The Writers' Union Meets the Royal Commission

Archives of Ontario, Royal Commission Fonds

Abstract

In November 1970, a crisis arose in the Canadian publishing industry: The Ryerson Press, English Canada's oldest publishing house, was sold to American branch plant McGraw-Hill. In response, the Ontario government mounted a Royal Commission to investigate the business conditions of publishing in Canada. The commission accepted briefs from anyone who wanted their say and heard hundreds of hours of testimony. But it wasn't until Farley Mowat bumped into Richard Rohmer at a party and demanded to know why the commission wasn't talking directly to writers—they had actually heard from the few who had sent in briefs—that the date was set for 9 December 1971 for a group of writers to give their testimony. Some of those who testified went on to found The Writers' Union of Canada (TWUC) in 1973. Jack Gray went on to separate the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) from the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) in order to get a better deal for scriptwriters. The writers testifying before the commission here include June Callwood, Margaret Atwood, Ian Adams, Hugh Garner, Al Purdy, Farley Mowat, Max Braithwaite, David Helwig, Jack Gray, Graeme Gibson, Fred Bodsworth, and Dennis Lee.

Résumé

En novembre 1970, une crise a éclaté dans l'industrie canadienne de l'édition : The Ryerson Press, la plus ancienne maison d'édition canadienne de langue anglaise, a été vendue à la succursale américaine de McGraw-Hill. En réponse à cette crise, le gouvernement ontarien a mis sur pied une commission royale pour investiguer la conjoncture économique de l'édition au Canada. La Commission a accepté les mémoires déposés par quiconque avait son mot à dire et a entendu des centaines d'heures de témoignages. Mais ce n'est que lorsque Farley Mowat a rencontré Richard Rohmer à une réception et

qu'il a cherché à savoir pourquoi la Commission ne s'adressait pas directement aux auteurs – ils avaient en fait entendu les quelques auteurs qui avaient envoyé des mémoires – qu'une date a été fixée, soit le 9 décembre 1971, pour entendre les témoignages d'un groupe d'auteurs. Certains de ceux qui ont témoigné ont entrepris de fonder la Writer's Union of Canada (TWUC) en 1973. Jack Gray a fait des démarches pour que la Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) et l'Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) soient deux entités distinctes afin d'obtenir un meilleur arrangement pour les scénaristes. Les auteurs qui ont témoigné devant la Commission incluent les suivants : June Callwood, Margaret Atwood, Ian Adams, Hugh Garner, Al Purdy, Farley Mowat, Max Braithwaite, David Helwig, Jack Gray, Graeme Gibson, Fred Bodsworth et Dennis Lee.

O Canada, O Canada, O can
 A day go by without new authors springing
 To paint the native maple, and to plan
 More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing?
 —F. R. Scott¹

Toronto, Ontario, Thursday, December 9, 1971

On commencing at 10:30 a.m.²

THE CHAIRMAN: I think perhaps we can begin. This is the last session of our public hearings in relation to book publishing generally. We have further hearings in relation to other matters that have been brought to our attention by the government of Ontario. This will be our wind-up day as far as these public hearings are concerned.

¹ F. R. Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet," *Overture* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945), https://canpoetry.library.utoronto.ca/scott_fr/poem3.htm.

² Notes on the title page of this volume of testimony: Mr. Robert Fleming, Executive Secretary; Hearings held at 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, December 9, 1971; This transcript [pp. 4283 to 4340 of the testimony] has not been edited, corrected or revised by the Commissioners, but may subsequently be edited, corrected and revised; Nethercut & Company Ltd., Phone: 363-3111, 48 York St., Toronto 1.

We consider it highly appropriate that we have the creative sector of the book publishing industry here with us today. We are most interested to hear what the writers have to tell us. We think their contribution to our work is going to be most important. I might say, from a personal point of view, we all speak for ourselves on this side of the table, but from my own point of view I am becoming more and more concerned about the whole question of the atmosphere of this country in terms of the authors and what can be done to improve the atmosphere for writing and authorship and literary endeavour in this country. I think this is becoming more and more important as we proceed. This is very much on my mind and I am sure it is on the minds of my fellow Commissioners. We welcome you and Farley may tell us why we are all here and how it started, but that is up to him. We are delighted to have you here and we are most interested to hear what you have to say. We will ask you questions and I am looking forward to a very informative session this morning.

Farley, I think you are going to lead off, are you not?

MR. MOWAT: Thank you, sir, very much.

Well, who we are it is necessary to define us. This little group sitting at this table doesn't pretend to represent all the writers in Canada. That would be impossible. What we do represent is ourselves as a group of fully professional writers and we believe that, because we are fully professional writers, that our problems are universal problems with the writing fraternity in this country.

I want to make the point that the group before you today does not include any literary dilettantes. We are writers of books, if not always full-time, that is only because we cannot always afford to spend all of our time writing books, because we can't survive on that alone. How we got here is purely accidental. One of the most beautiful accidents that could only happen to writers who are, in many ways, inconsequential people. As Mr. Rohmer well knows it happened at a party that was held by a publisher at which I had the misfortune to take that last drink and I saw Mr. Rohmer and I was filled with fury at what the Commission—what I thought the Commission was doing, so I dashed up to him, accosted him and said "Look, you [are] neglecting the primary producers. We, the writers of Canada, want to be heard." To my horror and chagrin he said, "That is exactly what we want to hear. We will give you a day. Come and talk to us." This, just threw me into a complete state of paralysis. I have been

trying ever since to work out some functioning method of meeting this promise that you have given us.

It is very important to note that we are not here, either individually or as a group, to register individual beefs, individual complaints against the system. Every writer here has done what they have done and have come up the hard way. We have all worked bloody hard to what we have got. We are not making an issue of that. That is over, that is past, that is done. The basis of all our submissions today, all our conversations is that we are concerned and very deeply concerned about the continuing, the on-going flood of writers in this country. So, please do remember this and I ask the press to remember this specifically. We are not asking for any more, anything including money ourselves. We are asking for our society to produce a condition that will be advantageous to new writers coming up.

Why do we bother? What is the value of the writer in our society? We think that we are probably the only people left in Western society who are absolutely free to speak our minds. We are the only people who are not associated in any way with commerce, while we are peripherally with publishers, but you could hardly call that commerce (laughter). We are not associated with sponsors. We may or may not have political affiliations, but we are not directly, any of us, the tools or the right-hand of politicians. We think we are the last of the free people in this society. We are untrammelled people. We serve many purposes in it. We are able to entertain, which is vital in a world which is going to the dogs. We are able to educate and, in fact, we are the educators. We are able to interpret what is happening in this world and maybe we are the only ones who are able to do this without control. We think we are the watchdogs and the only watchdogs that the Canadian people now have. We think that with us rests essentially the Canadian identity, the Canadian consciousness. Whatever there has been in the past of a Canadian consciousness, it is almost entirely due to writers, not to the businessman, most assuredly, not in recent times, due to the political atmosphere. If there is such a thing as a future for Canada, we believe it will be due mainly to writers. We do not believe that Canada can survive without us. If Canada wishes to survive, and I am convinced, and I think all of us are, that most Canadians want this country to survive, then they must wish that we will survive as well, not just as what we have been in the past, peripheral to society, but as strong viable elements in the society.

A Friend of mine who is almost anonymous, called Jack McClelland, once wrote that writers are the most important national asset of this country. With this basic statement, we do not wish to disagree, but another statement of his in which he said, "In book publishing the author's interests are paramount and any publisher who forgets this simple fact is in trouble," we feel requires amendment. We would like to put it this way: The author's interest should be paramount and not only to publishers, but to everybody in the trade, printers, right down the line, booksellers, librarians and so on. None of them should forget this simple fact.

So we think we have a problem in survival.

First, in this area is the fact that we have no power base. We are almost totally dependent on publishers, reviewers, the trade, the whole structure. We, ourselves, have no power base in a world where everyone must have a power base to survive.

The next point is that we are almost inexorably caught in the squeeze between U.S. and English publishing.

The next point is that Canadian writing in general lacks a solid, economic base. We just don't have it.

The next point is that we lack status and position. Now, it may sound odd—I am not pleading on our behalf for status and position—I am only pointing out to you that, if you are going to function in society today, you must have these two things. I, personally, abhor this fact but I recognize the absolute necessity of it. We, at the moment, are rather peripheral in Canadian society.

The last general point is the difficulty of being heard. This is becoming increasingly a problem for all of us. Magazines are becoming fewer, book publishing is becoming tighter. There are fewer and fewer outlets for young writers. If I was a young writer today, faced with the necessity of trying to break my way into this business, I think I would either get drunk, cut my throat, or join IBM and all three are about of equal value (laughter).

Now, we have some specific suggestions to improve the generic situation that confronts us. I am going to give you the overall areas and then each area will be covered in some detail by a member of our group. The first is that we require a new system, a brand new system of grants and subsidies, awards and incentives. The next is

that, for once we are making our voices heard for a demand for the protection of our rights as authors, as primary producers.

The next is that we require—we do not demand this because we recognize the difficulties the publishers are in—to require a better deal with the publishers and with the entire book trade.

The last point—and it may be the most important—we must have better, improved markets, not because of the money that comes in from these markets, which is important to us, but because we have to have a broader spectrum of readership. We have to be more available to the people of this country than we are now. The procedure which we will follow will, perhaps, be explained to you by the chairman. Before he does so, I would like to make one concluding statement. The Canadian literary scene is, as far as I can gather, almost unique in the Western world, perhaps in the world, in that it has been since its beginnings and it remains dominated almost entirely by dilettantes and amateurs. There is a body of professional writers in this country and we are no longer willing to tolerate this situation, nor are we willing to be treated any more as a peripheral element in the Olympian homes of the dilettante interests or in the publishers' interests. Although it goes very, very much against my personal grain, and the grain, I suspect, of practically every professional writer in this country, because we are first and foremost individualists, that is where our strength lies, we now feel that we must organize, not essentially to protect our own position, but to make bloody good and sure that there is a position and the position will exist for young writers, people coming up, one which will encourage imaginative and talented people to take up the pen in increasing numbers and the subsequent effect upon our society which we are sure will be of advantage to society.

We are going to form our own union and we are going to work very strenuously for all the things which will be described to you by the other people here.

Thank you very much, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Mowat. I take it all this has come from your rushing up to me at the cocktail party?

MR. MOWAT: It is entirely your fault. If there was a union formed, sir, I may tell you that you will be the man who will have to bear the blame. (Laughter)

THE CHAIRMAN: My understanding is that you wish to proceed on the basis of having certain members of your group speak to certain parts, certain concepts, and the first is Mr. Helwig, in terms of grants and subsidies, awards and incentives.

MR. HELWIG: This is obviously a central and crucial area, particularly with regard to this situation since it is the area which one is talking about, direct government spending, in many cases with relation to books and publishing and authors.

I think probably one could get a fair bit of agreement on the fact that in the economic situation in Canada, where publishing is perhaps somewhat a frail flower, that some kind of support is needed for publishing and writers and that kind of support has rarely been given. There are a number of ways in which this support can be given and I think they are very great and when Farley suggests we need a brand new system I am certainly not here to outline it, I am simply going to discuss a number of areas that have occurred to him, to me and to others here as being areas where change might be considered or where more action might be considered in order to make publishing and writing more vital.

The area of awards is a rather specific one and probably the most important single matter about any literary award is that it is a public declaration and by making a public declaration the group granting the award, whether it is the federal government, provincial government or publishers' group or any group at all, makes a public declaration that they consider this book to be important. Therefore, it becomes a matter in a sense of public acceptance of a specific book and of the idea that books are an important element in our society and that good books are being written. So, the idea of an increased number of awards is not simply, I think, a suggestion that we put a little more money in more writers' pockets, it is a matter of suggesting that the publishing of books and the writing of books be a much more openly declared type of public and valuable act.

There might for example—and this is certainly not an entirely new suggestion—be an Ontario version of the Governor General's awards which would simply be a matter of the government saying, "We consider book publishing important and we want to declare this as a public act and want to give some kind of specific awards which are also a general gesture towards the importance of books and publishing."

Clearly any awards like this are going to be important, both for the effect on sales of books and at some level for the actual content of the award. Another point that has been suggested that I think Farley made in his sort of grand list of suggestions was that, awards if they are to be given, should not be token awards they should be significant awards—I think certainly it is a matter that is worth thinking about—[I] think there is a significant difference between saying, “here is a token award of so much money which means we think your book is important” or “here is an award which allows you to write for one year or two years and produce another book because we think your book is important.”

Another possible suggestion is a category of special awards to new writers not simply bursaries, not simply financial support but awards which would say, “here is a man who has published a book, his name is not very well known, you probably do not know him yet, but one panel, or whoever made the selection, thinks this is an important new writer.” It may not be the best book of the year by a new writer and again will serve to make a book like this more open to the public to once again get in a society where geographically we are widely spread and where news for that reason cannot always travel by word of mouth to get the news out that the book is there, it is a good book, an exciting book and ought to be read.

The whole area of grants and subsidies is I think a somewhat separate one, awards in a sense are a specified limited area and I think they have quite clear value but do not always overlap with the problems of grants and subsidies and clearly the problem of grants and subsidies is enormous and we have discussed it before in various contexts and I cannot even sum up the whole problem. I can only make suggestions again from the point of view of a writer of how these things are of some use.

At the moment, for example, obviously the Ontario Council for the Arts is giving specific book subsidies and clearly, I think, we would all support this, the fact that a publisher can go to the Ontario Arts Council and say, “I want to do this specific book and I do not think it is economically viable and would you consider giving support?” I know in some cases they have done this or given support for a small program of publishing and this has been rather limited but it is I think at the same time rather valuable.

The Ontario Arts Council has also been giving some individual awards and I believe they have been in a process of changing their policy on that but I am not too clear about that.

Another suggestion that has been made is the whole area of book development grants rather than a specific book or a specific grant for a specific book and that is a suggestion that one can say, "here is a plan of development we want to do this series or this group of series or this group of books or this kind of series" and you either get a subsidy or get a loan or at least money of some sort to help the development of a publishing company forward. Yet this is by no means a new suggestion. It has been fairly widely suggested that the idea of a publishing development corporation would be a useful thing.

One variation of this which I do think is interesting is that there are obvious problems in giving money to one publisher rather than another or deciding which publisher should get them and how much and there may be areas in which subsidy is possible not in terms of a single publisher but in terms of the Canadian publishing industry or the publishing of Canadian books. It seems to me to be a really useful idea for the publishers to discuss or the Royal Commission to consider with the publishers, that is the idea of some kind of publishers' co-operative which in certain areas could provide a kind of negotiating power, especially if you are connected with a writer's union, which will be discussed later on, a kind of negotiating power might be very useful.

For example, I think we all know the problem of paperback distribution. If there were a single paperback imprint run co-operatively by those who are publishing Canadian books, and if a small publisher who might have, say, one or two books in a given year that might be viable in supermarkets and drug stores need not set out to start a venture in order to get those two books but would have available to him this co-operative general imprint which would provide, again possibly subsidized or certainly government-supported, from the point of view of the theory and possibly also the money, a way of dealing with some of these economic problems so you have a single imprint which would have some kind of muscle in dealing with rack jobbers and dealing with the economic problems of paperback distribution. Heaven knows it may well be the publishers who are publishing in Canada would not want this. It seems to me from a writer's viewpoint it might be very useful and I think that the distribution of books in difficult areas might also be usefully handled by something like a publishers' co-operative.

If you look at the cities of Ontario you find the larger cities usually have one or two fairly good bookstores but the smaller cities where

there clearly are readers simply do not. If you go to Owen Sound or Cornwall or Trenton, whichever part of the province you know, you could probably list four or five examples where you would have a city where there is likely to be at least a few hundred people who will be reading Canadian books from time to time and might well be reading more if the books were available. In most cases there will not be enough of them to make a large commercial bookstore functional.

Again, the possibility of some kind of co-operative series of bookstores, run by a publishers' co-operative or something of this sort on a small scale, but getting books there so they are available to people. I am sure there are other areas where distribution is particularly difficult for single publishers simply because you cannot afford to spend a lot of money on sales when there are only a limited number of sales which might usefully be handled co-operatively.

Another area in which government support, not simply in terms of subsidy or in terms of handing out money may be useful, is in the area of sales to educational institutions, public libraries, government institutions, and so on. Now, many of these are now buying books but the books they buy again depend partly upon the sales staff of the publishers and depend partly upon the publicity given to the books and in many cases I think there is a random element in this as well but all these are cases where the government is, in fact, at one level or another, putting up the money that is being spent for educational buying for public libraries, in government institutions and where it need not be a matter of saying, "We are going to hand out money to the publishers." It may be simpler to say, "Let us look at the amount of government money that is indirectly going to go into buying books, look at how large it is and see about increasing it somewhat," but not handing the publishers money but making sales easier so that the cost of selling books might well go down. This again could well be related to the idea of a gesture in terms of awards being made toward books, the actual distribution of books that have been given the awards.

In general then, this is a central problematical area which by no means can be summed up in a few minutes. I think if one could make a general statement about it, clearly there will be some level of subsidy, it should be a much higher level of subsidy and it may well be that the Ontario Arts Council ought to have more money to use in the way they are already using their money. I think generally the point

is that money should be used as aggressively and as imaginatively as possible in order to get what we are writing to the people who might be interested in reading it, not simply to give money to publishers in order to silence them and make them go away and be quiet.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mowat, I think there is a point you want to raise?

MR. MOWAT: Yes, I am adding something to David's dissertation by agreement. There was one specific subject I wanted to speak about myself and David gave it to me. There was some argument about this and finally he said, "Okay fine you can have it because you have the bottle." He knew very well if he did not give it to me he would not get another drink. I want to talk about the Canada Council while we are talking about the area of subsidies and grants. It would be a good idea if I started at the beginning, would it not?

I have spent a moderate amount of time incidental to my own business trying to find out what the Canada Council is all about. I have amassed a fair amount of information and because I personally have never had a grant, never expect to get one and after this dissertation I will be absolutely assured that I will never get one, I feel that I am perhaps the only member of the group who can speak absolutely freely about how most of us feel about the Canada Council in our guts. I conclude that it is no more than a secretive in-grown bureaucratic club possessed of one great big pork barrel from which it deals out spare ribs almost entirely—no, I retract that,—very largely to incompetents, to non-creative people many of whom are grafters to foreigners, non-Canadians, people who do not belong in this country, to sycophants, to dilettantes, to tourists, looking for a free holiday abroad, selections that are too often based upon nepotism.

Now, having said that, I will modify it by saying I am fully aware that the Canada Council has done a very notable amount of good in this country. Just enough to save it from any really honest investigation or attack. I believe that the Canada Council is operating at about 5 per cent, more or less, because I always invent my own statistics, of its potential efficiency. I consider that in effect it is a bureaucratic sham, and a Canadian shame. Now, having attacked it as viciously as I know how I am prepared to make recommendations and these have to be personal as to what can be done to turn the Canada Council into the organ that it was originally intended to be.

My first recommendation is that the present governing and selective body be fired in total and that new administrative and selective bodies be hired or appointed and be composed mainly of working artists. Since I am speaking as a writer I would expect to have a very large percentage of working writers in it. Leavened by a few creative critics and I cannot help but make the point that there are damn few creative critics in this country, and that is an area where we badly need something new, possibly some businessmen in the trade and I will suggest that Jack McClelland is one of them because he is obviously looking for a second career.

There should be no politicians, no academics. All the Canada Council's activities should be extended by the widest possible publicity, a complete end to secrecy in the Canada Council. They should seek publicity so that the Council becomes a prominent, respected and really vital organization to support the Canadian arts. There must be, and I don't say there should be—there must be total separation between the support of the arts and the support of the academics. The academic people have had at their beck and call, an innumerable list of potential financial supporters, all sorts of foundations, grants and so forth. The artists have almost none. I strongly recommend the Canada Council disassociate itself or break itself into twins and one half become really devoted to the creative arts and the other half—let us even give it a different name and call it the Academic Council, to deal with the academics.

The Committee which selects recipients of grants should be openly identified. We should know who they are, every one of us. Their decisions should be open, the proposals of the recipients or the applicants for grants should be made available to the needy. The system of grants itself requires radical change. If the present organization is maintained, that is, containing academics and creative people, 80 per cent or more of the money should go to the creative people and the other 20 per cent, maybe to the academics. Here is a real pile of dynamite, this one. I don't believe that any grants should be issued by the Canada Council until some proof of capability is given. At the present, the selection system is a sick joke. A Newfoundland dog, as Joey Smallwood would have said about it, could get a Canada Council grant provided he got three good letters of recommendation and I am not sure that some Newfoundland dogs have not been recipients. (Laughter)

Under the system that I propose, an applicant would either have to submit a previously published work of recognized promise or a previously written work—it doesn't have to be published, but he would have to produce a corpus which would demonstrate that he had some promise, he had some capability. Either that, or he would produce a chapter or two, some portion of the work that he wants support for.

MR. LEE: Bullshit!

MR. MOWAT: We will get to you. If you can't produce that, baby, that is what you deserve. I think any writer worth his goddamn salt, no matter if he is working in a salt mine, can find time to produce a few chapters or paragraphs to demonstrate that he has the capability. I don't think the Canada Council should accept the kind of synopses which they now get, which are no more than sales pitches. I think all grants should be paid on a sequential basis, not in lump sums, as the work goes forward, you get paid. There should be no second grant until you have proved that the first one has been well used, until that has been demonstrated. There should be no date deadline in an application. The applications might be selected every three months, every two months, or you might just take no time limit. When the Canada Council gets an application from somebody who wants to do something, they look at it on its merits and say, "Okay, we accept it or reject it." Don't do this once a year. The names of those people who provide references for Canada Council applicants should be published with the applicant's proposition.

A review board of the applicants set up by their peers to check their work should be in existence at all times to ensure that there is no injustice done if a man becomes sick, if his wife runs off with somebody else, his typewriter breaks down, and so on.

I think that we should make an end to this totally impersonal method of acquiring grants where you fill in your little bit of paper and send it off. I think that the grants, the applicants should have personal interviews. I think that the grants should be open-ended, running to at least \$10,000 a year so that the applicants, if they are successful, will be able to live adequately instead of having to scabble around. I think, finally, that in Ontario, the Ontario Council of Arts should set up a parallel system.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I might say that, in the course of our proceedings to date, we have made it clear to anyone in the audience, or anyone of the public, who wished to make a comment, that they are perfectly entitled when a speaker is finished, or to come and tell us what they have in mind. I would say to whoever made the remark a little earlier, if he wants to make any remarks subsequent, or follow this group, we would be pleased to hear him. I would also be advised that everyone is entitled to his viewpoint.

MR. MOWAT: That is a very personal viewpoint I take.

MR. PURDY: I would like to make a couple of comments. First, I disagree with Farley in his opinion of the Canada Council, not in total, but in almost every point. In the first place, he isn't aware of several things about the Canada Council. In the first place, the writer submits a whole chapter, or submits a whole manuscript. I might say I know, because I am one of their readers, among other things. He mentions that the recipients of Canada Council grants are not published. It is published in all the newspapers as soon as it is announced. He recommends a grant of \$10,000. The present senior grant is \$7000 plus travel, which could come to as much as, say, around \$8000. These are just a few points. I don't think Farley knows enough—he says he has gathered information but I don't think he has gathered enough information. There are things wrong with the Canada Council, of course, but Farley says he has not had a Canada Council grant. I don't think he has needed one. I have had several because I have needed them, and I think most people around this table would agree with me that the Canada Council is a good thing. Whatever criticism there is of it should be, well, it should not be phrased in the form of a tear-down or a complete attack, which I got the impression—I am sorry, Farley, but I did. That is all.

DR. JEANNERET: Could we poll the jury? (Laughter)

MR. MOWAT: I think I said, Al, I am about the only person in a position here to say what we think about the Canada Council.

MR. GARNER: The first thing we have to remember is that it costs money to write a novel. That is the hangup of Canadian writers. I received my first Canada Council grant in 1959, after I had been forced by financial difficulties to spend ten years doing silly magazine journalism to make a living for myself and my family. I received a Canada Council grant in 1959 and I wrote the novel which was

published by Farley's publisher, the only one, incidentally, that they did, so I proved that I used the money and put the money to good use. I have never asked for a travel grant. It has never been in my mind to go to the Greek Islands, or the Costa del Sol, or Mexico, or anywhere else and write a book. I have gone to these places, but I have gone on my own money. As Ernest Hemingway said to some old broad who once asked him where is the best place to write a novel, Hemingway said "The best place, Madam, is in your head." I never needed any travel grants to go anywhere to write a book. I have written 13 of them now and they have all been published. I have received three Canada Council grants, two for novels and one as a dramatic grant and I found out through that that I wasn't a dramatist, although even then I had one of my plays put on by the Brockville Little Theatre Group, which at least proved I had done a play.

I disagree almost entirely with Farley. I just wish the Ontario Arts Council were just one-tenth as good as the Canada Council is in helping Canada's writers.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anybody else have any comment on this point? We will see if anybody else wants to comment.

MR. GRAY: I would just like to say as briefly as I can, that I have had a great deal of help from the Canada Council, both in terms of receiving its grants and also in terms of dealing with it in one kind of official way or another. This is a personal opinion, but in my opinion the Canada Council is possibly the most enlightened, the best run, the fairest and perhaps the most effective grant-giving agency of its kind in the entire world, certainly among those that I have known of. There is no question it can be improved. Everything can be improved and the Canada Council can be improved.

One of the major improvements that could be made, both in terms of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, is for the governments to take their wraps off the money and to give these Councils enough money so that they can even begin to attack the enormous job that they are attempting to do. I am not sure what the Ontario Arts Council gets at the moment, but it is in the region of \$2.6 or \$2.7 million, but it needs a minimum of \$10 million to even begin to attack the job. This is the richest province in Canada and one of the richest areas in the entire world and that is the shameful

thing. It is not what the Councils are doing, but the lack of resources that they have to really tackle the problem which, in my opinion, is the shameful part of it.

MR. BRAITHWAITE: I think this is possibly going to break down into a discussion between those who have had Canada Council grants and those who have not. (Laughter) I haven't had one and I don't want one. I agree pretty well entirely with what Farley has said. He said it a little bit stronger than I would, but I think it has to be said strongly to make any impact. I think, pretty well, I agree with what he is saying, but then, again, I say I have never had one.

I would like to go on, if I may, because I have to leave and go out and try to sell some books. I used to think writing books was the hard thing, and then getting them published was the hard thing, and now it is selling them. That is the hard thing. I spend almost as much time selling them as I do writing them.

My suggestion covers the rather overall picture of what we are going to talk about and I have thought a great deal about this. I am sure what I am going to say is not going to find a response in all writers, and certainly not in all publishers. My proposal is simply this: In Canada we should have a Canadian publishing corporation. This Canadian publishing corporation should be organized along the lines of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it should publish books, it should publish magazines, it should publish books that publishers can't or won't touch, because they are not marketable, because they can't make money out of them, but many of them are very good books.

Now, the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as you know was founded during the thirties for the express purpose of preventing a sort of takeover of our culture by the American broadcasters. That was its purpose, it was founded for that purpose because this was a drastic situation and it worked. It has been very successful and has done many things that never would have been done in this country without it. It has developed writers, producers, directors, it has made a tremendous contribution to Canadian culture and there are opponents to the CBC to this day. But, no one can argue against the CBC on the grounds that it has not done what it set out to do, it produces plays and documentaries that other broadcasters will not touch.

I feel that there is a very strong need for such a corporation in the publishing business. I have not got much time so I will cover this quite quickly.

First of all, it would be organized along the lines of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, that is it would be financed out of public funds and would be independent of politics entirely and would have at its head the best people we can get in the publishing business and in the editing business and it would be a sound, good corporation. It would publish books that have not got a high market value, books that are important to this country, books that should be written, books about our sociology, books about subjects for the minorities. The CBC was organized as you know to give a voice for the minority.

Now, I do not see this corporation as being in opposition to publishers at all, in fact, I think publishers now in existence would benefit from this because there would be a development of more writers. Most of us around here got our start by writing radio plays for the CBC and that is how we got going and that is how we were able to become writers because the CBC needed a lot of material and because they would pay for it and because they did not quibble too much and we got our start that way and I think that many young book writers will get their start that way. They would publish books, novels, all kinds of books, and they would publish magazines. Now you know what has happened to magazines in this country—they are disappearing. *Maclean's* used to run a lot of fiction and now it runs no fiction. Other magazines have fallen into the same misuse and our magazines were being taken over by the U.S. magazines. *Time Magazine* is now the biggest seller in Canada and I contend we need a magazine for instance that would publish short stories. This is where a writer cuts his teeth, on short stories, this is where he learns the art of fiction and I think practically every fiction writer here will agree with that. Yet, there is no place, or very few places, where a writer can sell a short story today.

Now, if there were a magazine called "Short Story" or whatever, which was put out by the Canadian Publishing Corporation and which paid money to short story writers, this, I am sure, would have a market in Canada, perhaps not the biggest market, but it would have a market in Canada.

I think that it could publish much better magazines with reviews of books. I think the reviewers in this country are doing a good job and I would be a damned fool if I said they were not because they have so far given me favourable reviews. However, I think we need more reviews and we need a magazine that does book reviews. It

could take over from the Queen's Printer, the federal government I am talking about, of course, in this respect, already has the Queen's Printer that prints a lot of books and this could be incorporated into the Canadian Publishing Corporation.

The CBC actually publishes a lot of books and this too would be in this new corporation. There would be improvements all along the line in book publishing and book distribution. For instance, the book writer depends upon the bookstores and we have excellent bookstores in this country and they are doing a good job but there are many places where a bookstore is not possible and there are many communities that do not have bookstores and I think that without competing with the present bookstores the Canadian Publishing Corporation—I am beginning to like the sound of it already the CPC, the Canadian Publishing Corporation—would develop bookstores in towns and cities where there are none now.

Now, I have not any more time to enlarge upon this but I think that the possibilities are endless. The important thing would be to do as the CBC has done to give the very best people, the very best people available, pay them the very best salaries, and provide this service for Canadian writers and for Canadian readers. Now, this is a drastic solution, but I think we have a drastic problem. I think this must be the only country in the world that depends for its culture on other countries and we have to do something drastic as they did when they established the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, we have to do something equally as drastic now by establishing a Canadian Publishing Corporation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Mr. Braithwaite. Would anyone like to make any comments? Mr. Garner?

MR. GARNER: I think first of all that Mr. Braithwaite was including me in the people who started up by selling to the CBC but I would like at the present moment to exclude myself completely as I did not start writing junk for the CBC, I started writing short stories which I could not sell.

The first short story I ever wrote in 1940 was published finally in 1951 in a magazine no longer in existence called "Northern Review." It was then taken up by Martin Foley's *Best American Short Stories* and I tried to sell it in Canada to every publishing house, to every magazine here and none would take it. I found out the best way to

get your short stories published and not to start writing short stories incidentally, is write a novel first, to get a name first, and they will all buy your short stories. I do not think Mr. Braithwaite knows anything about that part of the business. He really does not know about the Canadian magazine business either and I would like to read out a few things I just jotted down.

When I started writing there were a lot of magazines. In 1951 I sold 17 short stories in Canada to 17 different magazines. Half of those magazines have gone under since then and among them were *Canadian Home Journal*, *National Home Monthly*, *Montrealer*, *Mayfair*, *Montreal Standard*, the *Canadian Magazine*, and there are others that I have forgotten—yes, of course, *Liberty Magazine*. The ones which are still left, but which do not publish short stories are *Star Weekly*, *Maclean's*, *Saturday Night*, among many others.

MR. PURDY: *Saturday Night* does publish them every once in a while.

MR. GARNER: They publish them once every two years and that is about all. *Chatelaine* was one of the first commercial magazines to publish short stories and still does and it is about the only consumer magazine which still does. *Queen's Quarterly* has published a great number of short stories by a great many Canadians over the past half, possibly a century, and are still publishing. The new magazines, and there are several of them which are publishing short stories, and because of the grants they receive not only from the Canada Council but from the Ontario Council are *Tamarack Review*, *Fiddlehead* and *Quarry* of which Dave Helwig has been an editor and is on the editorial board, I believe, and out in Vancouver, *Prism*, and a new magazine which is starting up at the University of New Brunswick called the *Journal of Canadian Fiction* for which I have great hopes, it will be sort of an east coast *Canadian Literature* which is published in Vancouver and does not publish any fiction. So, I thought I would just bring you up-to-date on the magazine situation.

MR. BRAITHWAITE: I would like to say one thing before I go. I think just about everything Hugh has said backs up my contention that we need more magazines and publishers who will publish books without looking at the strict market value. He points out himself that the magazines that used to publish short stories are gone and then lists a long list of magazines that no one has ever heard of and that no one ever sees, or at least very few people ever see and I think his

point is well taken. But, I would just like to say that most of what he has said, I think, bears out the need for a Canadian Publishing Corporation.

As I said at the beginning I did not expect everyone to agree with me and tell me I was right. Would you excuse me at this time, sir?

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Braithwaite, for being here with us.

Before we go on any further, I got a note from a person in the audience suggesting that we might, for the benefit of the audience, give a name to each person who is here. We can see them but they cannot. So, if I may, they are obviously Farley Mowat, Max Braithwaite, who just left, David Helwig who spoke a little earlier in the centre, Jack Gray, Mr. Graeme Gibson and Fred Bodsworth and they are all in the front row. There is June Callwood on the back left-hand side, and Margaret Atwood, Ian Adams, Hugh Garner and Al Purdy. That is the group we have with us at the moment.

Now, Mr. Lee, you wanted to say something?

The writers: TOP L-R: June Callwood, Margaret Atwood, Ian Adams, Hugh Garner, Al Purdy; BOTTOM L-R: Farley Mowat, Max Braithwaite, David Helwig, Jack Gray, Graeme Gibson, Fred Bodsworth; FOREGROUND (with their backs to the camera) L-R: Marsh Jeanneret, Richard Rohmer (the chairman), and Dalton Camp. To the right side between Dalton Camp and Fred Bodsworth is one of the transcribers of the testimony.

FOREGROUND: Commissioners Dalton Camp, Chair Richard Rohmer,
and Dr. Marsh Jeanneret;

BACKGROUND (behind Rohmer): Executive Secretary Robert Fleming.

MR. LEE: If that is at all possible.

THE CHAIRMAN: What we would like to do is go through the agenda and then if you would like to make comment we would be glad to hear from you.

MR. LEE: At the end?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. MOWAT: I was only going to make one point, and a very minor one. Sometimes we forget that the reason why we are here today is to create a better climate for writers in the future and some of us, particularly we elderly gentlemen like Hugh and myself, may think too much in terms of the past. No reflection [on] Hugh but this is a fact, I think we should all remember that we are here to talk about creating possibilities, a good climate for writers in the future.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that is fair, what can be done in the future and that is what we are interested in and what kind of ideas can you put forward to help the situation.

Next then on this list as you have given to us is the protection of authors' rights.

MR. GRAY: Mr. Chairman, we have already appeared and when I say "we" I mean a group has already appeared before you to discuss copyright³ and it is not my intention to go into all that again but I would just like to reiterate the points we made at that time, or the basic point we made at that time and just to inform you that so far as I can see that represents a consensus of most creative people that we have been able to consult since we saw you. The basic point we made when we saw you with regard to copyright was that we felt it should be vested in the creator in the first place and that there should be payment for use in all cases and we felt that a Canadian Copyright Act which was rewritten with those principles in mind would serve the Canadian community very well.

We are hopeful that when that Copyright Act is rewritten it will be possible then to correct some of the abuses that have crept in primarily because of technological developments. Such things as photocopying, for instance, we feel this can be handled once the new Copyright Act is sorted out, at least we hope it will be able to be straightened out.

THE CHAIRMAN: I might say to you in response that the expert is on my left in this regard but everywhere we have been and through the discoveries we have made, is that no one has yet in the western world, coped with the photocopying problem.

MR. GRAY: I think the suggestion we made to you before, obliquely, but nevertheless it is a practical suggestion, that when we come to such complicated matters or such complicated technological matters such as photocopying, we are probably going to have to deal in large solutions and by "large solutions" I mean blanket licences and we are going to have to go on and think about how the creative community can suggest to the large community those systems, or those methods

³ Archives of Ontario, RG 18-164, Box 4, 1 June 1971, testimony of the Canadian Copyright Institute: Mr. Roy Sharp, Q.C., Executive Director; J.C.W. Irwin, Vice-Chairman of the Board; John [Jack] Gray, Member, Board of Governors, pp. 1809-40; and Box 6, 9 November 1971, testimony of the Canadian Copyright Institute: Mr. Michael Pitman, Chairman of the Board; Mr. Roy C. Sharp, Q.C., Executive Director; J.C.W. Irwin; and John [Jack] Gray, pp. 3969-3984.

by which the creative community can legitimately participate in the use that is made of its material.⁴

Now, one of the primary suggestions that has come in many countries is that there be created what is often called a form of public lending right. I realize the Commission has done studies on that and I thought you might be interested in knowing that since we met before we have had occasion to have discussions with the Canadian Library Association and I would not want to say anything about the Canadian Library Association except that we were tremendously encouraged by the very positive creative discussions that we have had about this.

I think it would be fair to say that what we now need, and what we are hoping to see is a thorough study of the implications of public lending rights—that is not the right word, but it is some system by which the creative community can participate in the use of their work in all of the areas, in libraries, in the educational system, and so on. A specific suggestion would be made to you privately as to how perhaps the Commission might help in that regard.⁵

THE CHAIRMAN: I would encourage you to move with some degree of speed because we are gearing up—when we gear up, we usually disgorge also.

MR. GRAY: What we are really saying here is that we are aware of the problems many of which are technological. Creative people are now looking—not just creative people, but others in the community are obviously looking for practical ways, for example, to take public lending rights specifically, we don't want to get into a situation where librarians are either required to count every volume on their shelves once a year, which would be insane, or are required to pay out of their already inadequate budget monies that they simply don't have. We are working for more creative solutions than that. Obviously, this takes us a further step which we also discussed obliquely with you last time, and that is a collection agency or a collective group or a cooperative agency made up of creative people. I think I would like to state here as clearly as possible that it is the opinion of the creative

⁴ This large solution was finally found when CANCOPY was founded on 23 August 1988; it changed its name to Access Copyright in 2002. See <https://www.accesscopyright.ca/media/news/access-copyright-turns-30/>.

⁵ Canada's Public Lending Right Program (PLR) was established in March 1986 after the committee to discuss doing so was set up in 1977. See <https://publiclendingright.ca/about/history>.

community that such an agency must be created by and controlled by the creators themselves.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is encouraging.

MR. GRAY: That is a strong point and we cannot say it too strongly. If you go beyond that stage of the necessity for an agency that can do a certain job, you then get right back into the basic problem, which the creative people, in this case authors, have to face, and that is how they are going to organize themselves. You have already seen good evidence of how, when you gather together more than two writers at one time, anarchy develops.

THE CHAIRMAN: I might encourage you by saying the writers have not got a monopoly on that.

MR. GRAY: Therefore, we are going to be looking for a very practical way to form—I don't know what it will be called, and I don't know—nor do any of us know from what base it might develop, but in any case, an authors' society can do a variety of things. It can obviously organize the collection agency on the one hand and be responsible for that, but there is a whole range of problems that we want to tackle, contracts with publishers, specific problems like the difficulties that many of our writers are having with anthologies, with Americans coming in and sweeping the field and creating anthologies at rates and conditions which are not acceptable to Canadian writers. The whole promotion and generation of Canadianism, the kind of thing we are doing here, the encouragement of talent, the pressure on councils and the pressure on government to give those councils the wherewithal to succeed and so on. I think the whole object of this exercise, as far as I can discern, is to make it possible for the writers in this case to make their contribution to society which is why they exist in the first place.

I thought you might be interested in those, starting with specifics, how we can get into large, general problems and then we have to return to specifics to attempt to solve them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Garner?

MR. GARNER: I would like to shoot him down too! His remark about American anthologists coming into this country and sweeping all of the good Canadian stories, and so forth, into their anthologies, is a hell of a good thing. This year I sold to 10 anthologies and textbooks in West Germany and the United States and Canada and

the United Kingdom. I find that I get \$200 or \$150 from the American textbook publishers and I get an average of \$50 to \$75 from Canadian anthologists and textbook publishers. As far as I am concerned, and as far as every other professional writer in this country is concerned, we welcome the American market. There is no Canadian writer yet who has not wanted his stuff published in the United States.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anyone else who wants to comment on Mr. Gray's remarks?

MR. HELWIG: In answer to Mr. Garner, I am one of the anthologists who paid him a rather small fee. I think the real distinction there is that the Canadian publishers are, by and large, not producing simply text anthologies, that is, I produced an anthology of short stories which was connected with the fact there were no magazines doing short stories which was done by my own publisher as a trade book with very little hope of using it as a textbook, simply because it was, in effect, a year's stories. The actual money paid to writers in this case had to be limited for that reason. It succeeded fairly well as a trade book but the comparison between that and, say, an anthology which is published by a large textbook publisher, for which they will pay you \$200 or \$300 or \$400, but which they are publishing with the backing, you know, with the intent of getting it into ten universities, you know, and 37 high schools and so on, it is just not economically comparable, and to accuse the Canadian publisher of paying less, or to defend the American publisher on the grounds of giving more money, he is giving you more money because he is putting through a big textbook operation and selling in a different way. It is not comparable. It seems to me, again. You come back to the same problem of levels of composition which don't match.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Can we move on to Mr. Gibson, who is going to discuss the Book Marketing Board and book marketing abroad?

MR. GIBSON: There is another way of approaching the whole thing, and that is, somehow, to reward writers, in effect, for what they have already done. The most obvious way of doing that is improving sales, library sales, or whatever. It didn't occur to me but I think it was at a meeting of the I.P.A.⁶ when it first came up—and this again goes back

⁶ The "I.A.P." is the Independent Publishers' Association, which was the forerunner of the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP). The IAP also

to the possibility of cooperative action of some kind, the possibility of selling our books abroad, not just the rights for them. What that does, of course, is for a publisher here—even the smallest kind of action could double our markets if we set up an office in New York with a hell of a good book salesman in it, and perhaps an agent. His job is to sell books, just in the New York–Boston area, not trying to break the whole American market, but to take books and to put them into a cooperative catalogue, set them up down there and it will be his job to sell them in the same way we at least try to sell books here. You see, what that does right away is almost double the market for the publisher. I think it would have to be subsidized, initially, but if we are as good as we would like to think we are, and if the salesman is good, I see no reason why it shouldn't pay its way. This would avoid the whole business of hanging around waiting for full publication rights. It takes long enough for many publishers to make up their minds anyway, whether or not they are going to bring out a book. If they have to wait a further time while they persuade an English or an American publisher, that is a further delay, an unreasonable delay. It also, it seems to me, talking to—and I don't know very many people in New York—talking to a couple of young people working in the book business in New York, they are really dismayed by the kind of monolithic approach to what is going to be published or what is likely to sell. It has to do with pretty rigid projections of sales and so, in many cases, they don't take and they would never consider books which grow out of our experience. It seems to be in the same way as, say, if Owen Sound, indeed, doesn't have a book store and there are people there who would like to read us, there, there are still people in New York or London or people on the West Coast who would like to read us. I would like to get to those people. You see, one of the—an example—like any branch-plant economy, it seems to me, they are more concerned with merchandising than with research and many of us are involved in a kind of research. We don't intend to be immediately, you know, we would like to be, but we are not going to be best-sellers right away. To be tied into a market initially is, for some of us, undesirable, certainly, and most unlikely.

This makes it very hard on the smaller publishing houses who want to bring us out. If, in fact, there was some kind of cooperative—

testified before the commission (Box 4, 1 June 1971, testimony of the Independent Publishers' Association: Mr. Peter Martin, President; Dr. W.H. Clarke, Vice-President; Mr. Roy McSkimming, Secretary, pp. 1923–53).

something like the Hog Marketing Board, or something, where they could come into a cooperative catalogue, be sold, say, in New York and in London and, if it works, in another city like San Francisco. That is my suggestion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any comment on that, please?

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman —

MR. GIBSON: There is a problem which none of us really know, whether or not there is a limit on the number of Canadian books that can be sold in the United States. I know that the Americans only allow a certain number of books by Americans that are published in Canada, only a certain number of them can be sold in the United States, but we don't know whether or not that applies—whether there is a limit on the number of books by Canadians.

DR. JEANNERET: You can sell as many as you can find readers for it.

MR. GIBSON: Great. That was the only reservation I had.

MR. PURDY: There is a law on that particular point. As Graeme said, you can import into the United States only a certain number of books I believe, but I am not sure what the number of books is.

MR. BODSWORTH: 1500, it used to be.

MR. PURDY: 1500. This, about the marketing board, if you can only sell 1500 of any given copy of a book —

DR. JEANNERET: You are making the jump here a lot of people make applying to Canadian authors and it has nothing to do with Canadian authors at all. There is no such limitation on Canadian authors whatsoever.

MR. PURDY: I am glad to hear it but I understood there was.

DR. JEANNERET: It applies only to American authors or Americans domiciled here if the book is manufactured outside the country, then you have an interim licence good for five years which must be obtained to allow you to import up to 1500 copies but it doesn't bear on your problem at all.

MR. PURDY: Good.

DR. JEANNERET: And also, there is no duty going into the United States.

THE CHAIRMAN: At this time.

DR. JEANNERET: And, for that reason, there is no surcharge.

THE CHAIRMAN: At this time (laughter).

MR. GIBSON: It seems to me that it is the very practical type of thing that could be done to enlarge the market very dramatically and very quickly. You would have to get an extremely good salesman down there, because it would probably be a hard thing to sell, but it seems to me it would be desirable. I can't think of any reason to oppose it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bodsworth, you are next on our list.

MR. BODSWORTH: Gentlemen, what I would like to say is, really, a postscript to what Graeme Gibson has already said about the establishment of a Canadian book merchandising office in New York. However, Mr. Gibson is seeing this in terms, mainly, of an office that would promote and get bookstore space and sell already manufactured Canadian books in the U.S. market.

Now, I feel strongly on the basis of my own experience, with my own books on the foreign markets, that this office could play a bigger and more beneficial role for Canadian writers by also publishing foreign rights to Canadian books, both English language rights and foreign translation rights and I would like to take a minute or two to talk about this subject because I do not think Canadian books today are getting the promotion and the opportunities that they merit in the general over-all world publishing scene.

Now, if you consider book publishing in the terms of the world as a whole, London and New York is where it is at. Toronto, of course, is away out here in the boondocks. Every spring publishers from London and Europe go over to New York and go the rounds of the agents and publishers in New York and pick up U.S. books there that they think that there is a European or British market for and make their deals in New York for the publication of these books in Europe or elsewhere. Similarly, New York publishers go to London and go to Paris and pick up foreign books in the same way. Well, this is the kind of opportunity that Canadian books are now missing unless they are also published in New York as well as Toronto and I think it is an important role that is, a Canadian book promotion and merchandising office in New York could perform just simply by being there and having Canadian books there and by becoming known as a place to foreign editors, foreign publishers on their annual trips to

New York simply by becoming known as a place that should be on their rounds to the New York agents and publishers.

So, first of all there was reference made here to U.S. publication and about someone not wanting U.S. publication, but certainly if you are writing and dependent upon writing for an income and someone does not want U.S. publication, he is a bloody idiot. So, you have first of all U.S. publication itself and by being in close touch with the New York scene, our man in New York could, I am sure, arrange U.S. publication deals for at least some Canadian books that are not getting that opportunity today because I do not think there is sufficient incentive for Canadian publishers to promote the U.S. publications and this is an author's requirement and the author is not benefiting unless he has a Canadian contract in which the Canadian publisher has sneaked in a clause that in effect own most of his foreign rights.

There is the English language market outside of North America, which is a very big one, Australia, I understand is the biggest per capita book buying nation in the world and my royalty statements bear this out because I see the British publishers sell more books in Australia, or at least more of my books in Australia, than they sell at home in Britain. Then, of course, there is the translation rights for just about everywhere. Now, I know there is a kind of a legend that U.S. readers and foreign readers everywhere are supposed to be uninterested in reading books with Canadian settings and I think this is an absurd myth. I think it is an excuse that has grown up to cover inept Canadian books that have not been able to make the grade in the more competitive U.S. market.

Can I be forgiven now if I indulge in a little bit of self-advertisement to describe some of my own experiences in support of these statements? I am a Canadian citizen, I am a novelist, writing novels with Canadian settings and Canadian themes and I have been making my living this way for 15 years. I had the good fortune with my first book to sell it to a New York publisher and I have been a writer about Canada ever since but in terms of business and sales, I can hardly call myself a Canadian writer.

Most of my sales, and income, comes from the United States. My second source of income is Great Britain and the British market and my third source of income is Germany, my fourth source of income is from Canada and this of course sometimes varies from year to year but as a rule this is the way it works out.

The book publication of my last novel sold 71,000 copies in German translation, 71,000 copies in one year in Germany. The same book has sold 10,000 copies in Canada in three years and this is the kind of thing I am talking about as possibilities for an international agency in New York that could push or promote this kind of thing. Incidentally, my German publishers can say I can thank James Fenimore Cooper for my popularity in Germany because he says that ever since James Fenimore Cooper's, *The Last of the Mohicans* that the Germans have an avid interest in stories about Canadian—or rather North American red Indians and a couple of my books have been about the Canadian north and about Indians and he says, at least as a partial explanation of the reputation I have established in Germany.

Now, I have many other translation rights or deals but for some reason Germany is the one that really provides me with a significant income. Now I have got Japanese rights and I have a book coming out, at least I have an edition coming out in Poland, which is only going to give me a zloty account in Warsaw which I am going to have to go to Poland to spend and I have travelled a great deal and unfortunately Poland is the last country in the world I want to go back to so I do not know, but I have a Russian edition coming up which I presume will establish me with a rouble account in Moscow and I will be quite happy to go to Russia again. Maybe I will write a book on Siberia and call it "Sibir."

I do not know how much farther I should push this—

MR. MOWAT: Not much.⁷

MR. BODSWORTH: I mean this self-advertisement business.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have done very well. We take it you have a yen for the mark.

MR. BODSWORTH: I was in *Who's Who in America* before I was in *Canadian Who's Who*. I think *Canadian Who's Who* copies their entries from *Who's Who in America*.

MR. GARNER: I would like to congratulate Mr. Fred Bodsworth on his international reputation. However, I take exception to the fact that he thinks any Canadian books that is not acceptable in Poland or the United States is necessarily inept. It may just be parochial. If

⁷ Farley Mowat published the book *Sibir: My Discovery of Siberia* in 1970.

you wait a minute—if you write stories about the Canadian urban scene you stand little chance of being published in the United States. However, if you write about Curlews, Eskimos, wolves, Indians, Mounted Policemen you can be published all over the world.

MR. BODSWORTH: If you write a good book, you can be published all over the world. It does not matter a damn what that book is about.

MR. MOWAT: You are running into a perfect example of what writers are all about. They should keep their mouths shut and write books and not talk in public.

MR. BODSWORTH: I hope I have demolished the myth that Americans or no one else are interested in Canadian books.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have done very well.

MR. BODSWORTH: I think there is a role for this office that Mr. Gibson has suggested in New York in this area because I think there is a chance here that Canadian books that are not getting the opportunity for foreign publication, under the present set-up, at least some of them, could get that opportunity with a good Canadian book promoting man in an office in New York where publishers from Europe could just include that office on their springtime book searching travels in New York. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Miss Callwood, I am sure you are there? On this list we find you are next under the elaborate heading which says, the Publishing Wall Against Non-Establishment Writers. How do you like that?

MISS CALLWOOD: It was written by Farley.

THE CHAIRMAN: Of course.

MISS CALLWOOD: I will say to start how terribly important writers are and what I am going to say is kind of in that line although I flinch from the indebtedness in that way. But, I am a non-fiction writer and I have a great deal of respect for the influence of non-fiction writers not so much for the influence of poets whose perceptions I think are largely prophetic. But in the area of social change, for example, John Kelso, who was a reporter in the 1890s started the Children's Aid Society, and William Lyon Mackenzie King, who was also a reporter in the 1890s was able to cause an investigation of sweatshops, which caused legislation eradicating sweatshops.

But, in this country right now we are on this rather right wing newspaper press, at least almost all present newspapers are right wing, and we have a tabloid now in Toronto,⁸ that is in the tradition of most tabloids and has a conservative stance.

The whole burden of what I regard as the social conscience is being carried by the Underground Press. I find the Underground Press, in the main, to be taking most energy and most literate, the most anger, the most perception of any press in the country. It has been confined to street corner sales and some kind of patronizing coffee table exhibition in certain homes and I find when I go to publisher's parties, I see people who are costumed in certain ways and I assume they came with the caterers or by malabars because I do not have any rapport with their views although they dress in a way that seems to me they would. There is such a gap between publishing and straight press of all kinds and real energy in creative policies and perceptions, insights and anger in our country and I see no closing of that gap with the exception of Anansi and New Press and their circulation is a tragedy in those two publishing houses. For example, an early one, I think that Anansi brought it out, was *Law, Law, Law* by Bob Copeland and Clayton Ruby—it was a handbook on your rights as a citizen put out in a size that would go into the pocket of someone's jeans, and it had a very limited circulation, although I thought it had very wide—there was a very great need for it at that time and it solved the circulation problems of these small publishers. I see a lack of social consciousness in some of the larger publishing houses, a lack of interest in almost all of them in any Canadian process of change. They lack an understanding of the need for social change, and I see we have things like the Young Offenders Bill, which is before the House and is having countless hearings. There is no move to interpret why there is any concern about the Young Offenders Bill and it is of enormous significance, philosophically, in the way we handle children and families in the courts, and the impact it will have on the whole country, and I see no interpretation and no interest on the part of the publishers. I must say personally that there is a tremendous need for a book on the lives of children in this country, and the conditions of our institutions dealing with children and their child raising practices,

⁸ The *Toronto Sun* began publishing on 1 November 1971. It somewhat replaced the *Toronto Telegram*, which published from 1876 to October 1971. The subscriber list of the *Toronto Telegram* (which usually supported the Conservative party), however, was sold to the *Toronto Star* (more supportive of the Liberal party).

and the absolute hell that many of our children are in, and there is an enormous amount of investigation needed in order for us to have legislative change and I see no interest in books like that.

MISS ATWOOD: We have a book coming out in the spring, Anansi is bringing it out. It is called *Beyond Neglect*, and it is based on this very program. We totally agree with everything June said.

MISS CALLWOOD: I discourage the policy.

MR. MOWAT: The CPC will publish it.

MR. GIBSON: Too late!

THE CHAIRMAN: Any comment on Miss Callwood in this instance?

MR. GIBSON: Agreement.

MR. GRAY: Concurrence.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, Margaret Atwood.

MISS ATWOOD: I will do this very quickly in short form, if I may, to speed it up. What I am speaking about is the relations between the publisher and the writer and, as you can see, most are fully dependent on either legal action, OR changing the law, or union enforcement, as most of these things are. If you change the law, you have to have somebody not connected with the publishers to see that the flow of energy is paid the proper kind of attention.

The first two points have to do with money. They first is, we feel that there should be penalties imposed on publishers for failure to keep a book in print when there is a demand for it. That is, if a book runs out and the author feels that people still want the book, the publisher should keep it in print and if he doesn't, a penalty should be imposed on the publisher. Of course, you have to prove your case and this is, again, where a union would be helpful.

Second is the profit-sharing of authors. That is a bigger piece of the pie. We could do this in a couple of ways. If the total company makes a large amount, you could divide it up into little pieces and give one to each author or give the author a bigger share of large profits made from the sale of his book. Or you could do it by a system of escalating royalty rate, that is, you start out at a lower rate say, 8 to 10 per cent, and if a book really sells and goes into a number of editions, you

could bring the royalties up to 10 or 12 per cent. Some publishers do this already, but by no means all of them do it. It is not the general policy. If a publisher is making a large profit on an author, the author should be getting a little bit of it, at least a little bit of it.

MR. MOWAT: I would like to see a big piece of it.

MISS ATWOOD: My next couple of points have to do with other kinds of relations between authors and publishers. We think it would be very interesting if a working author were placed on the Board of Directors and not just the editorial board, but the Board of Directors of every publishing house. This would have the same value as placing a student in a position where he could attend faculty meetings at universities. That is, one of us in there looking at what they are doing. I think that would be very enlightening for us much of the time, because usually these are closed-door things. It sure would be interesting to find out what goes on in there. I am on the Board of Directors myself and it is just fascinating.

The next one, again, is the opening up of consultation and that is, we think, there should be open records, open files, that is, that the author should have accessible to him his file at the publishers on all transactions concerning him. Some of it now goes on behind his back and how much money is spent on promotion and publicity for him should be accessible to him. It should, even further, be made available to the public, but that might possibly be too exhilarating for everyone.

The next one is we feel the author should have a say in permission granting, that is, for reprints in anthologies. You covered this a little bit, but we feel it has to be done even speedier. As it is now, if a publisher has a copyright on a book, he can give the right to reprint without asking permission from you. That means that your work is going into an anthology where you don't want it. Supposing you are not in agreement with American companies making a profit on your work in anthologies and wish to refuse permission, you find out your publisher has already granted his permission. There should certainly be an accepted policy or a law that there has to be 50-50 agreement between publisher and author.

The last is just a general thing. More assistance to selected and specialized publishers of the kind Miss Callwood was talking about. This has been already covered by the Ontario government policy of underwriting loans from banks but perhaps even more has to be

done along these lines. This goes to big publishers like McClelland and it should go to the smaller publishers like Oberon and New Press and so on.

That is all.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. GARNER: I think Miss MacEwen is a little confused about publishers' agreements.

MR. GIBSON: That is not Miss MacEwen.

MR. GARNER: Oh, it is Miss Atwood. There are so many Gwendolyns in the poetry business. I think most —

MISS ATWOOD: I might also say that we didn't come here to listen to personal comments today and you just about lost five of your members a couple of minutes ago. Any more of it and we are all going to get up and walk out. Enough of this shooting people down. We are here to make submissions to the Commission and not to reach over hitting each other over the heads with personal comments.

MR. GARNER: I am not hitting you over the head, but I can see here several Canadian publishers with whom I have had contracts and all of them have given the copyright to me and not kept the copyright to themselves so that I have had—and this goes for many Canadian authors, have had the copyrights for all of their books, I am sure that I represent the majority, not a small minority.

(Miss Callwood, Miss Atwood, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Adams, withdraw.)

MR. GARNER: I knew I might drive the publishers off the stage but I didn't think I would drive poets off!

THE CHAIRMAN: Ian Adams, you have retired. Do you want to come back?

MR. ADAMS: My only comment —

THE CHAIRMAN: Before you start, we are interested in everybody's comments.

MR. ADAMS: I was going to say that all of this bitter wrangling by the older authors who are here, sort of really demonstrates what a

lousy situation the Canadian publishing business is in. It is obvious to me—I am a little up-tight.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. Continue.

MR. ADAMS: It seems to me it is not going to get any better collaborating, with that kind of council. It is not going to get any better putting forward this kind of information which the publishers can manipulate and use and the only thing really to do for guys like me, other young writers, is to go away and organize a sub-union of writers and then we won't be riddled with all this sort of factionism and all that kind of crap. That's all I want to say.

Thank you.

(Applause)

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps, out of all these proceedings and discussions will come the kind of thing you are talking about. I might say that in our few travels I have certainly been impressed with the strength of the authors associations in various countries. They are very strong, and an active force in the national community because they have banded together and decided where they want to go and what they want to do. This is a great move, in fact.

MR. PURDY: I wanted to preface my remarks by saying that whatever the Canadian consciousness is, and all countries have their particular consciousness of nationality, of identity, call it what you like, and we are no exception, whatever it is, it exists in the media, the newspapers. In TV and it exists in book publishing. Now, I believe that there are various laws that prevent, say, newspapers or TV stations being sold to outside interests. However, there is no such law in the case of Canadian textbook publishers. Now, whatever the Canadian consciousness is, as I said, it exists first of all in the minds of children and it comes out of textbooks, environment, it comes out of being here. So, I take this for granted and we now have in Toronto two large publishers left and a number of smaller ones such as Anansi, such as New Press and Oberon in Ottawa. These two Canadian large publishers, Clarke, Irwin, McClelland and Stewart, I believe Clarke, Irwin publishes a lot of textbooks, but McClelland and Stewart comparatively few. My particular recommendation is that Anansi, Oberon and New Press should be subsidized in some way or form to be decided by people who have more information on the subject

than I do and be set up as textbook publishers and that a Canadian textbook publisher should be given preference by the buyers. I believe there is an organization of some kind of buyers and I believe the Canadian textbook publisher should be given preference. That is all.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Purdy. Is there anyone else who wants to make a comment on what has been commented upon? Dennis Lee, where are you? Dennis, are you still with us?

MR. LEE: My sympathies are with the people who walked out. Perhaps I will remain silent.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Is there anyone else who wants to make comment?

MR. MOWAT: May I say one final word? I agree with what Ian Adams says and I agree with what most of the younger people here said. I do not consider myself an old writer, except in terms of years and gradual decrepitude.

I come back to the original contention with which we opened this meeting, that what we are looking for is for better opportunities, better conditions for the young writers who will supplant us and, having heard a wide variety of the older writers today, all I can say is, let's hope they supplant us soon!

Thank you.

DR. JEANNERET: I think this has been a fascinating insight that has been offered into the authors' points of view. I am awfully glad you went to that party, Mr. Chairman, and anything I would like to ask would be just sheer impertinence at this point. I am going to enjoy reading the transcript. We have been meddling around with the central part of our report, and this is a great help to us. I would like to thank you all myself.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you all for coming and to listen. You have all made quite an impression on us. My associate is saying the lack of questions on our part does not indicate any lack of interest. I think that you have, by yourself, covered most of the points we were going to ask, in any event, in our discussion.

As I said at the outset, we are, I know, vitally concerned with the whole question of publishing in this country and how it can be

enhanced and how the young people can be brought along and what, generally, can be done in this area.

I think you will find that right or wrong we will be making comment in this regard and making certain recommendations and I can guarantee that no matter what our report says, no matter how it is couched, there will be some for it and some who are against it and your points are well made.

We want to thank all of you for coming and I wish to say by the way at the cocktail party where we covered this I did not have a uniform on—but Hugh did.

Thank you for coming and we appreciate it very much. We hope you can all come together and become a stronger force.

MR. MOWAT: We will.⁹

—Adjournment.

⁹ The Writers' Union of Canada (TWUC) was officially formed in 1973.