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## COMMITTEE NOTES

October 27 was the last day of the Committee's New York Seminar THE EXPERTS SPEAK ON THEATRE ADMINISTRATION. In looking back over the week-long program, we found that it was a success in several ways: the speakers had a lot to say - much of which was topical, and the people who attended were vocal with their own opinions. The result was a fast-paced, highly argumentive, thoroughly informative series which produced a free flow of opinion and controversy.

Unfortunately, the Seminar was poorly attended - the figure ranged from five to thirty-five participants a night. Although there has been much hindsight to explain our quantitative failure, the fact remains that this East Coast "disinterest" follows a trend. Although the Committee seems to function well through publication, it does not succeed when it tries to hold meetings.

An edited transcript of the Seminar will be available shortly. However, a large part can not be released, and is therefore lost to those who did not attend. A report on the meeting of the Federal Bar Assn. of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut's Committee on the Law of the Theatre is included in this SUPPLEMENT. THE USITT was invited to attend the meeting as part of its own Seminar.

The present issue also holds the first section of a two-part article on the Canada Council. Part I describes the overall activities of the Council. Part II (scheduled for January) will review the Council's program in the specific field of theatre arts.

James L. Nuckolls  
Chairman, Committee for  
Theatre Administration

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PROBLEMS ON THE ROAD - T. Bruce Birkenhead

On Friday, October 21, 1966 BACK STAGE estimated that when all four of Martin Tahse's road shows were running simultaneously Mr. Tahse would be grossing more than a quarter of a million dollars per week. But two days earlier Variety reported that two of the four, "Where's Charley" and "Desert Song", were already on their way out. Subscription sales were apparently fairly good, but excellent box office sales were necessary to keep the shows above water. Despite hard sell promotion, the Box office sales did not materialize.

The final blow came on October 27, when the corporation filed for bankruptcy. The New York Times reported in its article of October 28, 1966, that debts of the corporation amounted to \$1,336,574, with assets a scant \$443,401. "Funny Girl" and "On a Clear Day..." proved to be stronger than the two antiques, but even they did not fare well in the smaller cities and towns. What happened to turn what appeared to be one of the strongest road attempts to come along in recent history into a rather quick failure?

There was much of interest in the enterprise. First, the scheme was organized as a corporation rather than the usual limited partnership. Without going into the pros and cons of this approach, we can presume that one of the goals was permanence and the creation of an organization which could expand through increased issue of shares in the corporation. Thus, if success had come to Tahse, new money capital could have been attracted more easily into the expanding enterprise than is the case with a limited partnership. Of most interest is Mr. Tahse himself. With a record of success behind him, and known as an individual who knows how to ballyhoo and market theatre, the organization appeared to at least be blessed with good management. And good management is a rare commodity in theatrical organizations.

We attempted to obtain an interview with Mr. Tahse to obtain some first hand knowledge as to what the problems are in mounting a twenty-five city tour of four shows. The attempts were unsuccessful, so we can only speculate. As indicated in the Variety articles, the small and medium size towns and cities did not provide enough business for a run of a full week. In addition, the shows moved out into the market with subscription sales far below printed estimates. Although there appears to be no question that ballyhoo preceded and accompanied each production, it failed to achieve the basic goal of advertising: to sell the product. And, there appears to be general agreement that stars with greater ability to draw on the basis of name were needed, especially to sell the revivals.

Two important points need fuller treatment. Variety touched on the question of the organization not capitalizing itself to allow for a year or two of losses. We believe this is a crucial point. The idea of instant success is a disease of the theatre. It is one necessary on Broadway. Either a Broadway production is successful almost immediately or it dies. But instant success is not necessary, nor usually possible, for regional theatre; it should not have been the goal of an organization which was obviously not put together for a one shot venture on the Road. Like any other firm, it must be presumed that losses will accompany a new venture. If instant success is realized there will be no complaints and few problems. But if losses are incurred there should be enough reserve to carry on for at least one more season, and to allow for changes in the formula just in case the first one help-

ed contribute to the failure.

The second point surrounds the market itself. There is an assumption inherent in any attempt to bring theatre to a community that a market exists. It may need to be whipped up a bit, and it may have to be convinced of the production's quality, but the market is there. Unfortunately the market may not be there at all. Any desire or need for entertainment and/or "culture" is being answered very adequately in many communities by half-empty movie houses and the self-owned TV set. And if the family is to spend the equivalent of two tickets for live theatre it may prefer to go out to dinner.

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#### THE CANADA COUNCIL - Part I

The Canada Council was created by the Government of Canada, in 1957, to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts, humanities and social sciences". It carries out its task mainly through a broad program of fellowships and grants of various types. It also shares the responsibility for Canada's cultural relations with other countries, and administers, as a separate agency, the Canadian National Commission for Unesco.

The Council itself is an independent agency which reports annually to the Canadian Parliament, through a member of the Cabinet, but sets its own policies and makes its own decisions within the terms of the Canada Council Act. It is made up of 21 members appointed by the Governor-in-Council. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman serve for terms not exceeding five years, and other members for terms of three years. The Council usually meets at least five times a year. The day to day administrative work is carried out by a permanent staff in Ottawa, headed by a director and an associate director who are appointed by the Governor in Council.

The Council's income is derived mainly from two funds, originally of \$50 million each, set up by Parliament when the Council was created. The University Capital Grants Fund has enabled the Council to help the universities expand their physical facilities at a crucial period by awarding them up to 50 per cent of the cost of eligible buildings. However, this fund is now nearing depletion and should be exhausted within a year. The Council's main source of operating income is the Endowment Fund, of which only the interest may be used, and which yields some \$3.1 million annually. Out of this amount, the Council must normally finance its various programs and its administrative expenses, as well as those of the Canadian National Commission for Unesco. However, as its resources had become inadequate to meet the growing need of the arts, humanities and social sciences, the Council received from the Canadian Government, in April 1965, an unconditional grant of \$10 million. This grant and the interest earned on it are being used to add to the income of the Endowment Fund for a period of a few years.

The Council's assistance to the arts, humanities and social sciences is directed both to individuals and to organizations. Assistance to individuals is mainly in the form of fellowships, scholarships and research grants. In eight years, the Council has awarded scholarships and fellowships at the master's, doctoral and post-doctoral level to almost 4,000 scholars in the

humanities and social sciences, and to over 1,200 performing and creative artists. Assistance to organization, mostly in the arts, takes up a large proportion of the revenue from the Endowment Fund.

In the year 1965-1966, the Council devoted approximately \$2,856,000 to the humanities and social science, of which \$1,606,000 financed 736 fellowships at the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral levels, and \$1,250,000 was applied to grants in aid of research, university libraries, meetings of scholars and artists, visiting lecturers, publication of scholarly works and other forms of assistance. In the arts, the Council spent \$3,441,000, of which \$425,000 was used to finance 135 scholarships and fellowships, and \$3,016,000 was applied to grants, including about \$602,000 for the theatre,.

Special Programs. - Apart from its own programs, the Council administers on behalf of the Canadian government a program of scholarships for students, scholars and artists from French-speaking countries (at present France, Belgium and Switzerland) wishing to come to Canada. In 1965-1966, awards made by the Council under this program totalled \$613,000.

Under its power to "make awards to persons in Canada for outstanding accomplishments in the arts, humanities or social sciences", the Council awards annually its own Canada Council Medal and the Molson Prize which is financed by funds from the Molson Foundation. It also finances the annual Governor General's Literary Prizes, which are awarded by an autonomous committee.

The Canada Council Act also provides for certain functions in relation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Council has accordingly established a National Commission for Unesco and provides its secretariat and budget. As an agent of the Council, the National Commission co-ordinates Unesco program activities abroad, and administers a small program in furtherance of Unesco objectives. In the year ending March 31, 1966, the Council spent approximately \$135,000 through the National Commission for these purposes.

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#### COMMITTEE ON THE LAW OF THE THEATRE

On Monday, October 24, 1966, the Committee for Theatre Administration was the guest of the Committee on the Law of the Theatre (Federal Bar Association of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) in association with the New York University School of the Arts. The program was on SUBSIDIES IN THE PERFORMING ARTS. The meeting started at 7:30 p.m. in the Theatre of the Lambs, New York.

The following notes are not intended as a transcript. They are interpretations of the evening's activities.

#### GROSSMAN

The Law Committee's Chairman, Bernard A. Grossman, began the meeting by explaining that the Committee endeavored to act as a "social critic with a practical point of view." It served to point out the particulars of theatre

law and to sharpen the profession's attitude toward them.

Mr. Grossman said that the Committee had always tried to search out the philosophy behind the rule of law. The conclusion had been that the theatre was not an activity based on rules, but rather a way of life which required an uncommon dedication. He concluded by observing that subsidy can help where dedication exists, although these funds can never be a substitute for it.

CORRIGAN

Dean Robert W. Corrigan of New York University had prepared a general introduction to the evening's subject, but in the face of the expertise which he assumed to be on the panel, he decided against it. Instead, he spoke on a topic he has presented before. (See the USITT SUPPLEMENT, March 1966, pp: 2-5; many of the main points are covered there.)

Dean Corrigan made one statement which proved to be a reference for the rest of the evening's speakers; "Men will always create, regardless of subsidies" because they recognize a "need."

ABEL

Walter Abel, president of ANTA, was asked to speak on THE GLORIES OF THE THEATRE THAT WAS. His reminiscences had little to do with the subject of subsidy.

O'NEAL

Frederick O'Neal's topic was the general CULTURAL EXPLOSION ACROSS THE COUNTRY. The president of Actors' Equity proved to be most interesting when he concentrated on the history of the WPA Federal Theatre Project. He noted that it was set up as a temporary way of relieving unemployment among artists, and as a method of keeping American arts alive during the Depression. Although it was never considered as a true National Theatre, it gave us an inkling of the success that such a project might have.

O'Neal feels that all art forms have required subsidy, and will continue to require it. He stated that the lower forms of entertainment can continue without support, but that the higher forms require it to help them shape the people's taste.

REA

Oliver Rea - former managing director of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre - spoke of AN EXAMPLE IN POINT. He began by defining theatre subsidy as "any funds received by a non-profit theatrical institution not related to box-office income."

Rea said that the Guthrie project started with an investigation of the need, possibility, and location for a subsidized theatre. The concept of subsidy was considered from the first as a base for the plan. After the location was chosen, another successful campaign was launched to produce the theatre facility and to pay for (1) continuing travel - aimed at assuring the support of the community, (2) the salaries of a basic staff, and (3) general promotional activities.

Next, the Ford Foundation gave two grants. The first was for salaries, publicity, and a subscription campaign. The second was a three-year guarantee

against loss. Other grants became available for special projects.

Rea is of the opinion that the Guthrie project would have been "unable to start, continue, or grow artistically without support."

#### LANDRY

To put it mildly, Robert J. Landry (Managing Director, VARIETY) produced A SKEPTICAL POINT OF VIEW. He dismissed subsidy as the "result of high prices, taxes, and inflation." Mr. Landry thought that the best subsidy might be applied to a study of the Foundation administrator, for he "seems bent on giving money to projects which will neither fail nor succeed." One thing seemed certain to him; subsidy was never going to replace entertainment.

#### WINCKLER

E. Carlton Winckler (CBS-TV) warned Foundations against spending on colossal errors. His speech was similar to one given earlier to the USITT.

#### KLEIN

Next came a history of European subsidy by Harold Klein (United Artists). In Europe, subsidy can come from national, provincial, state, or city agencies. It may be applied to motion pictures, radio, and television as well as to local repertory theatre, touring shows, and state theatre. The money comes from several forms of tax, including taxes on amusement tickets and radio or TV sales.

Although there have been arguments over the application of these funds, Mr. Klein feels that the results have been generally satisfactory. And the results have not been limited to rapid artistic development within a single country; there are frequently programs involving several countries.

#### KUPFERMAN

It was announced that Congressman Kupferman would discuss THE LAW OF SUBSIDIES. His discussion was not to the point.

#### STEVENS

The next speaker was Roger L. Stevens, Chairman, National Foundation of The Arts and The Humanities. Rather than read his prepared speech, Mr. Stevens decided to review some of the evening's statements, many of which he felt had "maneuvered" him into the position of defending subsidy.

Stevens thinks that we are faced with an outmoded industry - if theatre is to be thought of in those terms. He says that the inflexible output of theatre is unable to keep up with increased production in other areas of the economy.

He went on to say that it is "terribly hard" to translate the theatre of the WPA era in terms of the theatre today - with the intent of using the Federal Theatre Project as an indication of successful subsidy. However, he did note that (1) the production of art (in dollar values) far exceeded the WPA dollar input, and (2) the artists who are successful today are the ones who worked, and were kept alive, during WPA.

Stevens noted that the greatest subsidizers of the theatre arts have been,

and still, the artists themselves. They continue to work at "slave wages;" the difference between what they do make and what they might make is the amount of subsidy.

As far as private Foundation subsidy to the arts is concerned Stevens would just as soon that the Foundations (and not government) take on the burden. However, with the exception of the Ford Foundation, they have not done so. Only 4% of Foundation gifts go to any form of the arts.

He agreed that repertory and regional theatre have not been too successful in the American past. In particular, he placed US groups in comparison to the excellence of English Repertory; much of the latter, however, is subsidized.

Stevens wondered why everyone got excited when it came to subsidizing the arts. After all, most every other form of American business receives government help. He noted the techniques of declaring tax losses, aid to airlines, oil support, etc. Stevens said that subsidy has worked in business, and he can't see any objection to trying it in the arts. If it is not successful, Congress could always change its mind and withhold further funds.

Stevens went on to note the concern that has been evidenced over one possibility; government doing things in a big way may make big mistakes. He doubted that this would be the case, since government always inlists the best consultants and the tightest controls over its projects.

As far as "controversy" is concerned, Stevens thinks that it is a benefit to the arts.

Stevens closed with the statement that the National Foundation was not financing (because of lack of funds, not a lack of interest), built-in deficits, construction or renovation, and new projects (although there have been some of the last). On the positive side, Arts and Humanities has tried to (1) build audiences, and (2) invest in real talents.

#### LOWRY

At this point in the program, the Consular Law Society presented a special award to W. MacNeil Lowry of the Ford Foundation. Mr. Lowry then discussed the Foundation, what it had done, and what it meant to do in its association with theatre.

1957 was the start of the Ford Foundation's interest in the arts. At that time, there were few good resident theatres in this country - three, in fact. All of these were non-profit and tax exempt, and they all had interesting professional standards and programs. They were: the Alley Theatre, the Arena Stage, and the Actors Workshop.

The history of the movement, in general, had not seemed to assure a trend which might grow into a future outlet for good theatre on the regional level. There had been no continuity to individual efforts.

Each of these three theatres had tried to establish a dramatic program and then secure community support for it. The Guthrie Theatre was an example of trying to secure the support first, and then the program. The Guthrie became the standard for a series of companies which drew their analogies here, rather than from the Alley-Arena-Workshop angle. This system, by the way, did not exist in 1957.

Ford made advances in areas not directly dependant on the giving of money to producing organizations. It conducted research which not only developed factual information on the theatre, but which also helped to bring regional directors and producers together.

In a sense, the Ford Foundation attempted to "stir the pot." As an example, Ford helped start the Theatre Communications Group. Grants, per se, were not the purpose here. Ford also helped with several special programs; the Ideal Theatre Project is only one example.

The Foundation hoped it might be offsetting some of the economic problems plaguing theatre. It was trying to keep talent from being squeezed out; it hoped to reverse the trend of newcomers changes of being neglected in preference to the larger name. It tried to prevent the "bigger risk and fewer chances" of today's commercial theatre from eliminating the infusion of new ideas and processes.

In most instances, this activity was carried out in cities other than New York, and the Foundation has been criticized for bypassing the city. The reason the Foundation did not come here (NY) was partly economic, and partly because it found interest in new things to be elsewhere.

No one knows whether or not the Foundation's over-all gamble has paid off, and no one will know for the next decade. The Foundation feels that the prospect for resident theatre survival is good, but not assured.

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#### ETCETERA

On October 21, the Canada Council announced awards to theatrical organizations totalling nearly \$300,000. Ten performing theatre companies received grants, along with the Dominion Drama Festival, the National Theatre School, and the Canadian Theatre Center. The grants covered a number of purposes including season operating expenses, specific new productions, special personnel, touring, new plays and translations.

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##### NEWSPAPERS

Shepard, Richard, "State Arts Units Get Outside Help," NEW YORK TIMES



(October 7, 1966)

Thirteen states in two national regions will receive consultant aid under a pilot project initiated by the Arts Councils of America.

Taubman, Howard, "Houston and the Arts," NEW YORK TIMES (October 8, 1966).

Taubman asks what will come next to Houston's new "culture palace" after the opening series of operas.

Morse, Tom, "Boston Herald-Traveler Presents Shakespeare for Highschool Kids; See It a Press Promotion Bargain," VARIETY (November 9, 1966), Vol. 244, No. 12:69, 72.

The newspaper-backed project, "called the Repertory of Classical Drama, provides theatre at low cost to local high school students and adults. It is now about midway in a second annual September-December season." It is assumed that the program will break even this year. Paper considers the project to be a promotional boon.

"Deadhead Tickets For Students Goal of Arts Group Headed by Lynda," VARIETY (October 19, 1966), Vol. 244, No. 9:2

Lynda Bird Johnson heads the student committee for the United Performing Arts of Washington (DC). The Committee wants people to donate tickets to the events of the groups; it will give these tickets to students.

"File 'Restraint of Trade' Vs. Lester; Say he Conspires to Hurt Rivals," VARIETY (November 2, 1966), Vol. 244, No. 11:64.

The owners of West Coast's Melodyland, Carousel, and Circle Star theatres bring suit against LA and SF Civic Light Opera Assns. and their joint general director Edwin Lester charging that he conspired in restraint of trade to keep Broadway producers and stars from participating in any but Light Opera activities.

"Seattle Stock Theatre to Expand Next Season," VARIETY (November 2, 1966), Vol. 244, No. 11:63.

Stock operation of the Contemporary Theatre was up almost three-fold over its first season. Next years' plan calls for longer run (14 to 16 weeks), increase in the size of the company, and higher salaries for actors and crew.

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USITT COMMITTEE FOR THEATRE ADMINISTRATION

REGIONAL NEWS REPORT FORM

Enclosed are the following materials:

( ) Newspaper Article

Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ -66.      Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_

Page number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Other Publications (magazine, pamphlets, etc. )

Publication name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ -66.      Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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