objectives defined by the government. The next year \$900,000 was offered to the Council specifically to promote a national book

festival. Milligan explains that "in order to conform to the government's objectives in the program for national unity, the Council found it necessary to launch new forms of support for the arts which, in its own judgment, were less urgent than other needs for which funds were lacking."³¹

What made all of these earmarked funds especially questionable was that they came at a time when government was planning to cut general funding for the arts. The Council was uneasy about this development. In the 1978 annual report, Council chair Gertrude Lang wrote: "The willingness to fund 'national unity' through the arts, but not adequately to fund the arts themselves, is evidence of an attitude to cultural policy which gives me great concern."

The ambivalence of the Council toward earmarked funds was shared by some of its clientele. In reply to the Vancouver art community's agitation for greater funding for the arts, Pelletier agreed that more might be given, but added the caveat that they would find more strings attached to the public funds. The artists showed an overwhelming readiness to accept this arrangement.³²

In the summer of 1978, after Secretary of State John Roberts announced that provisions for new Art Bank purchases would be eliminated from the Council's 1979-80 appropriation, the Council decided it could no longer accept increased government interference in its affairs. Although it had accepted earmarked funds the Council was not prepared to let the government decide

what Council programs should be cut back. It was clear that earmarked funds coupled with continuous restraint would progressively diminish the Council's ability to act upon its assessments accordingly. At the risk of "enforced austerity, if not penury"³³ therefore, the Council decided to continue Art Bank purchases on a diminished scale by eliminating certain other activities, most of which had been launched with earmarked funds.

Roberts believed that the Council had betrayed him. He thought he had done his best to maintain the Council's grant in the face of inflation and had cut back the Art Bank out of necessity. But instead of receiving the Council's gratitude, he was confronted with open defiance. According to Fulford,

the word went through political Ottawa that the council was out of control, or at least could not be controlled by the minister who was reporting on its behalf to parliament and obtaining the council's funds from cabinet. This was an even more important event in the council's history than it seemed at the time: it made the council unpopular in the cabinet and among many senior civil servants.³⁴

A few months later, Roberts gave a speech in which he tried to put the Council back in its place. After asserting the Council's independence of judgment, Roberts insisted that there were some issues on which the government itself must make the major decisions. Questions such as: in what parts of the country should cultural institutions be located? Should economically deprived and geographically remote areas get special attention? Should Canadian content quotas be a factor? And what proportion of

revenue should be expected to come from the box office? He concluded by insisting that "the Canada Council must spend its operational support money in a way consistent with the answers."³⁵ Roberts was proposing an enlarged sphere of decision making for bureaucrats and politicians and a more limited role for the Council.

The Council was provided with a brief respite when Joe Clark's Progressive Conservative government entered office in 1979. Roberts left office displeased with the members and officers of the Council. David MacDonald, the new Secretary of State, restored money cut from Council funds and proposed more generous aid to publishing. More importantly, the roles of Secretary of State and Minister of Communications were merged under a single Cabinet minister. According to Woodcock, the shifting of responsibility for cultural agencies from the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Communications meant that these agencies "came into the province of civil service mandarins who gave assistance to the arts second place to the power and profit involved in establishing the lines of control for the rapidly developing communications technologies."³⁶

The Clark government was short lived, and the Liberals returned to power in 1980. Former Secretary of State John Roberts became Minister of the Environment. He continued, however, to concern himself with the affairs of the Council. In the spring of 1982, he held a conversation with Gordon Dowsley, a member of the Council's Board and the Council's

Financial Planning Officer, in which he expressed his concerns about the Art Bank program. According to Roberts, the program's purpose was simply to buy works of art for government buildings. Roberts also expressed the sentiment that when the Council decided to keep the Art Bank program going, it was in effect diverting money intended for specific objectives toward another program not sanctioned by the government. In correspondence with Roberts following this conversation, Dowsley wrote:

With respect to the purpose of the Art Bank, it is well documented that one of the reasons for its creation was to bolster the dealer network across Canada in order that the visual arts might flourish. . . . There are many [other] objectives for the Art Bank and I really must take issue with your statement that "the object is clear, it was to buy works for government buildings." The multiple objectives are documented and even are mentioned in the Dunton Report. In fact, the multiple objectives are the main reason for difficulty in precisely defining the program. Given this difference, it is obvious that I cannot agree with the criticism that we took the money for a specific objective and then said we will do what we want with it.³⁷

Clearly, the Council did not think that accepting earmarked funds placed them under the obligation to spend them precisely as the government directed. In the eyes of the Council, the government's policy of earmarking funds went beyond any accountability mechanism. Earmarked funds in combination with government directives to cut certain programs were increasingly interfering with the Council's autonomy to set and act upon its own policies. Roberts' reply to Dowsley's letter illustrates how the government itself rarely views its interactions with the Council in terms of interference:

My basic point about the Art Bank was this: it was established not as a Canada Council program originally, but as a program which the Council administered on behalf of the government. The government was within its rights (whether it was wise or not is another question) in cutting back funding in 1978 or 1979. That was not, as it has since been portrayed, an interference by government with the Council's program - it was a cutback on the government's own program. The Council decided, again quite properly, to pick up the program. So far as I remember, no one, certainly not I, complained that the Council was acting improperly. But the case was not one of government interfering with Council priorities.³⁸

In the same letter, Roberts questioned

whether the arms length relationship to forming cultural policies (note policies not peer judgement of awards) ultimately serves well cultural objectives since it detaches government engagement from these policies (since they are not the government's) at a time when more and more governments are disposed to fund their own priorities. Governments are less likely to be advocates of the arts, when arts policies are not their policies, than they will be if those policies are identified as government policies.³⁹

In effect Roberts was stating that unless it brought its policies into line with those of government cultural objectives, the Council could expect to receive less government support.

In 1984 the controversy over whether to accept earmarked funds was still alive at the Council. The twelve major performing arts organizations in Canada (the "Big 12") had gathered together to present a brief to Communications minister Francis Fox and Council director Timothy Porteous outlining their need for immediate extra funding in order to survive. The Big 12 hoped that the federal government would agree to pass on funds to the Council to be distributed among them alone. The Council held a meeting with representatives of the twelve groups to discuss the

matter further. According to the minutes of the meeting, Gordon Dowsley explained that

the Canada Council's mandate was to develop Canadian Culture. As such, it could not just support the performing arts, but must also be concerned with the non-performing arts as well. However, he commented that he personally did not have any problem accepting earmarked funds, although he felt that those on Council who defended arm's length funding will be opposed to it.⁴⁰

Maureen Forrester, chair of the Council, added that the Council could not give all of its funding to the large groups only.

Paul Reynolds of the Shaw Festival remarked that the Big 12 were not asking for exclusive access to available Council funds. Rather they were trying to get extra funding from the federal government on their own, which would ultimately remove pressure on the Council to provide them with extra funding. Walter Strothers of the Canadian Opera Company said that "the passing on of earmarked funds may represent some loss of power and independence to the Canada Council, but is better than the alternative of these groups receiving direct funding from the federal government."⁴¹ The Council agreed that the Big 12 were in desperate straits, but emphasized that what they failed to recognize was that the issue of accepting earmarked funds was more complicated than simply passing money from one group to another. In accepting earmarked funds, the Council would in effect be allowing the government (at the prompting of the Big 12 themselves) to set broad policy and priorities for the Council. Regardless of whether or not the

Council felt the Big 12 needed the money the most, it would not be up to the Council to decide how those extra funds would be divided amongst its existing programs. That choice would be made for them by the federal government. This would in effect reduce the Council's autonomy.

Paul Reynolds of the Shaw Festival, wrote to David Silcox, Assistant Deputy Minister of Communications, to explain his position on earmarked funds from the Department and to express his displeasure at the Council's, and specifically Timothy Porteous', lack of cooperation. Reynolds said that although the arm's-length principle was the best *modus operandi* for a funding organization like the Canada Council, this should not preclude the Minister's ability to give general direction to cultural policy and to review the activities and efficiency of the agencies it funds. In the long term, Reynolds admittedly feared the increased potential for political control of the funding process that this could lead to. But in the short term, he wanted the minister to have the power of directive and use it to ensure that the Council granted the specific request of the Big 12.⁴² He wanted the Council to administer directed funds for large organizations so as to avoid the red-tape of the ministries, and for individual grants to continue to be administered by an arm's-length Council. A firm believer in the importance of the arm's length principle, he was torn between the need for his organization to receive more funding and the need for arts funding to maintain independence from political intervention -- the same dilemma faced by the Council.

The Separation of the Social Science and Humanities from the Canada Council

While it rarely made the news, the bulk of the Council's money was spent supporting university research in the humanities and social sciences. By 1969, questions were being asked about whether or not sponsorship of the social sciences and humanities should be divorced from patronage of the arts. That year, the Macdonald Report, commissioned to examine the role of the federal government in the support of research in Canadian universities, was released. One item addressed by the report was the role of the Canada Council. With regard to the Council, the report stated,

there are probably no two fields of human intellectual endeavour much further apart in their nature, needs and effective organization for productive results in the national interest than the arts and the social sciences. To combine responsibility for both and also for the humanities in one organization makes the appointment of a governing body competent to formulate sound decisions respecting all the disparate interests entrusted to it, practically speaking, an insoluble problem.⁴³

The Macdonald Report recommended that the Canada Council be partitioned. The Council's director, Jean Boucher, rejected the report's conclusions, arguing instead for an increased co-existence and cooperation between various intellectual pursuits. "Before we rush into partition," he said, "we ought to think seriously about a National Council to support the variety of intellectual activities -- a council similar to the Ford Foundation or the Guggenheim. A council bigger and farther reaching than the Canada Council, not one smaller and more restrictive."⁴⁴

By the 1970s, however, the academic programs of the Council were under fierce questioning both inside the Council and out. Academic grants were awarded with no suggestion of what direction their research might take and no evaluation of the completed work. Questions about academic programs were raised in response to discussion of accountability and the public's right to know how its money was being spent. Another critical cry against the academic programs was that of the relevance of the work that was being supported. There were accusations that much of the work supported was either mediocre or served only to advance the career of the researcher, not to advance the state of knowledge. Gwyn reported that the Council was putting together a development section to review the content of existing Council-supported research and identify neglected areas. At the same time, the government was considering shifting this activity to a new research-granting board. Pelletier warned the Council in February 1972 that without some substantive arguments on behalf of the academic grant programs, he could not plead the case for program budget increases before cabinet.⁴⁵

In 1977 the government passed the Government Organization (Scientific Activities) Act. This represented government interference on a major scale in the affairs of the Canada Council. This law re-packaged the Council's support of scholarship under the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The prospect of this re-packaging had been looming since 1974. According to Milligan, the Council itself "had been

hesitant and equivocal in expressing its misgivings until the legislation became a reality – partly because its own members were divided in their feelings, and partly because of uncertainty about what changes in function and status the re-organization would bring.”⁴⁶ The passage of the Act evaporated any hesitation or uncertainty and openly abandoned the arm’s length principle in the field of humanities and social sciences. The new council was a government agency, a Crown corporation subject to most of the controls applied to departments. With the establishment of this new council, the Privy Council Office stated “the Government feels that a directive power [for government] of unlimited scope is appropriate.”⁴⁷ As Milligan later observed,

the Canada Council watched with rising apprehension as a growing burden of central controls was imposed on the programs, policies and administrative practices of its former humanities and social sciences branch. It required no feat of imagination to foresee the impact of comparable changes on its own operations.⁴⁸

Although no attempt was made at the time to similarly restrict the Canada Council, the threat was clearly there.

The Council was increasingly feeling the hand of government in its affairs. Torn between the need for increased funding and the desire to remain at arm’s length from the government, the Council accepted earmarked funds, implemented programs which were in line with overall government cultural policy, and voiced little opposition to the re-packaging of its social sciences and humanities programs. However, in the late 1970s, the Council began to

show a stiffening resistance to government interference. It decided not to transfer its Killam funds for the support of scientific research and scholarship to the new SSHRC, and insisted on continuing Art Bank purchases in the face of the federal government's decision to terminate funding for that purpose. This opposition to government interference in its affairs would escalate in the next decade under the leadership of Timothy Porteous.

Notes for Chapter Two

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3. Schafer and Fortier, Review of Federal Policy for the Arts in Canada, p. 18.
4. Frank Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," Love and Money: The Politics of Culture (Canada, 1980), p. 73.
5. Telegram to Canada Council Board Members, 2 December 1966 [NA, RG63, vol. 1350, file: Canada Council nominations for new members 1963-64]
6. Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows, p. 62.
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8. Ann Wilson, "A Jury of Her Peers," Canadian Theatre Review, no. 51, Summer 1987, p. 6.
9. Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," p. 73.
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12. Letter from Peter Dwyer to Al Johnson, 17 March 1971, [NA, RG63, vol. 1348, file: Budget (forecasts)]
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16. Schafer and Fortier, Review of Federal Policy for the Arts in Canada 1944-1988, p. 19.
17. Gwyn, "The Canada Council as an Endangered Species," p. 27.
18. Schafer and Fortier, Review of Federal Policy for the Arts in Canada 1944-1988, p. 26.
19. Under Secretary of State to Minister, memorandum re: Arts and Cultural Policy, 13 June 1968 [NA, RG63, vol. 1364, file: Secretary of State - Cultural Policy]
20. Under Secretary of State to Minister, memorandum re: Arts and Cultural Policy, 13 June 1968 [NA, RG63, vol. 1364, file: Secretary of State - Cultural Policy]
21. Dwyer to Pitfield, 12 July 1968 [NA, RG63, vol. 1364, file: Secretary of State - Cultural Policy]
22. Schafer and Fortier, Review of Federal Policy for the Arts in Canada 1944-1988, p. 27.
23. Preliminary Suggestions for draft Memorandum to Cabinet -- "Cultural Policy and Priorities" [NA, RG63, vol. 1364, file: Secretary of State - Cultural Policy]
24. Notes on a conversation with the Prime Minister, 24 February 1970 [NA, RG63, vol. 1348, file: Budget (forecasts)]
25. Gwyn, "The Canada Council as an Endangered Species," p. 84.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 86.
30. Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows, p. 117.
31. Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," pp. 75-76.

32. Ibid., p. 77.
33. Ibid.
34. Robert Fulford, "Federal Offense," Saturday Night, no. 99, September 1984, p. 5.
35. Ibid., p. 6.
36. Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows, p. 119.
37. Dowsley to Roberts, re: Canada Council Questions, 21 April 1982 [NA, MG31 D165, vol. 1]
38. Roberts to Dowsley, 17 June 1982 [NA, MG31 D165, vol. 1]
39. Ibid.
40. Minutes: meeting with members of the Canada Council and the Big 12, 18 July 1984 [NA, MG31 D165, vol. 1]
41. Ibid.
42. Paul Reynolds to David Silcox, 13 June 1984 [NA, MG28 I89, vol. 46, file 3]
43. Quoted in "Should the Canada Council?" Canadian Composer, no. 45, December 1969, p. 35.
44. Ibid., p. 37.
45. Gwyn, "The Canada Council as an Endangered Species," p. 86.
46. Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," p. 83.
47. Quoted in Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," p. 83.
50. Milligan, "The Ambiguities of the Canada Council," p. 83.

Chapter Three: Increased Government Interference: Legislation, Leadership and Administrative Restructuring (1980-1998)

Bill C-24: Accountability or Interference

In 1972 Trudeau appointed Timothy Porteous as the Council's associate director. Though he arrived at the Council as a Liberal appointee, Porteous stayed on to become "passionate servant" of the Council, fiercely loyal to its independent status. With the establishment of SSHRC in 1978, Porteous became the central force at the Canada Council. Not only did he shape Council policy, he acted as an advocate for the Council with government, press, and public, and made most of the crucial decisions.¹

In December of 1981, Charles Lussier, the Council's director stepped down. Porteous was the obvious person to replace Lussier. He had knowledge and experience and was a good administrator. He was admired by his staff and it was widely believed that senior staff at the Council would be dismayed if Porteous was not chosen as his successor. However, he had also developed enemies "and a prickliness that did him no good in Ottawa."² He had a long history of criticizing the way Ottawa viewed the arts and frequently expressed his opinions publicly. He annoyed members of parliament by refusing to listen sympathetically to their requests on behalf of constituents. When the Liberals returned to power in 1980, the Canada Council and all other cultural agencies began reporting to Francis Fox as Minister of

Communications. Frustrated over government inaction, Porteous had undiplomatically laid the blame on the doorstep of Fox. He had also annoyed his own boss, Charles Lussier, and made it known to almost anyone who asked that he viewed Lussier as more of a "governor general than a prime minister." Porteous was the real power at the Council. Despite the enemies he had made, Porteous's hope for the job lay in Pierre Trudeau's famous loyalty to old friends. The position of director was entirely under the control of the Prime Minister. Porteous was appointed director in January 1982 and continued both his criticism of government and his passionate lobbying on behalf of the arts.

The first real threat to the Council to follow the Art Bank confrontation came not from a politician but from a senior bureaucrat, the deputy minister of communications, Robert Rabinovitch. In a departmental policy paper, which was prepared under the direction of Rabinovitch and issued on May 3, 1983, it was stated that:

in order to implement ongoing policies and new initiatives as effectively as possible, the department intends to propose a rebalancing of the respective roles of the government and the cultural agencies in the determination and delivery of cultural policy. . . . We will examine the need for Cabinet to be given the power to issue broad policy directions to the cultural agencies. Conversely, we will seek to transfer some elements of program delivery, which are currently performed by the department, to the agencies.³

Although the policy paper did not explain exactly how this rebalancing of roles would be accomplished, apparently there would be a trade off. While the government would have the power to direct Canada Council policy, the

Council would perhaps be given something like the Department of Communication's book publishing development program. Although the Council might administer more programs, it would also become less independent in terms of setting its own policy and priorities. Cabinet would have increased power, which meant in effect that there would be *more bureaucratic* direction of the cultural agencies.

In November of 1976, the Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability, also known as the Lambert Commission, was appointed to review the relationship between government and its crown corporations. There was a widespread belief in the government that crown corporations were out of control and that measures to ensure their accountability needed to be put in place. After the Lambert Commission released its report in March of 1979, a working group on crown corporations was established at Treasury Board under the direction of Ed Clark to rewrite the laws governing crown corporations. Francis Fox agreed to defer a decision on whether cultural agencies, including the Canada Council, should be included in Clark's bill until the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, appointed in August of 1980 to study and report on federal cultural policy in Canada, had studied and reported on the matter.

The cultural community sent a clear and forceful message to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, also known as Applebaum-Hébert, that cultural agencies should retain their autonomy. When the

Applebaum-Hébert report was released in November of 1982, it recommended that "the status of federal cultural agencies should be defined in a new Cultural Agencies Act, in recognition of the fact that government activity in culture and the arts is subject to special considerations requiring a distinctive measure of autonomy."⁴ It also recommended that the independence of the Council and other cultural agencies should prevail wherever it might be in conflict with the Financial Administration Act or any crown corporation legislation. It asserted that "the high degree of autonomy possessed by the Council since its inception is entirely appropriate to its circumstances,"⁵ and that cultural agencies "should be exempt from political direction in the form of ministerial directives of either general or specific nature" and free from "ministerial and central government agency direction in financial and personnel administration."⁶

On 15 March 1983, Herb Gray, President of Treasury Board introduced Bill C-24, "an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act in relation to Crown corporations and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof." The bill included various cultural agencies that had traditionally been guaranteed independence and autonomy from government direction. Despite a promise to defer a decision on the inclusion of the cultural agencies in the bill until the Applebaum-Hébert report had been considered, the government decided to initiate legislation addressing the accountability of crown corporations and not to recognize the special status of the cultural agencies through exemption

or separate legislation. Although the proposed Act thus had major implications for federal cultural agencies, the only agency that had been fully consulted was the CBC. The rest of the cultural agencies were simply informed in a pre-emptive fashion under seal of secrecy.

Generally, there was little opposition by the general public to the government's attempt to ensure a greater measure of control over hundreds of crown corporations. Repeated scandals involving crown corporations had created public unease about their operation. Even though reports of the Auditor General showed no evidence of financial mismanagement among the cultural agencies, they were swept up in legislation precipitated by their non-cultural cousins.

The Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) emphasized that the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture had been mandated to review the report of the Applebaum-Hébert Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, assess its recommendations with regard to federal cultural agencies, and determine whether the status of such agencies should be altered. The CCA wanted the Miscellaneous Estimates committee to refer the issue of the status of the federal cultural agencies back to the Culture and Communications committee.⁷

The Minister of Communications and his departmental officials worked hard to incorporate within the legislation some safeguards for certain cultural agencies and while they were generally satisfied with the results they

achieved, the cultural community was not. Brian Anthony, director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, stated that the spirit of the recommendation made by the Applebaum-Hébert Committee enjoyed little currency within Treasury Board during the preparation of Bill C-24.⁸ The CCA was dismayed and wrote that the inclusion of cultural agencies in the scope of Bill C-24 sent an underlying message that "however important culture may be, and however welcome and of interest carefully developed views on this subject may be, they are all, ultimately, of little or no relevance. . . . The disappointment and frustration resulting from the manner in which Bill C-24 has been generated are deeply felt by the cultural community."⁹ According to Fulford,

by writing the bill, Clark and his colleagues demonstrated that after decades of experience the senior Ottawa bureaucrats still do not know how to deal with cultural affairs – indeed, they appear to know less than the people who drafted the original Canada Council Act in 1957. They brought to their work one of the most destructive tendencies of the Trudeau years in Ottawa: the attempt to impose uniformity on government, to bring every aspect of federal activity under the same set of rules. In culture this approach has failed more often than it has succeeded.¹⁰

On March 15, 1984, Bill C-24 was introduced in the House of Commons for a second reading. It was quickly tabled and passed onto the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates for clause-by-clause analysis. The cultural community opposed the bill and felt that it would have a disastrous effect on the arm's length status of certain cultural agencies. Letters from cultural and arts organizations opposing the bill poured into the offices of

Francis Fox and Jean-Robert Gauthier, chair of the Miscellaneous Estimates committee. These included letters from the Professional Association of Canadian Theatre, the Association of National Non-profit Artists' Centres, the Globe Theatre, the Manitoba Arts Alliance, the Canadian Music Council, the Book and Periodical Development Council, and the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada.¹¹ The Canada Council and the National Arts Centre also refused to allow the bill to pass quietly and without protest. The Canada Council issued a press releases on March 26, 1984 objecting to the legislation. On May 4, the Council released a background paper which examined the ways in which the proposed bill would undermine the Council's independence and reduce it to the status of an advisory body.

The Council had two general objections to its inclusion in Bill C-24. First, the commercial model that the bill was based on, that of a commercial corporation with a single shareholder, was incompatible with the concept of a public trust, governed on behalf of the public by a board of trustees, upon which the Council had been established. Secondly, the two objectives of the bill were to increase the accountability and the control of Crown Corporations. The Council was already fully accountable to Parliament, so that the impact of the bill on the Council would relate primarily to control -- which would pass from the Council's board to Cabinet.¹²

The Council emphasized that the primary body to which an

organization spending public money must be accountable is Parliament – not Cabinet or the Department of Communications. Unlike many of the crown corporations scheduled for inclusion in Bill C-24, the Canada Council was already fully accountable to Parliament and the public through the existing requirements of the *Canada Council Act* and its long-established practices. The Council receives its appropriation by an annual vote of parliament. The Auditor General of Canada audits the Council's financial statements each year, which are included in the Council's Annual Report. Provision is made each year for a review by Parliament of the Council's Annual Report. The Council appears whenever requested before Committees of the House and Senate.¹³

The Canadian Conference of the Arts emphasized in their brief to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates that they did not oppose accountability and control. According to it, the resources dedicated to cultural pursuits were comparatively few and precious, and it also wanted to ensure that public money devoted to public cultural purposes was spent appropriately by the cultural agencies with due regard for economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It stated:

Where agencies can be shown to be governing themselves in a manner inconsistent with the mandate established in their founding Acts by Parliament, or in a manner inappropriate within the broad policy context created by the federal government, then corrective action and compliance must be enforced as a matter of right and duty. That said, however, the Canadian Conference of the Arts is satisfied that sufficient accountability and control mechanisms exist in regard to the

federal cultural agencies. Not only are we unaware of any compelling argument or information which would justify any increase of such, but in our examination of the issue we have concluded that increased accountability and control mechanisms would have an adverse impact on the federal cultural agencies.¹⁴

Bill C-24 would subject the Council to controls by Cabinet on the Ministers recommendation. Cabinet would gain control of the corporate plan and operating budget. The Council asserted that responsibility for these kinds of decisions should rest with its Board. Cabinet would have the power to impose directives on the Council. It would also have control of the Council's by-laws and have the power to amend or repeal any of the by-laws of the Council. Finally, the Bill would give Cabinet the power of dismissal; that is, the right to remove from office at any time the chair, members of the Council, or the director.

Through these controls, the Council would lose authority and many crucial responsibilities. It would no longer have authority for defining the types of artistic activities that the Council would and fund. It would no longer decide the allocation of the Council's budget to particular disciplines. It would not determine the proportion of the Council's budget allocated to organizations. It would have to obtain approval from Cabinet before it could initiate a new policy or program. The Council could be required to base its grant decisions not on factors other than excellence. The government would be able to tell the Council, for example, to spend more money on theatre, to fund amateur artists rather than professionals, to fund only fiction, or to

eliminate the Art Bank. Bill C-24 would destroy the tradition of allowing broad policy decisions to be guided by professional expertise and advice. Those decisions would be made by politicians and bureaucrats. All these decisions could be imposed on the Council without reference to, or examination, by Parliament.

The Bill contained an exemption for the cultural agencies specifying that no directive could be given with respect to the provision of financial assistance to a particular person or group of persons. The Council argued that this proposed exemption was inadequate because the actual awarding of a grant is only the last step in a complex sequence of policy, programs, and budget decisions. If all the preliminary steps in determining Council priorities were guided and directed by Cabinet, then the protection of the final step in the process, the actual awarding of grants, would turn the Council's role into little more than a formality. "The important point," it said, "is that in funding the arts there can be no meaningful distinction between ultimate grant decisions and the plethora of policy, program, and budget decisions which precede and inevitably influence awards of grants."¹⁵

At the Department of Communications, the Council's opposition to the bill was regarded as paranoid. David Silcox, Rabinovitch's assistant deputy minister for cultural affairs, explained that "a power of directive is a very rarely used thing and would probably never be used with respect to anything the Canada Council would do that I can possibly think of."¹⁶ Silcox

could see only how cumbersome it would be to use this power. In response the Council stated:

It has been suggested that the powers available under the Bill are unnecessary and therefore would not be used. However, the authority would be written into statute, and no Minister or official can commit his or her successor not to apply it. If the legislation provides means for intervention in the operations of the Council, we must anticipate that sooner or later the authority will be exercised.¹⁷

The Council had not forgotten the attempt by Roberts to halt Art Bank purchases. If the government had tried to direct the Council's spending once before, why wouldn't it try again? The Council had strong grounds for suspicion of the government and of its intentions.

The power to give a directive to federal cultural agencies by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the appropriate Minister also concerned the Canadian Conference of the Arts. It stated that although it had been assured that these powers of direction were not intended to be used with respect to federal cultural agencies,

this is too important an issue, and too grey an area, however, to leave to vague assurances of the best of intentions. If the broad directive powers are not to be used to supersede or skew the mandates and functions of the cultural agencies, then they should either be deleted from the legislation or Bill C-24 should include qualifications in this regard. Even assuming that the broad power of direction is not to be used, and that it is never used, its mere existence always presents the possible threat of use and can, therefore, be used as a powerful persuasive force. . . . This concern is not a manifestation of free-floating anxiety: officials have been known to bring pressure to bear on the cultural agencies within the context of the existing mechanisms, and it would be naive in the extreme to suggest that increased opportunity for such intervention would reduce its incidence.¹⁸

Along with the press release and background paper the Council had

released, director Timothy Porteous and chairman Maureen Forrester intended to present a brief to the Miscellaneous Estimates committee before the Act's third reading. On June 5, two days before the Council was to appear before the parliamentary committee, John Thomson, M.P., received a confidential letter, apparently from a Privy Council bureaucrat: "It is my impression, from talking with the Treasury Board officials last night, that C-24's application to the Canada Council, et al, is no accident. The government appears to have a score to settle with the Council and C-24 provides a rare opportunity."¹⁹ In fact, Woodcock argued,

It seems clear that a number of ministers were using the occasion to express their annoyance that in the past the cultural agencies had shown themselves reluctant to accept political directives. In Cabinet, apparently, three senior ministers insisted that these bodies -- the Canada Council, the Canadian film Development Corporation, the National Arts Centre and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation -- should be subjected to the provisions of Bill C-24. . . . Pierre Trudeau seems to have supported them, insisting that he wished to secure the bill's passage before his resignation from the prime ministership became effective. Francis Fox, who as minister of communications was responsible for representing the interests of the cultural agencies, did not protest. Indeed the rapid and rather sensational series of events suggests that he stood not with the agencies but with his fellow ministers.²⁰

Porteous had managed to rally the entire appointed Council to his side and he and Forrester had prepared a strong statement against the Council's inclusion in Bill C-24. However, before they could present their brief, Rabinovitch intervened. According to Porteous, Rabinovitch called him and told him that public criticism by any member of the Council would not be

tolerated. He told Porteous that he had no right to criticize the bill and hinted that there would be consequences if he did. According to Porteous, Rabinovitch said that appointed Council members should be dissuaded from criticizing the bill.²¹

The phone call became public knowledge when Mavor Moore, the Council's recently retired chair, described it in an article in the Globe and Mail. The article appeared on June 7, 1984, the same day Forrester and Porteous were scheduled to appear before the parliamentary committee to present the Council's brief. When Forrester appeared before the committee, several Members of Parliament expressed astonishment at Rabinovitch's call and asked Porteous twice to confirm that it had occurred. Rabinovitch countered that he had not given instructions to Porteous, but had simply discussed Bill C-24 with him and expressed concern about the Council politicizing itself. He felt that it was part of his job to talk to the Council and interpret for them events in the government that might affect them.

A week later, Donald MacSween, director of the National Arts Centre, testified to the Miscellaneous Estimates committee that he had also received a phone call from Rabinovitch, telling him that "it was improper or impermissible for the trustees or senior officers [of the NAC] to speak publicly in a manner directly or implicitly critical of government policy."²² Writing at the time, Fulford claimed that, in the end the two accounts of what had happened did not differ significantly: "The argument came down to the a

question of the difference between an interpretation and a warning."²³

However, whether it was a warning or an interpretation, the implications were the same. Rabinovitch was telling the Council and the National Arts Centre that it was not their place to comment on government policy decisions that affected them. In fact, he did not want them to even comment on *proposed* policy.

Moore's disclosure to the Globe and Mail of the phone call to Porteous, along with the courage of Porteous and MacSween to stand up despite Rabinovitch's warnings, alerted opposition members to the issue. They stalled the bill to look more closely at the question. Rabinovitch's intervention had proved in advance that fears about Bill C-24 were justified and that bureaucrats and politicians would not fail to use their newly acquired powers. On June 27 1994, during the last week of Trudeau's regime, Herb Gray, president of the Treasury Board, appeared before the Miscellaneous Estimates committee and announced that agreement had been reached between the government and opposition leaders to exempt the cultural agencies from Bill C-24. Separate legislation recognizing their special status was to be introduced at a later date.

In a Council news release the next day , Maureen Forrester stated that "this enlightened move by parliamentarians shows that they clearly understand the historic necessity for an arm's length agency to fund the arts in Canada."²⁴ Others disagreed stating that the preservation of the arm's

length principle could no longer be taken for granted and that by refusing to comply with the plans of senior bureaucrats, the Council had made new enemies in Ottawa and was in more danger than it had ever been.²⁵ However, this was a great victory for the Council. Had it remained silent and let the legislation pass, federal support for the arts would have been drastically altered and become intricately tied to the changing politics, policies and priorities of government. The Council's opposition renewed and reaffirmed the autonomy of arts funding.

The Dismissal of Timothy Porteous

On September 4, 1984, the Conservative government was elected and Marcel Masse was appointed as Minister of Communications. The federal deficit was staggering and funding for arts and culture was to be reduced by the same proportion as all federal programs. A total of \$85 million was cut from arts and culture, \$3.5 million being cut from the Council's budget (the bulk of the cuts were suffered by the CBC at \$75 million).

On July 2, 1985, Porteous called a press conference to express his displeasure over the treatment of the Council by the Department of Communications. He had received a phone call from the deputy minister, Martigny Marchand, enquiring whether he was interested in taking a job in Los Angeles to promote Canadian film and video for the department. At the press conference, Porteous charged that his appointment was being

terminated by the Conservative government and that the principle of arm's length funding was in jeopardy. He claimed that the arm's length principle was being deliberately eroded by the Department. This was reflected in "the lack of consultation with the Council chair Maureen Forrester over his dismissal, a trend towards issuing direct grants to the arts, as well as cuts in arts funding."²⁶ Porteous felt that through its increased capacity to fund projects and organizations, and due to the decrease in the funding ability of the Council, the Department was effectively supplanting the Council in many areas.

Porteous explained that for months he had been actively trying to resist DOC incursions into Council affairs and at the same time promote a better understanding between his organizations and the department. He had been unsuccessful in meeting with the Minister, despite sending numerous letters and invitations to meet with the Council staff. Explaining his opposition to government cutbacks, Porteous stated: "The real issue is not a cut-backs in arts funding. It is how the cuts have been applied. At the same time as the budgets of the arts agencies have been cut back or frozen, the arts funds which are directly controlled by the minister have been increased."²⁷

The Canadian Conference of the Arts was also concerned about the recent treatment of cultural agencies. CCA president, Curtis Barlow, stated that "the months of speculation and confusion concerning the status of the cultural agencies and their heads, particularly the Canada Council, has had a

deleterious and demoralizing effect on the heads of agency, the staff and the functions of the agencies, and upon the cultural community which they serve."²⁸ The Executive Committee of the CCA proposed to the federal government the devolution onto the boards of the cultural agencies of the responsibility for selecting the chief executive officer of those agencies.

Barlow stated that,

the capacity of the appointed boards should be enhanced, and their responsibilities broadened, to include the power of recruiting and selecting their chief executive officers. This would provide an important political buffer, and would be a significant and responsible step toward reinforcing in practice the arm's-length principle. Until this proposal is put into effect, we expect that any new appointments at both the board and the head of agency level will be made with due regard to their cultural credentials and credibility, and in close consultation with the responsible boards.²⁹

Masse and Mulroney denied that Porteous was being fired and said that no Order-in-Council had been issued terminating his appointment. They did admit, however, that active efforts were being made to find a new director.

Peter Roberts replaced Porteous as director of the Canada Council in October of 1985. He had acted as a press secretary to Trudeau and as assistant undersecretary of state for cultural affairs. In an interview, Roberts was reminded that his predecessor had claimed that the arm's length principle had been placed in jeopardy by the Conservatives. Asked if the government had pressured him, Roberts replied:

I don't know if the government is twisting arms -- it hasn't twisted mine. But there has to be constant vigilance. Not because the government has evil designs on the council but because it is a huge

bureaucracy which may tread on our territory. It's easy for this vast creature to nudge us without being aware of it. We have to speak up when they do.³⁰

Porteous had feared that the "vast creature" was involved in more than nudging, and that it was intentional.

In 1986 Flora MacDonald replaced Masse as Minister of Communications and the government began making some major changes to the direction of cultural policy development. Released in 1987, the Ministry of Communications document "Vital Links" established a clear connection between arts development and Canada's cultural *industries*. The government was placing more emphasis on the private sector, market forces, and marketing techniques used by arts and cultural organizations. Cultural development policies were increasingly being based on arguments of economic and political viability and the government's commitment to these arguments began to surface in its dealings with the Council.³¹

The Council Under Alan Gotlieb

In January of 1989, Mulroney appointed Alan Gotlieb as chair of the Council. There were those in the arts community who felt that Gotlieb's reputation as an eminent bureaucrat and a talented professional along with his interest in the arts and his friends in the government positioned him as a good man for the job.³² On the other hand, many in the arts community were either sceptical of his appointment or outraged by it, because of the key

role Gotlieb had played in negotiating the free trade deal. When Gotlieb's appointment to the Council was announced, Mulroney praised Gotlieb's work in convincing U.S. politicians to approve the deal.³³ Along with his position at the Council, Gotlieb held the position of director of Maxwell Macmillan Inc., an American publishing firm. Some in the arts community felt this could present a conflict of interest with his position on the Council, since part of the Council's mandate was to promote Canadian-owned publishing.

In April of 1990, Heather Robertson wrote a column in Canadian Forum outlining the reasons she felt Gotlieb was an "inappropriate and improper chairman" for the Council. Aside from the role he had played in negotiating the free trade deal, Robertson listed several reasons "Why Gotlieb must go." Among the reasons were his involvement in the private sector, his lack of commitment to the Council by only dedicating himself to the Council part-time (he had also accepted a position as part-time publisher of Saturday Night, and planned to work at a Toronto law firm and teach part-time at the University of Toronto), and Gotlieb's opinion expressed in his Globe and Mail column that the "top ten losers" for the 1990s included National Sovereignty and Canada.

Robertson's article was re-printed in the Ottawa Citizen, and Gotlieb, outraged, filed a personal lawsuit for libel against Robertson and Southam Inc. To the arts community the "spectacle of the Canada Council Chair (and

publisher of Saturday Night) pursuing a leading Canadian author through the courts" seemed preposterous.³⁴ The advisory committee to the Writing and Publishing section of the Canada Council recommended that Gotlieb resign, at least temporarily, from his position pending settlement of the lawsuit he had brought against Robertson and Southam. This demand was quickly echoed by the Writers Union, and by the Periodical Writers Association of Canada.

On December 4, 1990, the Board of the Council released a statement in which it asserted that it fully supported Mr. Gotlieb as chair and believed that he should not relinquish his position. The Board defended Gotlieb's right to take legal action to defend his reputation and to seek legal redress. It emphasized that the Council itself was not involved in Gotlieb's decision to launch this action and that it was a personal matter that would not effect the Council's granting procedures.³⁵ For many, the issue was not about Gotlieb's freedom to initiate a libel suit; the issue was his comportment as head of the Canada Council and his questionable judgment in choosing to exercise this freedom while he was the Canada Council chairman.³⁶

On December 18, Gotlieb announced that he was dropping his claim for damages against Robertson, while continuing to sue Southam. He stated that he still felt he had been seriously libelled. Gotlieb remained chair of the Council. These events raised serious questions about the role of the Council in supporting artistic excellence and artistic freedom, regardless of an artist's

personal or political views. Doubts had been cast on the Board's will to defend freedom of expression. At the time, Roy MacSkimming wrote:

If the Canada Council Board condones beating up legally on artists, can the government be expected to place them in any higher regard? If the Chair sits on the board of a powerful U. S. book publisher (Macmillan Inc.) owned by a powerful international conglomerate (the Robert Maxwell communications empire), will that fact have any bearing at all on the government's treatment of Canadian book publishing?³⁷

How could the Council be trusted to lobby for the arts when important members of its Board were in positions of obvious and serious conflict of interest?

Administrative Restructuring: Re-uniting the Council and SSHRC

In February of 1992, plans were announced to amalgamate the Canada Council with both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the International Cultural Relations division of External Affairs in the interests of "efficiency." The merger was proposed without consulting either the cultural or academic communities. The mandates of these three bodies were certainly incompatible: the Council funded the arts; SSHRC funded university research; and External Affairs had diplomatic and trade objectives.

On March 20, 1992, Communications Minister Perrin Beatty appointed SSHRC president Paule Leduc as director-designate of the Canada Council. She was to act as director of the Council and also to remain SSHRC president until the new amalgamated body was formed. Leduc, along with Canada Council chair Allan Gotlieb, were to head the steering committee to oversee

the merger. Three subcommittees comprised of DOC, SSHRC, Treasury Board, and Department of External Affairs representatives were appointed to make arrangements for the new body.

Along with the merger, Beatty also announced that SSHRC would receive an annual 4% increase to its budget for the next four years, as well as an extra \$40 million for university research and training. Academics welcomed the budget increases and Leduc's appointment to the Canada Council, but were fearful that the merger would mean decreased autonomy for academic funding. Opponents from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities feared that the Canada Council might lose sight of the difference between funding the arts and funding humanities research and that the quality and quantity of humanities research might suffer as a result.³⁸

In November of 1992, the Mulroney's government introduced Bill C-93 to amalgamate the Council, SSHRC and the Cultural Relations division of External Affairs, into a single cultural agency, to be named the Canada Council For the Arts and for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (CCARSSH). This particular merger was part of a larger move by the federal government to eliminate or amalgamate 46 agencies and commissions. Craig McNaughton, a Globe and Mail columnist, wrote:

What is intriguing is not so much how our political leaders may have decided to sacrifice various disfavoured federal agencies to political exigency. What is intriguing is how the senior civil service seems to have let this merger go through the system unchallenged. One of the most revealing statements was provided by a senior official from the

Privy Council Office (PCO) in testimony before the legislative committee on Bill C-93, the bill that would create CCARSSH. Asked by Conservative Committee member Don Blenkarn why no consideration had been given to the alternative of merging SSHRC with the other two academic research councils - the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and Medical Council - Nick d'Ombrain, deputy secretary to the cabinet for machinery of government, offered this explanation: "The point I really want to stress is that our concern was to produce for the government a set of changes that were do-able. . . . Our criterion wasn't to be able to say this was the absolute best way to do any one of these things. It was to be able to say this was a do-able proposition, consistent with policy."³⁹

Academic and cultural representatives embarrassed the government, picking large holes in the Finance Department's case during the committee phase of debate on the bill. Although the merger was supposed to eliminate administrative duplication, officials had been unable to demonstrate or produce any convincing proof that the move would actually save any money.

On April 27, 1993, the government imposed closure to end debate on the bill, claiming it now had evidence from the Canada Council that the merger would save taxpayers at least \$5 million a year. Evidently, Treasury Board and Department of Communications officials had placed pressure on Paule Leduc, who was currently acting as head of both the Council and SSHRC, after which she finally agreed the merger could lead to administrative savings. This was in opposition to earlier testimony Leduc had given to a Senate finance committee and in opposition to internal estimates by the Treasury Board that the maximum savings that could be expected were \$1.5 million over 5 years.

Simon de Jong, an NDP critic, telephoned Leduc to confirm the

estimate of the alleged \$5 million a year savings. De Jong claimed Leduc was far more equivocal in her response. According to him, she said "there might be a cumulative saving of \$5 million over five years, depending on what happened in the implementation, but it was very soft and qualified."⁴⁰ De Jong also stated that several hours later he received a faxed letter from Leduc that parroted the Treasury Board and Department of Communications line about the \$5 million savings. Later, in a corridor conversation with Perrin Beatty, De Jong was amazed to find out that Beatty knew about his call to Leduc and the fax he had received back from her in which she had changed her response to his question. De Jong was convinced that there had been some arm twisting at the Council to provide economic justification for the merger.⁴¹ On June 10, 1993, Senate defeated the bill. Roy MacSkimming wrote that "it was such a crackbrained notion that even a Senate overstuffed with Tory transplants could see no merit in it and killed the legislation."⁴²

Despite the fact that the bill was killed, the prospect of the merger had wreaked havoc in the Council. Jocelyn Harvey, former assistant director at the Council explained that "for most of two years, the Council's energies were consumed by elaborate housekeeping changes when it should have been conducting a dynamic, creative conversation with the arts community about how it could best serve Canadian culture in the difficult times ahead."⁴³ At the same time, the Council had to deal with an \$8.7 million reduction to its 1993-94 budget, this following a five year budget freeze by the Conservative

government. At a news conference after the announcement of the budget cuts, Paule Leduc, said, "this is the most severe cut the Canada Council has ever had. I believe that with these cuts, the viability of artistic life and expression in Canada is being dealt a serious blow."⁴⁴

Even though the merger bill was killed, and despite reports that Leduc herself was lukewarm in her support for the merger, MacSkimming argued that "Dr. Leduc proceeded to make it in some respects a *fait accompli*."⁴⁵

Recent departures of senior staff left the Council depleted of leadership. chief financial administrator Peter Brown, research analyst Herb Wetmann, and assistant director of the arts Division Jocelyn Harvey all left the Council during Leduc's term. Leduc elevated Louise Dandurand, her number two at SSHRC, to the position of secretary-general of both organizations. Leduc also moved the two agencies into the same offices in down town Ottawa. They shared a common boardroom, library and other facilities. She began introducing "streamlined" granting policies at the Council similar to those in existence at SSHRC. And while she could not incorporate the Cultural Relations division of External Affairs into workings of the Council as originally planned, she instead invited the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council to share the Council/SSHRC office. Upon her resignation in February of 1994 MacSkimming wrote,

There has been a loss of influence by the arts officers: staff members who frequently come from the cultural community, help ensure that Council decision-making is informed by the real needs of the arts. Dr. Leduc was far less interested than previous Directors in listening to the officers' guidance; she shut them out of Council meetings, barred them from proposing board nominees (currently half the directors' seats are empty), and discouraged them from speaking to the media.⁴⁶

The appointment of Leduc to the Canada Council before the merger had passed put the Council in a situation where it was left with little leadership, little direction, and little confidence from the constituents it served. At a time when the Council needed strong policy direction, it was thrown into a futile exercise of re-organizing its administration.

Administrative Restructuring Revisited: Roch Carrier, Donna Scott and the Strategic Plan

Optimism swept through the Council when the Liberals were elected in 1993. Under the Tories, the Council had suffered a five year budget freeze followed by a budget cut of \$8.7 million in 1992. On the other hand, the Liberal's Red Book had given culture a strong endorsement. The arts community hoped that, as a first step, the Liberals would demonstrate their commitment to the arts by restoring the most recent Tory cutback of \$8.7 million. However, within months of the election, the arts community began to wonder whether the Chretien Liberals were Tories in sheep's clothing. The weakest minister in cabinet, Michel Dupuy, was appointed Minister of Canadian Heritage. The Prime Minister was forced to spend an entire week during question period defending Dupuy, who had "blithely lobbied the

Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission on behalf of a constituent, regardless of the fact that he himself is the minister responsible for the CRTC."⁴⁷ The Liberal government also allowed the sale of Canadian textbook publisher Ginn Publishing and Canadian Theatre chain Famous Players to Viacom, the U. S. entertainment conglomerate. It seemed that the Liberals were less committed to culture than they had claimed.

In June of 1994, Roch Carrier became the first artist ever to take the director's chair. Congratulations and encouragement poured in from the arts community. It was expected that Carrier would understand the principles that guided the Council, the need for the Council to maintain the arts community's confidence, and the vital role played by public subsidy.⁴⁸ Many in the arts community felt there was a lot of deadwood at the Canada Council. Carrier, on his arrival, began a full review of the Council's workings, asserting that he wanted to spend less money on management and more on artists. The arts community hoped Carrier would revitalize the Council. René Blouin, owner of a Montreal art gallery, stated "the solution is not only more money but first to put the house in order, to have a good core of people directing it."⁴⁹ Carrier agreed: "I don't think we should be pessimistic about the future of the Canada Council. We have to be very rigorous. We have to spend our money with a great deal of wisdom and creativity."⁵⁰

At the same time as Carrier's appointment, Donna Scott was appointed chair of the Council. While Carrier's appointment was widely applauded,

Scott's was dismissed as "tawdry patronage." She was the founder and former publisher of Flare magazine and a former provincial Liberal candidate in Ontario. She was unknown to most cultural bureaucrats and had no history of involvement in the artistic or cultural communities.

In the past, there had always been a clear demarcation between the role of the part-time chair and the full-time director: the chair was the council's public face, while the director ran the workings of the council. Scott decided from the beginning that she would play a much more involved role. As Gray explained:

Scott has spent far more time on Council business than her predecessors. Although Carrier takes day-to-day control, the responsibility for initiatives like the Strategic Plan is obviously shared. And Scott, the more deadline-conscious and action-oriented of the pair, is frequently the driving force. . . . In the meantime, it will be left to Roch Carrier to fill the role traditionally taken by the council's chair: to be the champion of the arts and the strongest advocate for public funding. He must assuage fears amongst artists that the Canada Council is no longer 'theirs.' So far, however, every reform the Council has undertaken has triggered screams of resentment.⁵¹

In pre-budget Ottawa, it seemed the squeeze was on every agency and department. In March of 1994, prompted by the relatively high cost of the Council's administrative costs, the Treasury Board ordered the Council to cut its administrative budget by \$2.4 million over the next three years. The Council had one of the highest overheads in the country with 18 per cent of its budget going to administration. The Council announced that the cuts would affect the Council staff but not artists' grant programs or the peer evaluation process. The Council began speaking in terms of "fiscal pressures,

priorities, and spending envelopes” instead of more traditional concepts such as creativity, excellence and artistic integrity. In the fall of 1994, both Scott and Carrier became convinced that they had to create a new strategic plan for the Council, which they hoped to set in motion by the following April. Many questioned whether this was enough time to accomplish such an enormous task.

At the last minute, Scott and Carrier realized that they had better consult the arts community about the strategic plan and hastily organized a coast to coast tour. The meetings were held without adequate notice, and the background tool for discussion, a “consultation workbook,” was seen by artists as trivial and insulting.

The first line of the workbook set the tone for the proposed strategic plan: “The federal government has given us the responsibility to renew the Canada Council.” For many in the arts community, what “renewal” seemed to mean was the accommodation of further cuts to the Council’s budget and the preparation for lean times ahead. The workbook was full of corporate jargon such as “investment” in the arts, developing new “partnerships” in the arts, “improving program delivery,” and “cutting administrative costs.”

The timeline for the release of the strategic plan, along with the last-minute and disorganized nature of the consultations, made it clear to the arts community that their concerns and ideas would not be incorporated into the plan. It was widely felt within the arts community that the blueprint for the

new-look of the Council was already drawn up. Scott and Carrier were adamant that everything was on the table for discussion and that the community's contribution to the plan would be substantial. However, when Scott and Carrier were questioned in Vancouver about whether the community would have an opportunity to review the plan before it was adopted, they hedged and finally conceded that these consultations were the only chance for community comment. The tour had left "the cultural community puzzled, distrustful and angry about the consultation process and the very future of the institution that Scott and Carrier lead."⁵²

Throughout the consultations, Scott and Carrier spoke about fiscal pressures, priorities and spending envelopes. However, the artists talked about culture and made it clear that they were not interested in "balance-sheet jargon." They thought Scott and Carrier should be demanding more money from the government, not settling for less. Many artists told Carrier and Scott that the Council's main problem was that it did not have enough money to meet its responsibilities and that the major obligation of the Council was to persuade government of that fact. Brian Anthony, the Council's associate director, claimed that criticism of the consultation process was largely due to time constraints, and the frustration and anxiety of the arts community came as a result of the culmination of years of substantial cuts to the arts.⁵³

However, Charlotte Gray wrote:

By New Year, it was clear that Donna Scott had achieved what nobody

thought possible. The former vice president of Maclean Hunter Ltd. had created unprecedented solidarity within the arts community. Usually a volatile bunch of loners, artists spoke almost unanimously on one issue – their distrust of Donna Scott.⁵⁴

Artists' criticism of Scott and Carrier marks a difference from earlier times when artists believed the Council truly consulted with the arts community and acted as their advocate to the federal government. In light of anticipated cuts, the Council's hurried consultation was no surprise. But as Barbara Godard later pointed out, in the Council's frustrated scramble for funding,

artists have become suspicious of the Council they must placate, particularly since the Council's discourse increasingly echoes the rhetoric of the marketplace. In the 'consultation workbook' sent to artists, the absence of previously central statements on historical context and policy principles for public funding of the arts was disquieting in the light of the Canada Council's critical negotiating role with government.⁵⁵

Midway through the tour, another disturbing development occurred. The executive committee of the Council's board intervened into recommendations made by Council juries. This was unprecedented. Chaired by Scott, the committee had decided to hold back many of the grants recommended for three literary associations, two periodicals, and the Canadian Music Centre. The associations received partial payments of the grants awarded to them by their juries, with letters indicating they might not receive the remainder. The official announcement of these decisions said: "The Council decided to delay making final decisions on most applications it reviewed [...] to maintain the flexibility to implement its strategic plan,

beginning in the 1995-96 fiscal year." There was to be another board meeting held in March at which time "further funding may or may not be approved." It was explained that the grants were held back in light of the strategic plan to be implemented for the 1995-96 budget and it was anticipated that this budget might conceivably be reduced. It soon became known, however, that the grants in question were supposed to come from the current 1994-95 budget, not the 1995-96 budget. Furthermore, it seemed that some awards had been held back on an arbitrary basis while others received the full amount recommended by the juries. The grants which had been held back tended to be arts-service organizations and this fuelled suspicion that the Council had already made some preliminary decisions about its future direction.

The arts community was outraged. The Council's own policy manual states that "only when clear, unmitigable evidence of procedural improprieties is adduced would it be appropriate for the Council or the Director to intervene." The manual further indicates that even if such an intervention were to occur, the Council should intervene only at the level of process not at the level of decision-making. It would be the Council's responsibility to resubmit the case to the jury for re-evaluation, or empanel a new jury to evaluate the case, "but neither the Council nor the Director would assume the role of the jury or change the results of the jury's decision." No procedural improprieties had occurred, but the Council had broken two of its own cardinal rules: first, the Council was abandoning the

peer-assessment principle by overturning the recommendations made by its own juries; secondly, it was failing in its responsibility to provide due process to applicants who had submitted applications according to Council criteria, and who had been assessed by juries appointed in accordance with established procedures.

Confronted with these accusations, Scott responded that her board had not broken any policies or procedures. Carrier indicated that he was not ready to recommend to the board that it use its authority to rescind the executive committee's actions and award the full grants that had been recommended by the jury. According to Harvey, Carrier's action reflected that "there was no indication that he believed it his responsibility, as Director of the organization, to remind the board of its obligations to respect established policies and procedures."⁵⁶ In a letter to Scott and Carrier, Collin Jackson, a former Council board member, wrote:

the appropriate role for the board is to set over-all policies, lobby government, establish budgets, approve strategic plans and act as a balance on its employees. If the board becomes the actor as well as the arbitrator, then who will hold it accountable? If the board over-rules juries, what self-respecting artist will agree to serve on a jury?⁵⁷

The arts community was outraged by both the last minute community consultations on the Strategic Plan and by the Council's interference with the grants. However, it was surprised when, two months later, the federal budget seemed to skip over the Canada Council. While the Council received only a 2.5 per cent cut from its \$96 million parliamentary appropriation, other arts

agencies experienced severe cuts. The National Film Board lost 7.1 per cent, Telefilm lost 10. per cent, and the CBC lost 23 per cent. Somehow Scott and Carrier had persuaded the government that the Canada Council should continue to function as it was. Scott attributed this to their new strategic plan, A Design for the Future. "Everyone knew we were working on this, and we were serious." According to John Goldsmith, the Council's head of communications, Scott and Carrier had made it clear to everyone at the Council that changes needed to be made; that if the Council did not get its house in order, someone else would do it for them.⁵⁸ According to Gray:

Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy confirmed Scott's logic. He told officials there was a message in the budget's treatment of the council. It escaped the axe because Scott and Carrier didn't wait to be ordered by Ottawa to embark on a fundamental streamlining review. The implications was that if organizations like the CBC hadn't been so busy defending their status quo and bloated bureaucracies, they might not have been so savage.⁵⁹

However, Scott vigorously rejected suggestions at a news conference that the Council had struck a pre-budget agreement with the Heritage Minister to restructure itself in order to be spared major cutbacks.⁶⁰

News of the \$2.5 million cut to the Council's 1995-96 parliamentary appropriation was accompanied by the release of the strategic plan. The Council announced that it would absorb its cut by cutting 76 of 238 positions in accordance with a directive to cut 45 per cent of its \$22 million administration budget by 1997-98. It would also eliminate two departments overseeing grants to artists. The Council promised that the cuts would be felt

mostly by the organization's administration rather than the arts community. This major restructuring at the Council would, in fact, see the administrative budget reduced from \$22 million to \$12 million over three years.

The strategic plan incorporated tangible business strategies. The Council planned to focus on "core business," that is to say on the creation, production and distribution of the arts rather than on the training of artists. To this end it would eliminate all programs that did not generate sufficient return in relation to their costs. The Council announced plans to withdraw from the financing of arts training, including the National Ballet School and the National Theatre School. It proposed that the money earmarked for professional training revert to the federal Heritage Ministry for distribution. This announcement took the Heritage Ministry and the two schools by surprise. None of them had been consulted about this potential change. The Council also announced plans to end the Art Bank program. This too came as a surprise to the arts community, especially visual artists, who had not been consulted or advised about the potential changes.

Scott's vision for the Council was to make it the pre-eminent granting agency in the country, or as Gray explained it, "a sort of central sorting office for all subsidies to artists and performers."⁶¹ Scott hoped that other sources of funding -- private foundations, government departments, corporations -- would use the Council as a delivery vehicle for their grants. However, Gray argues that government ministers and corporate benefactors get a certain type

of exposure from awarding these grants themselves, and that it was unlikely that they would choose to surrender this privilege to the Council simply because it was a market leader.

Scott and Carrier began looking for ways to “reinvent” the Council by co-opting the private sector. They did not necessarily want the Council to be in competition with corporations, which were already giving support to specific arts organizations and agencies. But they thought that the Council could provide creative platforms for corporations where those corporations could receive a good return for their investment.⁶² Carrier felt that by leveraging private sector dollars, the Canada Council could make its case against additional cuts in government funding. However, collaboration between corporate Canada and the Canada Council is unlikely. The Council operates as part of the large bureaucracy in Ottawa and few corporations would be willing to become involved in that type of operation. They want to make their own decisions, not leave them to the dictates of a large arts bureaucracy.⁶³

By March of 1997, the second phase of the Council’s two year cost-cutting strategic plan was underway. In an effort to trim another \$4.5 million from the Canada Council’s Administrative budget, 39 more staff positions were cut -- reducing the total number of positions at the Council from 171 to 132. Along with the staff cuts came further restructuring to the Council’s disciplinary sections and changes to application deadlines and the number of

grants an individual artist could apply for each year. Carrier said that he hoped the federal government would be impressed by the Council's streamlining exercise: "We're getting to be a very interesting organization that is not costing a lot to operate. Perhaps the government will be able to give more projects to us, because we're not costing too much to operate."⁶⁴

Jocelyn Harvey observes that where the Council was once a leader of public opinion, building consensus about the importance of the arts in society, in recent years it seems to have "lost its nerve." Where it used to call governments to account when they failed to recognize this value, it now takes refuge in silence. "Recent leaders have been more remarkable for their keenness to deliver a 'lean,' and 'accountable' Canada Council than to demonstrate the value of the arts to society."⁶⁵ For many in the arts community, questions remain about the effects of this streamlining on policy. Although most agree that the cuts to the administrative budget of the Council were important and essential, they worry about the effect it has had on the way grants are distributed.⁶⁶ Some artists worry that the streamlining of programs and reduction of advisory functions have made the Council less responsive to changing conditions in the arts community. Most troublesome of all, in order to conform to government expectations of accountability, the Council has increasingly abandoned the arts community it is supposed to serve.

Notes for Chapter Three

1. Robert Fulford, "The Canada Council at Twenty-Five," Saturday Night, no. 97, March 1982, p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Quoted in Robert Fulford, "Federal Offense," Saturday Night, no. 99, September 1984, p. 6. See also George Woodcock, Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada (Vancouver, 1985), p. 123.
4. Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 35.
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7. Canadian Conference of the Arts - Brief to The Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates on Bill C-24 [NA, MG28 I89, vol. 46, file 3]
8. Brian Anthony, Memorandum on Bill C-24, 20 March 1983 [NA, MG28 I189, vol. 46, file 1]
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10. Robert Fulford, "Federal Offense," p. 6.
11. Letters from arts organizations to Francis Fox and Jean-Robert Gauthier [NA, MG28 I189, vol. 46, file 3]
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13. Ibid.
14. Canadian Conference of the Arts - Brief to The Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates on Bill C-24 [NA, MG28 I89, vol. 46, file 3]
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48. Harvey, "Closed Council," p. 20.
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Conclusion

There are three main themes that surface in the story of the politicization of the Council: interference, complicity and accountability. How and why has the government interfered with the Council's autonomy? Why has the Council, at times, been complicit in its own politicization? And through what means and to whom should the Council be accountable?

The government has interfered with the Council's autonomy through both direct legislative attempts and through more indirect methods. While the legislative changes proposed by both Bill C-24 and Bill C-93 would have had devastating effects on the Council, they were in the end defeated. On the other hand, the more indirect methods used by the government, which on the surface seem unassuming and non-threatening, have resulted in a greater long-term erosion of the Council's autonomy. These include the increased use of earmarked funds in the 1970s, and more recently the government appointment of leadership to the Council that is not opposed to the kinds of administrative re-structuring the government wants to see implemented at the Council. Why the government has interfered has generally been explained under the guise of keeping the Council accountable for the public funds it disburses. But in fact, the government has had more self-serving motives. In the 1960s and 1970s, the government attempted to pull all arts funding under the umbrella of an overall unified cultural policy. It wanted

more control over how and where arts funding was used and wanted arts funding to fall in line with its own priorities for general government policy. In the 1980s, upset over the Council refused to incorporate government policy into its own, the government took steps to “pull in the reins” and gain more control over the Council. At the same time, the government began appointing leadership to the Council that was not opposed to the kinds of “streamlining” policies being undertaken by the government. As a result, major changes (for better or for worse) were made in the administration of the Council with little or no consultation of the arts community it served.

The Council has often played a complicit part in its politicization for various reasons. At times it has been in response to the need to secure more funding for the arts. It believed that under some circumstances, earmarked funds could not be refused. At other times, it has been complicit through silence. Though some disagreement was voiced in 1977 when its social sciences and humanities program was being separated from the Council, strong opposition was not voiced. On other occasions, it has voiced little opposition to cuts to its budget. When it received a 10 per cent cut to its 1993-94 budget after it had already absorbed reductions to its administrative budgets, the “Council board and management didn’t raise a peep.”¹ And in recent years, the Council has not opposed government directives for administrative reform because its leadership did not disagree with those reforms. Such was the case with the proposed re-unification of the Council

and SSHRC and with Scott and Carrier's strategic plan. The major problem was not that administrative reform was being proposed or taking place (it was perhaps overdue), but the way in which it was carried out with little or no consultation with the arts community it served.

The accountability of the Council itself has been an important theme. The Council is accountable to the arts community it serves and the public through Parliament. The Council itself has emphasized that the primary body to which it should be accountable is Parliament -- not Cabinet or the department which holds responsibility for it. As an arm's length institution, the Council is given a certain mandate and the resources to fulfill that mandate. They are not directed how to do this, but must report back to Parliament on how those resources were used. It is the Council's role to accept responsibility and be accountable for the funds spent through audits by the Auditor General and its annual reports. The primary question from Parliament should be "is the Council using its resources to foster the arts in Canada?" A distinction, however, must be made between the Council being accountable to Parliament, and Parliament keeping the Council accountable. It is not the role of Parliament, Cabinet or the Department of Heritage to say what types of endeavours should be supported and especially not for what purposes. Not even the Council gives directives on how funds are to be used once they are awarded.

Finally, Parliament is the primary way through which the Council can

ensure that the *government* remains accountable for the policies it proposes that will affect the Council. Bill C-24 would have allowed government policy decisions to be imposed on the Council without parliamentary approval. This would have left the Council with no public mechanism through which to oppose government policy decisions. Through parliament, as the events surrounding Bill C-24 demonstrated, the Council can make its voice heard and alert the opposition party members to the implications of proposed government policy.

Writing about the Council over 15 years ago, Robert Fulford commented: "In a way that no one could quite have imagined [...] the council has become -- promisingly, but also dangerously -- a part of the complicated, endlessly compromised apparatus of government."² The Council still finds itself in this compromising situation. It holds partial autonomy from the state resulting from the act establishing it, but on the other hand, it continues to rely upon an annual Parliamentary appropriation to conduct its affairs. When the Council began receiving annual appropriations, it was able to expand its support of the arts in Canada. At the same time, however, it became beholden to the government of the day in a way not intended by the Act which established it. In the face of its financial reliance on the government, the Council itself has sometimes played a complicit part in this politicization, and sometimes fought vehemently against it.

Despite the Council's legislated autonomy from government

interference, the federal government has persistently attempted to exert an influence over the Council and has slowly eroded the Council's autonomy and ability to set its own policy. The government has rarely seen these efforts as interference in Council affairs. Governments set certain priorities and then seek to instigate measures that will support their own broad policy.

When a government is detached from the setting of priorities of an organization, the government does not view those priorities as its own. The government then becomes less likely to support those policies through funding.

The government has made a commitment to foster Canadian culture, and although it may be inadequate, is preferable to no commitment at all. It is during the times when the Council was complicit in its own politicization that it is clear that the government will always try to place its own stamp on Council policies and priorities. And during the times that the Council has fought against government interference that its need for autonomy is most clearly illustrated. But although the Council has become increasingly politicized, it continues to play an important role and must maintain its legislated autonomy. The Council will serve its mandate better with a legislated autonomy that is frequently challenged rather than no autonomy at all.

Notes for Conclusion

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