

# Conservative promise better deal for the arts, return of tax shelter

The following Conservative position on cultural policy was read by David Crombie to an "invitation-only" gathering in Toronto on Aug. 22. Representatives of all cultural sectors were present.

"There's one word to sum up life for the artistic community and the cultural institutions of this country under a Conservative government: better. Better because we understand the value of our creators in interpreting us and our country to ourselves and the world. Better because we understand the thrust of regional aspirations and the need to nurture collective excellence. Better because we understand the value of world class national cultural and artistic achievements.

"First of all, the broad strokes. "In terms of individual artists and creators, we've started to get Revenue Canada off the backs of our beleaguered creative community and we won't stop until they understand that a Conservative government in-

tends to cherish our artists, not hound or punish them.

"Secondly, no more nonsense about separating into two departments. You don't keep the bullets in one building and the guns in another. It makes no sense to separate the medium from the message. There will be only *one* ministry in a Conservative government to deal with cultural affairs - the Department of Communications.

"About the matter of trying to sneak the cultural agencies under the control of the cabinet and departmental bureaucrats, again - no thanks. We will keep the independence of organizations like the Canada Council, give them autonomous, strong, capable boards with a parliamentary committee and the auditor general as a watchdog. The parliamentary committee will also review all senior appointments.

"We will find ways to keep arts funding current in constant dollars, not falling below the rate of inflation, and encourage private sector involvement

through tax incentives, gifts, trusts and wills.

"Now let's look at some specific fields. First, publishing. We are already opposed to the dumping of materials from the U.S. and will impose the full vigour of the law to protect Canadian authors, publishers and printers. We *do* approve of payment for public usage and if the Canada Council will not distribute the proceeds, we will put it in the hands of the Writers Union of Canada to distribute in a manner satisfactory to them and the government auditors.

"In terms of theatre, I think we need strong, predictable, five year programs of support on a regional basis, based on what the institutions themselves want, not what Ottawa wants to impose on them.

"I know what the East Vancouver Playhouse did with John Gray's *Billy Bishop Goes To War*. I know what happens when James Reaney does his version of *The Donnelly's*. I know about *Balconville* by

David Fennario and *One Night Stand* by Carol Bolt and *The Farm Show* by Theatre Passe Murraile and the Codco and Lennoxville and Blyth festivals and I know the best bang for the buck we get is money for regional theatres in terms of the plays they commission. In Toronto, we would all be the poorer without TWP, YPT, Taragon, Toronto Free Theatre, Centre Stage, Theatre Plus. Let Marlene Smith loose among the *Cats*, Marion Andre among the fat cats and put Erika Ritter on *Automatic Pilot*, and you can't go far wrong!"

## FILM AND TELEVISION POLICIES

"First, the CBC. Yes to an imaginative development and planning scheme to put up a new English services headquarters and studios in Toronto right now, instead of 30 years of Liberal fumbling. It can be done and with the right entrepreneurial approach, the price will be right.

"Then the CBC must be strengthened. It must gear up now to keep its promise to buy more variety, drama and children's programmes from private producers. The acquisitions department is non-existent, there is only one project evaluator for all of English Canada and there is a backlog of hun-

dreds of projects waiting to be considered.

"CBC Enterprises should be reviewed and private Canadian distributors encouraged and strengthened to sell our products abroad. We don't need to spend more on fancy sales brochures than we do on scripts and we don't need to send a flotilla of executives to the Riviera to do a fraction of the business ABC does with four people.

"CBC needs more programmes, not more vice-presidents, more money for talent, less money for forests of memos on how to talk their way out of the auditor general's indictment of their unacceptable wastages.

## PRIVATE BROADCASTERS

"There must be a commitment to top-notch, prime-time Canadian programming as a condition of licensing, and it must be enforced. By and large the problem isn't the quota of time made available for Canadian production, it's the quota of money and that's far too little.

## PAY-TV

"Another Liberal classic case of too much too late. The decision to split the country isn't a wonderful one but it is the only one. Here again, the license holders

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