

Mediamorphosis and Canadian self-expression 1982-1994

The evolution of Canadian cultural policy and its impact on the arts

John Peter Lee Roberts Convinced of the increasing importance of all forms of telecommunication, the Canadian federal government developed in the early 1980s a cultural policy with Canadian artists at the centre, using broadcasting and cultural industries as pillars. In the 1990s a public policy was articulated that acknowledged the close relationship between cultural and communications policies.

Before the explosion of commercial television channels in Europe took hold, some public broadcasting executives there were expressing concern about what they described as the 'Canadianization' of Europe. Used in this way, 'Canadianization' has a pejorative connotation. It means the overwhelming of the culture of one country by that of another. Obviously, the perception was that because of Canada's geographic proximity to the United States, it was being overwhelmed by US television culture and in this way a form of inadvertent cultural hegemony was taking place.

Even during the first decade of television in Canada - it began in 1952 - when public broadcasting was predominant, there was a mixture of public and private (commercial) television stations, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) always depended on a certain number of affiliated private stations as vital links in its radio and

television networks. For many years, this expanding hybrid system was considered anachronistic in Great Britain and the European mainland, and totally unsuitable for the British or other European broadcasting scenes. Furthermore, it was clear that a growing number of commercial television outlets simply encouraged the wider use of American programming. It is therefore ironic that the Canadian system has ended up being a prototype for a new era of European television.

1. Canada as a cultural laboratory

mediamorphosis

It has been estimated that the people of the world watch 3.5 billion hours of television each day.¹ In Canada, generally speaking, after work and sleep, television consumes more time than any other activity and the same situation exists in countless other countries. Because of the

globalization of the electronic media and the on-going advances of technology, we are living in an age of *mediamorphosis*, to use a term first coined by the Viennese music-sociologist Kurt Blaukopf.

Cultural convergence through the mass media is a characteristic of our times, as are various forms of culture that have emerged due to the modalities of the electronic media and the scope they offer creators and performers, including television and film producers and directors. In this new environment, state broadcasting organizations are struggling to adapt to the emergence of an ever growing number of commercial channels that are attractive to general viewers and specialty audiences. Indeed, it is the electronic media power brokers and their economic interests that are determining the direction of the electronic media through policies that are more apparent than declared.

cultural laboratory

It is hardly surprising to note that the dimensions of cultural policy are many and complex in their interaction. Cultural policy - which in general terms can only succeed in relation to the users of culture or through what can be described as 'the public will' - is in a constant state of adjustment and development. Canada, by virtue of its geographical proximity to the United States, and as a country of two founding peoples, the English and French, together with its multicultural component first recognized in federal policy in 1971, and the cultures of the aboriginal peoples, has provided the world with a unique laboratory for observing the evolution of cultural policy and learning lessons that can be adapted to other cultural environments in different regions of the world.

developing cultural policy

Developing coherence and balance in cultural policy in a population of 28 million people, mostly concentrated to the 5000 kilometre border with the United States, has been an on-going challenge to policy-makers. Particular organizations like the CBC, the broadcasting and telecommunications regulatory body known as the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Téléfilm Canada and The Canada Council, are often responsible for cultural policy through their actions. The Canada Council, an agency of the federal government, is the primary instrument for funding visual and media artists, orchestras, dance, opera, theatre companies and independent creators and performers as well as writers.

Cultural policy is also a concern of the North West Territories, the Yukon, and the ten provinces, particularly Quebec, which is the heartland of the French language and French culture in Canada. Since the early eighties the provincial governments have been busy assessing cultural needs and introducing policies.² Arts policies and strategies that enhanced those of the federal government were developing in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In Nova Scotia, the government moved more slowly. Certain provinces are active in educational broadcasting. The two most important are Radio Quebec and TV Ontario which recently signed a long term agreement of co-operation.

Also since the early 1980s, municipalities across the country have developed arts policies and are important players in the development of culture.³ The cities of Toronto and Montreal have arts councils and in other cities there are useful mechanisms such as the Calgary Arts Initiative, that in 1994 influenced the provincial

government to increase the budget for culture, even while it was introducing draconian measures to eliminate the provincial deficit. The main interest of the municipalities however is libraries. Since 1982, 71 percent of their expenditures on culture were spent on libraries.⁴

Working across all levels of government is an important body, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) which successfully represents the arts community and acts as its chief lobbyist. The CCA plays a vital role in keeping arts issues to the fore and proposing policies and strategies. Financially assisted by the federal government, it is not infrequently its greatest critic. This kind of enlightened democracy has been favourably commented on in other countries. Another active advocacy organization concerned with the production of culture is The Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, and there are other groups as well.⁵

Although responsible for a variety of cultural agencies and their principal funding, the federal government keeps these bodies at 'arms length' to avoid accusations of political interference, while at the same time providing an overall general direction for cultural policy that takes into consideration readings of the present and future in relation to the fiscal realities of both public funding and the market place.

2. Canadian self-expression

Obviously, culture is an on-going process and at a basic level grows organically in relation to creators and performers on the one hand and the users on the other, in a climate of freedom of expression and appreciation of shared cultural values. However, in a world dominated by mass culture, without cultural policy that

strengthens the place of artists and creators and gives them greater access to audiences, the potential of the arts in Canada cannot be achieved and reflected back to the people. While this applies to the arts in the electronic media, it does so equally to the symbiotically related area of the arts in traditional venues.

It should be emphasized that Canadian cultural policy is essentially concerned with Canadian self-expression. This means that in both English- and French-speaking Canada, whether it is a federal or a provincial initiative, the intention of cultural policy is to provide scope and mechanisms for the development of Canadian writers, performers, directors and others to freely express themselves in all forms of culture, including the arts, through media such as the printed word, radio, television, videos, film, recordings and through computer and other technology.

Canadian self-expression manifests itself in both popular and so-called serious culture, and encompasses the particularities of indigenous cultures, multiculturalism and Canadian heritage.

Canadian self-expression versus cultural industries

Because there is no common definition of culture in current use there are varying views concerning which components of culture should be considered paramount.

From the following statement by a former minister of Communications (1987), it would seem that the component concerned with Canadian self-expression would have the greatest priority: 'Canadian culture (...) is the substance and reflection of who we are and what we form as a people (...). The creative activity of all Canadians, whether Francophone or Anglophone, both reposes on our culture and becomes its most active form of expression (...).' And: 'Canadians are enthusiastic about the

state of the arts in our country. The quality and abundance of creative work has never been higher (...). As a society we wish to reward our artists. They need not only our interest and attention, but also material conditions within which they can engage in their work and their art (...). The health of our culture and the health of our country are interdependent.'⁶ In reality, the component concerned with encouraging Canadian self-expression has not received the greatest priority. In 1983, the then minister of Communications stated: 'Although not generally recognized, arts and cultural activities may have as much to contribute to economic performance as information technology.' He pointed out that in 1981, the cultural sector had contributed almost 1 percent of the economy - almost as much as the textiles, aircraft and chemical industries combined.⁷ In this case, the minister was not thinking of culture in terms of Canadian self-expression, but rather of the economic potential of the Canadian cultural industries. In other words, the Canadian book publishing, magazine, film, radio, television and telecommunications industries.

The tensions between culture, the state, industrial development, technological innovation and globalization have determined the outcomes of Canada's cultural policy laboratory, as any examination will reveal. Some scholars, like Steven Globerman⁸, have tried to show that the dynamics of free market forces are healthier for cultural development than government interventions, but such views are primarily concerned with economic development and ignore the value of Canadian self-expression.

3. The central role of the federal government

In spite of some miscalculations and ill-advised actions, such as the attempt in 1993 to merge

two cultural agencies and a department in a ministry without first doing research that would give such a move justification⁹, there is no question that without the intervention of the federal government, Canadian cultural life could not have developed to its present level. Furthermore, alternative sources of funding, such as private wealth, which has played such an important part in the development of culture, and particularly the arts, in the US, are simply not available to anything like the same degree in Canada. A reliable estimate of annual private contributions from all sources to cultural organizations is around \$ 68 million.¹⁰ The total expenditures by federal, provincial and municipal governments are estimated to be of \$ 6.1 billion a year.¹¹ Notwithstanding this fact the amount of Canadian content in certain program categories in the electronic media is small. Well over 90 percent of dramatic television programs are foreign and 97 percent of major film showings are non-Canadian. Furthermore, more than 70 percent of the books sold in Canada are foreign.¹²

cultural policy research

As far as cultural policy is concerned, and the on-going need to reshape it, like the decade of the 1970s, the period 1982-1994 was consumed with inquiries, probings and constant research due to technological developments, the advance of global communications, concerns with trade, pressures from the private sector, the arts community and citizens' groups. Some of the research was concerned with the cultural implications of restructuring the Canadian economy in relation to two monumental agreements, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement which came into effect on January 1, 1989, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that began on January 1, 1994. In dealing with both agreements, Canadian culture, which was viewed as the

Canadian cultural industries, was officially excluded. Nevertheless, there is evidence that negative consequences for Canadian culture are inescapable.

4. Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Applebaum-Hébert)

If we focus on the period under consideration, it will be immediately apparent that from the outset there was an awareness that Canadian cultural policies were not well enough synchronized to a rapidly changing world and needed to be reviewed. It was for this reason that the government established the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Applebaum-Hébert) which submitted its report in 1982.¹³ The committee recognized that without the financial and organizational support of the federal and provincial governments in the previous thirty years, a much noted, phenomenal surge of artistic activity in Canada could not have occurred. As its point of departure, the committee insisted that creative artists - which means creators and performers - must be central to all cultural policy together with audiences, who after all are the users of the arts. With this worthy and 'pure' view of the purpose of cultural policy, the *Applebaum-Hébert report* stressed the need to focus on Canadian self-expression as the most important component of Canadian culture to a government whose primary concern was the cultural industries.

broadcasting

The most controversial part of Applebaum-Hébert was concerned with broadcasting. The committee did not mince words in saying that, while Canada had developed a technological infrastructure that was one of the most sophisticated and up-to-date in the world, in terms of developing indigenous programming in the Canadian broadcasting system it had

been much less successful, because about 80 percent of the prime-time viewing of Canadians in 1982 was being spent watching foreign programming, most of it with high production values from the United States. However, a partial explanation for this situation is that the Canadian broadcasting system was rapidly becoming part of a mediasphere of multi-channels with an expanding number of hours of foreign programming. An inevitable consequence was a move to focus on Canadian entertainment programming that would be competitive with that produced elsewhere. Obviously, a move to focus on such programming did little to implement the balance between types of programming and betrayed the spirit of the 1968 Broadcasting Act which was in use at that time - something that the regulator seemed unable to correct.

Applebaum-Hébert recognized a negative aspect of commercial broadcasting in relation to viewer choice and balance of programs. In the report it said that 'many potentially good programs are not produced. Even though there might be an audience large enough to allow them to be produced profitably, there are other programs with even larger audiences that are still more lucrative and these win out.'¹⁴ This is why private television networks in Canada have stayed clear of the arts. They prefer to concentrate on the most popular programming to earn the maximum in advertising revenue and tend to complain about the 60 percent overall and 50 percent prime-time Canadian content regulations with which they must comply.

CBC Television

Applebaum-Hébert believed that the CBC spent too much money on bureaucracy, and for that reason recommended that except for news, CBC Television should relinquish all production activities and acquire its television programs

from independent producers.¹⁵ The CBC was urged to commission a substantial amount of programming from the various regions of the country and to concentrate on developing Canadian self-expression. Another recommendation was that the CBC should withdraw from commercial broadcasting; something that had been urged by private broadcasters who resent competing with the CBC in their use of advertisers.

Unfortunately, Applebaum-Hébert did not suggest ways and means of replacing the money CBC would lose from advertising with the result that the CBC's attention to the arts on television is still marginal.

The CBC was shocked and disturbed at Applebaum-Hébert's recommendations and was reluctant to cut 'in-house' production. Nevertheless, since 1982 it has made giant strides in opening its doors to independent producers.

Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund

This situation was brought about by an insightful policy of the federal government that set up the Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund - available to both public and private broadcasters - under the auspices of Téléfilm Canada, in order to stimulate independent production. This fund, brought about by a fresh excise tax on cable subscribers, was the centrepiece of a new broadcasting policy announced in 1983. So important was it to find a growing amount of money for productions that it appeared the CBC was being cut in order to increase the budget of Téléfilm Canada, because after the CBC was cut \$ 75 million in 1984, as part of reducing the national deficit, two years later \$33 million was added to Téléfilm's budget while the CBC's pleas for additional funds, in real terms, went unheeded. This shift in policy on the part of the

government, although useful in enhancing Canadian production, had one unfortunate consequence because the CBC felt obliged to seek greater revenue from advertising, with the result that it began to look more and more like a commercial broadcaster instead of a distinctive public broadcaster. One sign of this was a conspicuous reduction of full-length productions of operas, dance events and serious drama in CBC television schedules as well as a range of other types of cultural programming.

CBC Radio

It should be noted that Applebaum-Hébert's criticism of the CBC was aimed at CBC Television. Although they received their share of criticism, the CBC's four radio networks, two English and two French, are considered to be vital instruments for Canadian self-expression and the development of the arts. In spite of budget cuts, the CBC is still the largest single employer of musicians in Canada and CBC Radio is the major outlet for music performers and composers.

The symbiotic relationship between radio and the recording industry is well known.

In Canada, the regulator requires that 30 percent of all music played on AM must be Canadian and there are varying requirements for stereo stations according to the type of music used.

Sound Recording Development Program

In order to assist both the Canadian radio and recording industries, the federal government established a Sound Recording Development Program in 1986, which among other things, was to help finance French language recordings, which, because of the smallness of the French language market, and for other reasons, were in decline. In short, through a variety of means, the amount of Canadian content on radio stations and in the

recording industry could not have been achieved without the CRTC and the direct financial assistance of the federal government.

5. Cultural industries

During the 1982-1994 period, a considerable number of initiatives were taken including the establishment of task forces to advise on the development of cultural policy in relation to Canadian self-expression. Of course, not all of the advice offered was accepted.

film and video

Just before the 1984 federal election, the liberal government introduced a new policy for film and video. Of the two thrusts involved, one focused on bringing economic stability to the production of film and video and the other was an attempt to clarify the role of Canada's National Film Board. The suggestion from Applebaum-Hébert that the Board should cease productions and become a centre for advanced research and training was ignored. Instead, the new direction was that the Board should undertake only those productions that were of no interest to the private sector, which of course left it considerable scope.

When the conservatives, with Brian Mulroney as prime minister, were elected in 1984, it was not surprising that with Canada in recession they wanted to reconsider cultural policies in relation to their stated priorities of deficit reduction, privatization and national reconciliation.

In 1985, the new government had many concerns about the cultural industries and notwithstanding the previous government's film and video policy of the previous year, it established a task force to probe further the structural and other problems of the Canadian film industry. This was followed by the announcement of a program to assist feature films and film dubbing that added the \$33

million previously mentioned to Téléfilm's already expanded budget.

In 1987, the government issued a document called *Vital links* which articulated cultural policy in relation to the Canadian cultural industries while trying to link them to Canadian self-expression. It stated that 'Culture is the very essence of our national identity. Nourishing that identity are the cultural industries, whose artists are more assured than ever but whose institutions face long odds against success.'¹⁶ The objective of cultural policy was 'to shorten those odds'¹⁷ and develop initiatives that would better join Canadian creators to their audiences. While the rhetoric was excellent there was still no real move to financially strengthen Canadian creators and performers who should be central to Canadian cultural policy.

Eventually in 1988, a bill was introduced on the importation of films and videos. Among other things this move was intended to assist Canadian film distributors, but because of strong lobbying on the part of the US film lobby with the Canadian government, the bill died on the order paper and has never been reintroduced. Another negative action was the move of the minister of Finance to reduce the 100 percent capital cost allowance for films to 30 percent, which made Canadian films much less attractive to investors. Obviously, the cultural and fiscal strategies of the federal government were out of alignment.

book and magazine publishing

The federal government had many concerns with the cultural industries with regard to the printed word and in 1986 allocated \$65 million to the book publishing industry over five years. This strategy consisted of a Book Publishing Industry Development Program and some assistance to The Canada Council to provide limited support for culturally important books

unlikely to find their way in the market place. As far as the periodical publishing industry was concerned, a policy was already in place. The federal government prohibits the sale of foreign periodicals with more than 5 percent of advertising intended for Canadian readers - with the exception of religious, scholarly and literary publications. However, the implementation of this policy is now threatened because of the advancement of technology. In 1993, the American magazine *Sports Illustrated* announced it would produce a split run version for release in Canada. Although totally produced in the US, it can be printed in Canada through satellite transmission.¹⁸ Unless this new loophole can be closed, foreign publications will be able to circumvent Canadian law and undermine the Canadian magazine industry.

Apart from mainstream magazines, special encouragement is provided to arts, literary and children's journals by The Canada Council and to scholarly journals by the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada.

6. Task Force on Broadcasting Policy (Caplan-Sauvageau)

At the centre of Canadian cultural policy was broadcasting, because generally speaking, after work and sleep Canadians devote more time to this form of culture than anything else. Not satisfied with the previous government's broadcasting policy, the conservatives established a Task Force on Broadcasting Policy which submitted a report in 1986.¹⁹ A book of some 700 pages, it was one of the most exhaustive studies ever undertaken in the cultural area and one for which a great amount of research was done. The *Caplan-Sauvageau report* as it was called (after its co-chairmen) made many recommendations and provided suggestions concerning how they could be financed. One of the most controversial

recommendations was the establishment of a second public broadcaster to be known as TV Canada which would have separate English and French services and be located elsewhere than Toronto or Montreal. The Task Force felt that the crisis in Canadian programming was so enormous the CBC alone could not cope with it. As a solution, it proposed that TV Canada would focus on children's, documentary and arts programs, and on independent productions originating in the regions. An exchange of various programs was called for between the English and French services using subtitling. Ironically, this proposal bore resemblance to the CBC TV 2/Télé 2 proposal that the CBC itself had made some time earlier and which had been rejected by the regulator because of concerns over the CBC's ability to finance these new channels.

The *Report* also called for a revision of the 1924 Copyright Act, to better protect creators and performers in the light of a new technological world, and to provide protection for other players, including recording companies and cable operators, against piracy. Important recommendations were made, intended to give greater scope to multicultural broadcasting and the special needs of the native peoples of Canada in order to strengthen the use of their languages and develop their cultures. The *Report* also recommended the expansion of not-for-profit community broadcasting, which had developed nation-wide because of a CRTC requirement to each cable operator to establish and maintain a community channel as a condition of licence. Caplan-Sauvageau considered citizen access so important that it recommended more weight and recognition be accorded to community broadcasting.

In the non-public part of the system it urged the regulator to place greater Canadian content demands on the private broadcasters in return

for the regulatory protection and legislative support they receive that is worth 'many tens of millions of dollars in direct advertising revenues and infinitely more in industrial stability.'²⁰ Caplan-Sauvageau proposed a new broadcasting act that would encompass all their recommendations and address the needs of all segments of Canadian society, strengthen the various dimensions of Canadian culture and provide more Canadian programming choices with the CBC playing the central role.

7. The importance of twin cultural and communications policies

culture, communications and Canadian unity

In 1991, an attempt was made to forge a new constitutional deal which would make Quebec a part of a renewed Canada. This led the federal government to see whether it could take a symmetrical approach to cultural policies with the English speaking provinces and an asymmetrical approach with Quebec. In the latter case, some policies would have been devolved to Quebec. This approach proved controversial, because, while Quebec nationalists demanded the 'repatriation' of their culture, there was also support within the province for the federal government's involvement in culture in Quebec. Although the referendum on constitutional renewal brought about a majority negative vote from both French and English Canada, the work done on the special needs of French culture in Canada and attempts to ensure the open-endedness and flexibility of cultural policy will not be wasted in terms of developing future cultural policy.

It should also be noted that before the referendum took place in 1992, the all-party Standing Committee on Communications and Culture in the House of Commons in Ottawa undertook a major study on the implications of culture and communications for Canadian

unity. This committee had previously established a new importance with a remarkably perceptive review of the previously mentioned *Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy*.²¹ The new study was called *The ties that bind* and included a number of recommendations, the most significant of which was a request for a Canada cultural accord with the provinces and the territories that would reflect a national cultural vision allowing for diversity among the founding peoples and those of multicultural background, as well as the aboriginal peoples.

culture and communications as twin policies

The ties that bind report necessitated a response from the federal government and this took the form of a report called *Unique among nations* which was issued in April 1993. In its response the federal government felt obliged to provide an up-date to cultural policy developments. The approach was also to articulate a public policy that acknowledged the importance of twin cultural and communication policies. However, if culture and communications are twin policies, they are joined at the hip and inextricably bound up with each other.

Three components were confirmed within cultural policy, consisting of one for the arts and artists, as well as crafts, a second for the cultural industries and a third for heritage preservation. Two components were identified within communications: first, broadcasting transmission including radio, television, cable and satellites and second, telecommunications, including telephone service, telecopying, teleconferencing, direct data transmission and satellite communications.

actions in the field of cultural policy

In order to show that it had moved ahead to deal with these policies the government

articulated various actions it had taken.²² One of the most important under cultural policy was the 1991 Broadcasting Act, proposed by Caplan-Sauvageau. The Act, which took five years to come into being, contains a general broadcasting policy for Canada. The policy articulates three components to the system, consisting of public, private and community elements. It states that the system must continue to operate primarily in English and French and, through its programming, provide a public service essential to the maintenance of national identity and cultural sovereignty. The expectation that broadcasting will deal with the issue of national unity, included in the previous act, was removed because of a perception that it smacked of uniformity rather than the diverse cultural expression within a single nation of two founding peoples, which is the Canadian reality.

In recognition of the special considerations of Quebec, and French-speaking minorities across Canada, the Act states that 'English and French language broadcasting, while sharing common aspects, operate under different conditions and may have different requirements.'²³ Of course, this simply acknowledges reality, because the cultural, social and political particularities of French Canada are such that it must develop according to its own dynamics.

In essence the Act provides guiding principles, roles and obligations of public and private broadcasters, insists on Canadian production (including a significant contribution from the independent production sector) and gives the right to the government for the first time to issue directions to the regulator concerning broad policy matters.

the native peoples and ethnic minorities as part of cultural policy in the electronic media

As far as other developments in cultural

policy are concerned, mention must be made of the launching of Television Northern Canada Corporation (TVNC).²⁴ Through TVNC, the aboriginal peoples of the far north now have access to a broadcasting system under native control which is reflecting their culture in as many as 12 languages or dialects to 94 transmitters across five time-zones.²⁵ The basic funding for the expansion of native broadcasting in northern Canada came from the federal government and about 80 percent of the programming is Canadian. However, budget reductions caused by the recession are now affecting this imaginative development.

Furthermore, during the 1982-1990 period, ethnic language broadcasting expanded in Canada in both radio and television. By 1990, in accordance with a previously announced ethnic broadcasting policy of the regulator, almost 15,000 hours of programming were being broadcast annually in 46 languages.²⁶

further actions by the federal government

Among other federal government actions mentioned under cultural policy were: the 1988 Copyright Act which is really Phase I of a copyright overhaul, the Status of the Artist Act that recognizes the importance of artists in society and provides a legal framework for the professional relations of artists' associations and producers and the Canada-Quebec Subsidiary Agreement on Communications Enterprises Development. Under this umbrella, Canada participates in the TV 5 Consortium with the governments of Quebec, France, Switzerland and Belgium.

Two further actions by the federal government should be mentioned. The Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Music Industry established in 1992 which was concerned with the impact of technology and accompanying trends in relation to existing policies and legislation, the 1991 Broadcasting

Summit that led to a strategy to focus further on Canadian productions and align Canadian commercial broadcasters and film makers to face new competitors such as those concerned with Direct Broadcast Satellite - Direct to Home (DBS-DTH) technology. Finally, two building projects of national and international significance were completed in Ottawa; namely, the new National Gallery of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization. They opened their doors in 1988 and 1989 respectively but their holdings have hardly been reflected in the television programming.

actions in the field of communications

Under communications policy the federal government articulated the following actions: first, the tabling of a bill to overhaul and update existing telecommunications legislation as a counterpoint to the 1991 Broadcasting Act and second, the establishment of a Local Networks Convergence Committee to report on the continuing convergence of telecommunications and broadcasting and the new multimedia services that will be delivered by the telecommunications common carriers and the cable television operators.

Also brought into being was the Radio Action Plan Consultative Group to make recommendations concerning the serious economic situation of private radio stations and a Task Force on the Introduction of Digital Radio to plan for the co-ordination and implementation of digital radio broadcasting. In addition, there was a Task Force on the Economic Status of (Private) Canadian Television (Girard-Peters).

Further to these actions the federal government drew attention to the fact that it has assisted both artists and the public with its Canadian arts consumer profile study, with which it was financially assisted by the

provinces and the cities of Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. This was the first pan-Canadian survey of current and potential consumers of the professional performing and visual arts.²⁷

8. Strengths and weaknesses in Canadian cultural policy

Enough information and comment have been provided to attest to the intense activity in the Canadian cultural laboratory between 1982 and 1994. However, there are varying views on the success of Canadian cultural policy during this period.

expenditures

Certainly, there has been some success. In 1981, the total contribution of the cultural sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 2.2 percent.²⁸ By 1991 it had grown to 3.7 percent.²⁹ This was of course slow but sure growth.

As already stated, the combined level of direct expenditures, on all aspects of culture, on the part of the three levels of government stands at \$ 6.1 billion for 1991-1992, which represents an increase of 3.6 percent in constant dollars over five years from the 1987-88 year. In the same five years, the federal government, which has always been the largest contributor to culture, has seen its share of total government expenditures decline, while that of the provinces and municipalities has risen.³⁰ Nevertheless, the federal government remains the largest player in expenditures on culture,³¹ but at the same time a dramatic drop in both direct and indirect expenditures should be noted.³²

employment and income

Another yardstick of development is employment, which in the cultural sector grew by 58 percent in the 1981-89 period. Certainly, this compares favourably with total national

employment which grew by only 14 percent during the same period.³³

However, in spite of these encouraging indicators, the reality was that Canada was coping with a recession in the 1980s and again in the 1990s. The uncertainty of the economy in a global recession has depressed the incomes of individual creators and performers: in the decade leading to 1991, there was barely any growth in their incomes. Indeed, there was a decline in certain categories.³⁴ This of course means that those who are most essential to Canada's cultural life are the most disadvantaged. During this period, one could also see the elimination of some book publishing firms, performing groups and the increasing deficits of performing arts organizations. In addition, generally speaking, there has been a decline in the profits of private broadcasters and a slackening of the production of films and videos. The decline of combined direct and indirect expenditures on culture by the federal government by 24 percent between 1984-85 and 1991,³⁵ has placed agencies like the CBC, which is obliged to make further budget reductions, in a crisis that calls for innovative thinking and fresh approaches to planning. The budget of The Canada Council has been in decline in real terms for almost a decade. Speaking in May 1992, the chairman of the Council sent this message to the federal government: 'The economic crisis (...) has imperilled the arts (...). The incomes of individual artists, already the lowest in the country, are shrinking as work opportunities disappear. What is the future for Canadian film (and) broadcasting when original creation - the very basis on which these other activities depend for their survival - is threatened? As Canadians we face the danger of losing what has been created during thirty years of growth, and of leaving an impoverished cultural legacy to our children, whose major cultural resource

will be the international mass media.'³⁶

However, the Council will fare better with the announcement of 1.5 percent annual increase beginning in the 1995-96 year.

decline in audiences for the performing arts

As far as the performing arts groups are concerned, in 1992-93, average ticket prices remained the same but difficult economic times led to a decline in audiences - a trend that had previously been in evidence. The exception was theatre audiences which increased by 4 percent. In terms of performing groups, the City of Winnipeg remains a model where 47 percent of the population attend arts events. Across the country, expenses for performing arts groups rose just under 2 percent while revenues increased by just over 2 percent.³⁷

CBC Television and Radio

The recommendation of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy that a second public broadcaster be established has not been implemented. Indeed, the one public broadcaster, the CBC, is finding it hard to meet its mandate, not only because of budget cuts but because of falling advertising revenue. Because, like other national broadcasters, the CBC has to read the future and understand the insatiable appetite of the public for news, it launched CBC Newsworld, a satellite and cable distributed service in English and is planning a similar service in French. In September of 1994, the CBC will launch two television services in the United States as a result of an agreement with Power Broadcasting Inc. (PBI) using DBS-DTH technology.³⁸ In this way, Newsworld International and Trio, a service concerned with Canadian drama and other aspects of Canadian culture, will be the first attempt to implement a Canadian policy concerned with the South-North flow of culture on the North American continent while hopefully increasing

the CBC's revenue. Again reading the future, CBC Radio in association with Industry Canada, is making some of its programs available to an experimental data base being fed into Internet, now considered the world's fastest growing on-line service. Through Internet, these programs are available to 30 million people in 152 countries.³⁹ This is a welcome sign because it has been evident for many years that the CBC needs a consistent policy to widen its program delivery system.

It should be noted that the CBC's recognition of Internet is very much in tune with the federal government's interest in the 'electronic highway' which will eventually link together all existing communications systems into a seamless new communications system in Canada. However, this calls for a realignment of cultural, communications, telecommunications and economic policies.

cultural industries

Clearly, the realignment and development of culture in relation to changing social and economic situations and the unceasing advancement of technology is providing governments everywhere with a major challenge. However, Canada is in a particularly difficult situation, because from an economic point of view both its English and French markets are small, and with the advance of globalization, in which conglomerates seek the advantages of economy of scale by marketing and distributing their cultural goods in many countries, Canada is in a vulnerable position. Indeed, this situation caused Canada's deficit in trade in cultural products (books, magazines, sound recordings etc.) to grow at an average of 8 percent between 1981 and 1989.⁴⁰

specialty channels

In recent years, viewer choice has been widened through the introduction of specialty

channels that are dealing with a variety of special interests ranging from popular music channels in English and French, and others concerned with feature films, to outlets for religious and individual linguistic groups, all of them having different expectations of Canadian content. It was hoped that following a 1993 hearing of the CRTC, which was concerned with choosing new specialty channels, there would be a significant improvement in the work opportunities of Canadian artists and creators. There were 48 applications and one devoted to the arts and other forms of culture has now been approved. For months, CHUM City's Bravo application was viewed with concern by the Canadian arts community, because of a fear that it would rely heavily on the American channel Bravo (with which it is associated), for high production value programming. Certainly, the smallness of Bravo's Canadian program development fund gives credence to this perception. No doubt this is one of the reasons why a concerned group of organizations has petitioned the cabinet in Ottawa to postpone, or set aside, the approval of the licences for Bravo and its French language twin, Arts et Divertissements. The regulator will eventually make a call for further channels, but the licensing of Bravo and its counterpart may seriously delay other arts channel proposals being brought forward.

other structural weaknesses

There are other structural weaknesses in Canadian cultural policy, which is meant to link creators and performers to their audiences. Examples of this are the lack of a strong policy to assist Canadian film distributors to bring home-made films to Canadian audiences and the failure to date to finish and implement Phase II of the Copyright Act through legislation. Furthermore, some cultural policies in place are being disregarded. In

March, the sale of the educational publisher Ginn to Paramount Communications Inc., which had already acquired another Canadian publisher of great importance, is seen as a contravention of Canadian cultural policy by the Association of Canadian Publishers, which has threatened to take legal action. Although not in accord with a policy that encourages Canadian ownership in publishing and by implication, with a policy that gives encouragement to Canadian writers, the current liberal government states that a commitment to sell the company was made by the previous conservative government and must be honoured.⁴¹

three levels of government

While a cultural accord with the provinces as proposed in *The ties that bind*, has not been achieved in the way envisaged by the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture in 1992, structural problems concerned with duplications between different levels of government are considered at meetings between cultural bureaucrats in the two levels of government. However, new mechanisms to bring coherence to cultural policy between all three levels of government and the private sector need to be put in place. In Ottawa, there needs to be greater coherence in cultural policy between the cultural agencies such as the CBC, the National Arts Centre and The Canada Council, and these agencies need to be subject to regular reviews with established yardsticks of accountability.

9. Cultural policy and the future of the Canadian broadcasting system

Clearly, the most problematical area of Canadian cultural policy is broadcasting. From the very first report of 1929 by Sir John Aird that brought about the establishment of the Canadian broadcasting system until today,

there has been a fear that Canadian culture would be overwhelmed by that of our great neighbour south of the 49th parallel.

It is obvious that there is more television programming available now in the system than in 1982. But how much viewing of Canadian programming is taking place? Between 1984-85 and 1988-89 peak time (7 to 11 p.m.) viewing of Canadian programming on English language stations increased by 30 percent, to reach a level of 25.4 percent and overall viewing of Canadian programming climbed to 29 percent. In French-speaking Canada the overall viewing of Canadian programs was a whopping 75 percent.⁴² The CBC French network and its main commercial counterpart TVA have the largest audience 'shares' of any of the television networks in North America. From this, and taking into consideration the expanded number of channels available, it can be assumed that at least as far as the numbers game is concerned, Canadian cultural policy in relation to broadcasting has been successful from certain perspectives. However, as already indicated, the structure and performance of CBC Television leaves something to be desired and the manner of financing it is in urgent need of review. Such a review will take place by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage aimed at 'forging a new consensus about the role of the CBC in the new multi-channel universe' and in relation to advertising it will 'explore the feasibility of introducing alternative revenue-generating mechanisms.'⁴³

CBC and regional and local programming

Within broadcasting policy, regional and local programming are of special importance to cultural identity, and apart from the private broadcasters, the CBC has a crucial role to play in these areas. However, with television, before, during and after a series of severe budget cuts, the CBC appeared to develop what might be

described as 'mandate schizophrenia'. This took the form of dramatically moving away from regional programming responsibilities while consolidating its national mandate. The result has been a dysfunction in the system because of the lack of a real presence for certain types of programming and in particular those concerned with the arts, multi-culturalism and drama that give scope to the creative and performing resources of all the main areas of the country.

Canada has very particular responsibilities toward Quebec, as the smallest of the two principal cultures, and toward the one million French speaking people situated elsewhere in Canada who are surrounded by nearly 290 million people using English as their official language. Obviously, the culture of Quebec is an extremely important part of the warp and woof of the Canadian cultural fabric and a yardstick of the success of Canadian cultural policy should be how well English and French cultural reflection is apparent in the Canadian broadcasting system through the programming of both public and private broadcasters and the strategies of the regulator.

repositioning of the broadcasting system

Clearly, any new approach to changing the structure of the CBC has to be determined as part of a repositioning of the Canadian broadcasting system, which through DBS-DTH technology and digital video-compression, will be subject to approximately 150 additional channels⁴⁴ in the not too distant future. In various parts of Canada, Canadians can receive more channels than almost anyone anywhere in the world, so there has been no strong general demand for more channels. It is certainly not possible to watch 150 channels, in anything but the most superficial way, let alone the 500 predicted in the next century. An exploding universe of television channels means that

almost all American high-production-value populist programming will be in constant circulation among many outlets. This could mean that the survival of Canadian outlets depends on their finding ways to be more distinctive, and the most logical way to achieve this end is through greater and more serious attention to Canadian programming. As far as the arts are concerned, with their collective experience, it would make sense for the CBC to combine with the National Arts Centre and other appropriate partners to come forward with a proposal to the CRTC for arts channels in English and French. However, for the moment there is no room for further channels on the basic tier.

In the new broadcasting universe, Canadian cultural policy will need to focus less on regulation per se and more on Canadian production, as well as on a strong Canadian presence in a widening number of international productions. Canadian cultural policy will need to give greater emphasis to Canadian creators and performers, because without self-expression at the centre of our culture, the collective identities that are so characteristic of Canada would lose their reciprocal resonance and the country would be only a market of the super-powers of globalization.

In the changing world of today, we must all learn from each other. Certainly, Canadians have an eye on the changing cultural scene in Europe, and if Europeans want to have a particular idea of what the reconfiguration of broadcasting systems, the explosion of technology and the increasing domination of commercial interests do to the reshaping of indigenous culture, they will find the developing situation in Canada a phenomenon worth continuing to watch.

Notes

1. Robert Kubey, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *Television and the quality of life*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990, p. 1.
2. The provincial governments were introducing policies such as those of Quebec concerned with strengthening dance and theatre in 1983 and a Quebec Status of the Artist bill in 1987 and a capital cost allowance for films and video more substantial than that of the federal government which was subsequently replaced by a refundable tax credit. As the result of the Special Committee for the Arts in Ontario in 1984, the Ontario Arts Council received an increase in its budget and started to implement an enriched five year plan.
3. In 1990-1991, of total government spending on culture, 47 percent was from the federal government, 32 percent from the provinces and 21 percent from the municipalities. In: *Proscenium*, vol. 3, 1994, no. 1, March/April, pp. 6-7. (The publisher of *Proscenium* is the Canadian Conference of the Arts, in Ottawa.)
4. *Government expenditures on culture 1990-91, catalogue 87-206*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; Culture Statistics, 1993.
5. Paul D. Schafer and André Fortier. *Review of federal policies for the arts in Canada (1944-1988)*. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of the Arts, 1989.
6. *Vital links*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987, p. 7.
7. Francis Fox. *Culture and communications: key elements of Canada's economic future; brief to the Royal Commission on The Economic Union and Development Prospects of Canada*. Montreal: Ministry of Communication, 1983, p. 12.
8. Steven Globerman. *Cultural regulation in Canada*. Montreal: Institute for Research and Public Policy, 1983.
9. *Memorandum*. Ottawa: Office of President; Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), June 16, 1993.
10. *Unique among nations*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1993, p. 28.
11. K. Kelly and M. Krantz. 'Building the new economy'. In: *Proscenium*, vol. 3, 1994, no. 1, March/April 1994, p. 4.
12. R. Skinner. 'Dispelling the myths of Canada's cultural malaise'. In: *Proscenium*, 1994, vol. 3, no. 1, March/April, p. 4.
13. Known as the *Applebaum-Hébert report* after its chairmen Louis Applebaum and Jacques Hébert.
14. *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee*. Ottawa: Department of Communications, 1982, p. 271.
15. *Ibidem*. Recommendation # 67, p. 354.
16. *Vital links*, p. 6.
17. *Ibidem*, p. 6.
18. Press release 'Canadian Conference of the Arts call for immediate government action on Sports Illustrated'. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of the Arts, April 5, 1993.
19. *Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy* (Caplan-Sauvageau). Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1986.
20. *Ibidem*, p. 697.

21. *Broadcasting policy for Canada: a report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer for Canada, 1988.
22. *Unique among nations*, pp. 12-20.
23. *1991 Broadcasting Act*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer for Canada, 1991, pp. 3-4.
24. Composed of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), the Inuvialuit Communications Society, Northern Native Broadcasting, Yukon, the Okalakatiget Society, Taqramiut Nipingat, the Native Communications Society of the Western, North West Territories, the Government of the North West Territories, Yukon College and the National Aboriginal Communications Society.
25. *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission decision*. Ottawa: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 1991 (Decision no. 91-826)
26. Keith Spicer. *Opening remarks Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Ottawa: Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission, November 20, 1991, p. 2.
27. *Canadian arts consumer profile 1990-91: findings*. Ottawa: Decima Research and Les Consultants Cultur'Inc Inc, May 1992.
28. Paul Audley. *The arts and artists in Ontario in the context of the cultural sector and cultural policy*. Toronto: Paul Audley and Associates Ltd., May 3-4, 1992. (Background Research Paper)
29. Kelly and Krantz (note 11), p. 6.
30. *Ibidem*, pp. 6-8.
31. *Government expenditures on culture 1990-91, catalogue 87-206*, p. 7.
32. Audley (note 28), p. 19.
33. *Ibidem*, p. 3.
34. Cultural labour force

Cultural labour force, average income, Canada 1981 and 1991, SOC 1980

	1981 (in constant 1980 dollars)*	1991 \$
Actors and actresses	12,520	12,242
Musicians and singers	9,512	8,997
Dancers and choreographers	8,819	9,346
Occupations in writing		
Writers and editors	15,969	16,377
Translators and interpreters	15,500	14,437
Occupations in writing n.e.c.	13,834	13,715
Painters, sculptors & related artists	7,394	7,401
Conductors, composers & arrangers	11,158	13,552

*deflated using all items C.P.I. n.e.c.: not elsewhere classified Source: Statistics Canada, Census

35. Audley (note 28), p. 19.
36. *Notes for remarks by Allan Gotlieb, chairman of The Canada Council, to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Communications and Culture*. Ottawa: The Canada Council, 14 May, 1992.
37. *Performing arts groups attack deficit*. Toronto: The Council for Business and the Arts, March 10, 1994.
38. Letter from Gladys Frappier to J.P.L. Roberts. Ottawa: CBC Audience Research, March 22, 1994.
39. CBC press release. Toronto, December 21, 1993.
40. Audley (note 28), p. 3.
41. Val Ross. 'Angry publishers weigh legal action in Ginn affair'. In: *The Globe and Mail, Arts +*. March 26, 1994, p. C5.
42. *CRTC audience research*. Hull, Province of Quebec: CRTC, 1994. International information.
43. Letter from Michel Dupuy, minister of Canadian Heritage to J.P.L. Roberts. Ottawa, June 27, 1994.
44. Lorne Gunter. 'Alberta report'. In: *Alberta Report*, 1993, March 22, p. 21. (The magazine *Alberta Report* is published in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta.)

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