

The Applebaum-Hébert Report: Personal Observations

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following personal observations on the Applebaum-Hébert report were solicited by me through mailing over twenty-five letters to leading individual archivists, those as I therein stated "who were directly involved in the FCPRC hearings, the ACA's briefs, earlier comments on the report and the FCPRC processes, or recent thinking on the issues raised by Applebert." Some replied that they had had a major part in preparing one of the foregoing institutional or association responses and therefore had nothing new to contribute; others that their views had been given to deputy ministers or ministers and therefore must remain confidential until officially released; others that they were too busy with other priorities or that they had not yet seen or read the report; and of course still others who did not reply at all by my deadline. The responses from those who did reply appear below virtually as they were received. Any readers wishing to add their comments to this debate are urged to send them to me for inclusion in Archivaria 17.*

The Applebaum-Hébert *Report* should be seen as a mirror rather than as a crystal ball. Both the flaws and the delights of a mirror are present. The arbitrary distance, which is imposed by such a mirror, is beneficial; this reflected silver barrier, imposed on us as we look at the archival profession, forms a means of distancing ourselves, looking a bit more objectively at ourselves as archival institutions and as professionals, seeing ourselves against a background of the "collective experience" (p. 1). Some heritage sectors may claim (indeed, have insisted) that the *Report* distorts certain features of our cultural landscape. Others see only a partial view of the visage they know so well. Others, privileged with a direct rather than a diagonal position *vis-à-vis* the *Report*, are well-satisfied with the picture they see.

Is the image reflected by the *Report* one which archivists can greet with a feeling of pleasure, satisfaction, or even of identity? Do we see ourselves depicted as we want to be seen? And more important, are we, indeed, as we want to be? Has our mirror provided us with any insights to hasten us in our maturing process as a profession and as a group of institutions striving towards common goals?

Some visions reflected by the *Report* are glancing, narrow, don't indicate

possibilities. The *Report*, for example, gives only a sideways view of the importance of the technological revolution, although it admits that this revolution “will drastically affect the ways knowledge is created, stored and transmitted” (p. 7). This may well be the single most important aspect of our archival environment over the next few decades. The old masses of paper may not necessarily be replaced by equal masses of information in electronic form, but like a Siamese twin, the two may go forward linked in an ever-growing common corpus of fact and figures. The archivist’s job in dealing with this body of knowledge will become ever more difficult. Canadians, and archival creatures everywhere, are ill-prepared at present to deal with this radical change. The philosophical leap is as great as the technological one, in effect a transmigration from the flickering candle of Plato’s comfortable cave to the blinding ruby laser light of a modern computer. One cannot think of a single archival institution, whether government, university, corporate or religious, which will not feel in some way the effects of this change in the next decade.

The importance of an adequate philosophical and educational basis to cope with this change cannot be overrated. The *Report* refers only briefly to the need for appropriate programmes of education in various areas of culture and heritage. As keepers of records who might now be likened to monks attending to Bibles chained in churches on the eve of Caxton’s breakthrough, archivists are sorely in need of a body of literature, and a series of courses, which will equip them to deal with the new technology in a meaningful way. The *Report* defines the role of a National Heritage Council as being “actively involved in promoting and encouraging institutions and individuals to collect, conserve, research and display heritage materials” (p. 137). This overlooks the vital necessity for both philosophical and operational support to all heritage programmes.

Fortunately for archivists at least, the *Report* envisages a substantial and direct role in this area for a National Archival Records Commission under the aegis of a Canadian Heritage Council. As well, both the possible responsibilities of an Extension Branch in the Public Archives of Canada and the long-range impact of such programmes as the graduate course in archival studies at UBC ensure that a variety of means of coping with technological change will be in place for archivists. The influence of existing granting programmes, such as the SSHRCC’s Research Tools Program, will also heighten the awareness of archivists about the possibilities which the new technology offers to archives and to the profession in general.

Despite the *Report*’s assertion that “there seems to be a consensus in the Canadian archival community that money is not the only solution to current problems. We were told that there is a ‘much greater need to identify major problems in the archival landscape and to develop priorities that will lead to their solutions’” (p. 131), the inarguable fact remains that Canadian archives are virtually destitute. Even if aware of their major problems — which the Archives Congress in June 1982, the increased discussions of national archival problems at the Dominion-Provincial-Territorial level, and the establishment of task forces by professional associations in various areas and on various themes have clarified — archives are unable to fund solutions out of existing operating budgets. The sad fact revealed by the Wilson Report of 1978 that only thirty archives had operating budgets of over \$75,000 speaks for itself. Thus the establishment of a National Archival Records Commission, which “will ultimately be expected to make grants

for such priorities as capital projects, archival training programmes and publications, research in conservation techniques for collections, and standards and building codes for new archival institutions” (p. 131) will be doubly welcomed by the archival community.

The *Report* has highlighted certain areas of immense importance to archivists, their institutions, and professional organizations. It has reflected the concerns expressed in briefs sent to the committee by these individuals, institutions and groups. But the important point to remember, now that the *Report* is published, now that the Department of Communications has established a departmental committee to decide how best to implement certain recommendations, is that impetus and momentum for change within our own profession must continue to be generated from within. We can seek in the *Report* objective analyses of our own musings set in a broader cultural context, but it is up to us as a profession to make active use of the recommendations and insights offered to us in the *Report*, in moving forward along the road to institutional and professional maturity. That implies that our national and provincial and territorial repositories must take an active, leading role in establishing the network system for archives in Canada. It implies that the institutions from a variety of bases will work cooperatively in a variety of ways. It implies that individual archivists as professionals will undertake to work for the common good both within their institutions and within their professional associations.

A positive start has been made along this path, with the obvious consensus found at the Congress in June 1982 paving the way for interaction and cooperation as the Dominion-Provincial-Territorial group began discussions on establishing networks, and as regional archival associations worked with the Association of Canadian Archivists in preparing their responses to the Applebaum-Hébert *Report*. We must at all costs maintain the sense of cohesiveness that is now developing within the Canadian archival system. That can best be achieved by continuing and acting upon the frank dialogue which has been nurtured by Symons, Wilson and Applebaum-Hébert.

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(ACA President, 1982-83)

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I am delighted that “Applebert” has plumped for a National Archival Records Commission. It is exactly what archives and archivists need. Viewed broadly in a heritage policy context, with virtual operating autonomy and special appropriation, with broadly representative archival and heritage composition and with untrammelled discretionary power, the proposed commission could be the fount of much-needed adrenalin in the archival body politic. The particulars of the commission's structure and composition, the mechanisms it will require and the range of its jurisdiction are moreover to be largely at the behest of Canada's archivists. A remarkable opportunity.

The commission proposal is by far the most affecting and novel recommendation for archivists. That the federal flagship should have a new act and a new building is but a confirmation of processes already well in hand. And it is good to read such a positive urging of the Public Archives of Canada to consult with other archival jurisdictions on acquisitional policy — an old sore which is again well on the way to being healed. A relatively autonomous commission, similar in function and purpose to its successful American namesake, is an exciting prospect, not least because it offers us the chance to unhitch ourselves from the tails of other professional interests groping for funds. A National Archival Records Commission would, I hope, attend to all *archival* interests, irrespective of jurisdiction, where needs are identified and judged to be appropriate to the development of Canadian archives. On the matters of identification and judgement, I have never been in favour of the rigid framework originally composed (*Archivaria* 11, pages 17-18) for this appraisal process nor the composition of the commission itself which tended to be highly institutional and deferential. I should like to see rather a simple application process directly to the commission, avoiding all interim scrutiny processes, followed by evaluation first through a series of referees and secondly at a meeting of the commission. The most critical aspect of all is the matter of critical appointments to the commission. Who should make recommendations, receive them, choose from them and for how long should the appointees hold their positions? My preference is for the widest possible canvass for nine positions (six of which should be entirely archival), held for no longer than three years on one term and appointed by a national body — perhaps the Dominion-Provincial-Territorial Archivists Conference. Two of the six positions should be nominated by the Association of Canadian Archivists and the Association des archivistes du Québec; the remaining three non-archival positions should be open to recommendations from public users of archives — not primarily academic. With the Wilson report's prospectus for Canadian archival development as something of a blueprint, the commissioners ought in principle at least to be able to justify "Applebert's" brave arm's-length gesture.

Are the shoulders of Canada's suppliant archivists sturdy enough to carry this adroitly-hoisted monkey? The omens, as ever, are hardly propitious. In the first place, the waft of warm harmony spread by "Applebert" is derived from the slightest of evidence. The report contends that, on the basis of submissions received, the commission proposal "accurately reflects the considered judgement of the entire archival community." Yet, not only were there amazingly few briefs from or on behalf of archivists (perhaps five?), the whole tenor of the *Summary of Briefs and Hearings* on archival matters was perfect confusion. In almost Disraelian tones, "Applebert" referred to two archival landscapes — one outlined by the Public Archives of Canada, the other by the Association of Canadian Archivists. Despite the latter's hurried denial of such schizophrenia, the signs were obvious that archivists were not speaking with one voice. Secondly, there is no doubt whatsoever that "Applebert" has rejected *de facto* one of the major recommendations of the Wilson report, which opted for a National Archival Advisory Committee working in tandem with a newly funded Extension Branch of the Public Archives of Canada. "Applebert" claims that this solution was not approved by either the Public Archives or the association. Thirdly, "Applebert" has also run counter to the recommendations of the so-called National Archival Congress held in June 1982 at Queen's University. The seventh of its disorganized, vaguely worded and quaintly expressed resolutions, now being touted by the association as a kind of gospel,

called for nothing more than “an advisory group on Canadian archives to meet under the aegis of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.” Fourthly, “Applebert” may not have the support of the Dominion-Provincial-Territorial Archivists Conference, which appears to be leaning substantially on the institutional resources of the Public Archives in some sort of modification of Wilson. This would be the very opposite of the “Applebert” view, which I too share, that the “separation of the wider interests of the Commission from the ongoing actions of the Public Archives of Canada” should be emphasized. Fifthly, “Applebert” has been followed by a lickspittle draft from the association to the federal minister which reads like an institutional or departmental information memorandum. Phrases such as “leading national archives for other levels of government to emulate,” in extolling development of Public Archives’ programmes and facilities, do precious little to stir confidence amongst individual archivists who might dare to look to the association for independent, professional leadership. The quicksand of archival positioning clearly remains treacherous ground for the unwary soul.

No one, of course, can yet tell whether the commission or anything like it will emerge. Quite possibly the Heritage Council, the supposed motherlode, will never get off the ground. I do have a few qualms about any literal implementation of the assignments charged by “Applebert” to the commission and there is a lurking danger that it could become a creature of the council or of non-archival heritage interests. Nevertheless, I should have thought the most promising step for archivists and archives to take at this point is a boisterous, united cry of joy at “Applebert’s” proposal. It is, after all, such a sharp cut through the customary archival fog. Let the federal government and archival community at large know that Canadian archivists have their Commission pretty well worked out and raring to go. Should we not be so precious, I fear a rare opportunity will pass us by and condemn our monkey to a lean, cantankerous future.

Gordon Dodds

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While I am in general accord with most of the *Report's* observations and recommendations, I am disappointed by its ambiguity and its failure to indicate priorities concerning its recommendations. In a period of economic recession, it is to be expected that the minister will have to decide which, if any, of the recommendations require immediate action, but no guidance is offered to him. I fear this may well result in the needs of the nation's archives continuing to be largely ignored while assistance is provided to libraries, museums, art galleries and other heritage agencies. The *Report* states that “the stimulation of Canadian creativity will require that the knowledge base of culture and the arts be firm. Knowledge and information and the means for their creation, storage and transmission, are fundamental to culture and the arts.” If this means anything, the recommendations pertaining to archives ought to have top priority. But, because the *Report* fails to spell this out, it will be necessary for our national and regional associations to emphasize it at every opportunity.

In view of the contradictory impressions of the archival landscape that were published in the Committee's *Summary of Briefs and Hearings*, it is imperative that archives and archivists achieve as much unanimity as possible in responding to the *Report*. The efforts of the ACA Executive to arrive at a consensus in this regard are to be commended and it is to be hoped that archivists will cease to appear to be acting at cross purposes.

Turning to specific recommendations, I fully support the recommendations for the creation of a Canadian Heritage Council and a National Archival Records Commission. It is important, however, that the archival community be adequately represented at all times on the Heritage Council, as is well documented by the unsatisfactory experience of archives and archivists with the SSHRC in the past. Also as the recommendations stand, there is ambiguity in the relationship and roles of the Heritage Council and the National Archival Records Commission which must be clarified.

The conservation recommendation is the least satisfactory of those pertaining to archives. It fails to face up to the fact that a significant proportion of the nation's documentary heritage is in the process of disintegration because of the lack of adequate conservation facilities. The Canadian Conservation Institute has concerned itself almost entirely with works of art and museum artifacts and has rejected archival conservation as part of its responsibility. Consequently, it is vital that provision be made specifically for archival conservation.

It is highly appropriate that the example the Public Archives of Canada has set and the leadership it has provided for the archival community should be recognized in recommendations calling for suitable accommodation for the PAC and revision of the Archives Act to "reflect the national needs of archival institutions throughout Canada."

The recommendation that the Heritage Council support initiatives to develop training programs in professional heritage management is commendable, but it ignores the individual. I would have hoped to see an additional recommendation for the creation of national scholarships for post-graduate training in archival science. Similarly, the committee has failed to take up the recommendations in the Wilson *Report* that archival science be recognized as an eligible discipline for SSHRCC research grants and that archivists be eligible for Leave Fellowships.

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Written in vintage Bureaucratese, the *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* containing the Truisms of Chairman Applebert undoubtedly will increase the nation's envy of the world's illiterati. The reward for following this 340 page rainbow of contorted prose and convoluted reasoning is not the proverbial pot-of-gold but rather a crock of something else. Admitting to a collective decision to emphasize artistic creativity does not excuse Héberbaum and company for the production of a singularly narrow, professionally biased, self-serving and superficial

report. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that seldom have so many owed so little to so few.

Archivists, in particular, owe very little to the FCPRC which has seemingly masticated the reports of earlier commissions, committees and groups and the submissions and briefs of a few interested individuals and institutions and, without digesting anything, regurgitated the input. The Public Archives requires a new building and a new piece of legislation; the population in general requires opportunities for heritage education and training; someone must do something about audio-visual archives and public records. Little of this will be a revelation to Massey, Symons, Wilson or anyone else who has heard of archives sometime during the last four decades. I will studiously avoid bemoaning the fact that municipal, university, religious, etc. archives stand outside the boundaries of culture/heritage, along with libraries and other such irrelevant bodies. I am equally hesitant to point out to our colleagues that once again their aversion to politicking and lobbying has afforded us all yet another lost opportunity. I rest assured that others will atone for my shortcomings.

Although archivists are unlikely to be indebted to the FCPRC, centralists certainly should be. Having initially exhibited an almost paranoid obsession with governmental (political) influence, interference and/or subversion — to the extent of proposing a separation of culture and state (p. 16) — this delightful little band of savants eventually conclude that culture and heritage are fledgling industries in dire need of federal evaluation, regulation, legislation, education, administration, acquisition, taxation, amalgamation, subsidization, equalization, coordination, protection, preservation and construction (preferably near the confluence of the Ottawa and Rideau) — all at “arm’s-length.”

Of the 101 recommendations contained in the *Report*, the majority appear directly related to the vocations or avocations of the committee members themselves. Slightly more than 54 per cent have basically an administrative (bureaucratic) thrust while the remaining recommendations are preoccupied with financial matters. Perhaps as a reaction to current reality, the FCPRC has approached its assigned task with an idealism which will likely prove injurious to the very community it seeks to serve. In adopting a “shotgun” technique of ministering to Canada’s cultural ills, the FCPRC has seemingly ignored one of its own truisms: “The working of the government entails the balancing of specific public demands not only against the resources available but also against other competing and sometimes contradictory public wants.” (p. 17) These factors are balanced on a vote scale which is unlikely to favour culture and heritage. Even a popular government enjoying a buoyant economy would not anticipate garnering overwhelming electoral success on a platform advocating the construction of numerous public edifices and the birthing of several new bureaucracies. In submitting the above truism, the FCPRC forecasts the probable fate of its report and recommendations.

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The first great report on Canadian cultural policy, the Massey Commission report issued in 1951, is now generally regarded as having led to a flowering of the arts and high cultural activities in Canada. The Massey Commission did not fail to take notice of archives. C.P. Stacey, then an historian and records officer working for the Department of National Defense, wrote a special study on behalf of historians who were interested in the continued development of the Public Archives of Canada and better access to the archives (historical records) of the Government of Canada. The Massey Commission's recommendations took time to take hold even when they were acted upon by the federal government, but nothing much was done for the Public Archives of Canada as a result of the commission's work, and nothing certainly occurred beyond the environs of Ottawa. More vital to the development of the Public Archives of Canada was the Glassco Commission in the late 1960s, out of which issued the records management scheme of the Public Archives of Canada. Perhaps archives have more to gain from careful study of administration than careful study of cultural policy. Perhaps an opportunity missed in the 1950s will be grasped in the 1980s as a result of the report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee.

The comparison between the Massey Commission and the Applebaum-Hébert Committee is fruitful in more ways than one. The Massey Commission began its study in a recessionary period. Its report was issued in 1951 at the beginning of the Korean War, which lifted the recessionary gloom, but money did not immediately pour forth for cultural endeavours. For instance, the commission's recommendation for the establishment of the Canada Council was not implemented until 1957. The Applebaum-Hébert Committee's report was issued in the midst of what appears to be the closest thing to a depression in Canada since the 1930s. Money will certainly not grease the skids of its recommendations, at least not in the short run. If it is not the only issue, the matter of money is important. As the report of the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives revealed in 1980, a great many Canadian archives are woefully inadequately funded, which fact is the root of many of the problems that face the archival community. Whatever else they are, Canadian archives (except the largest public archives) exist in a financial backwater. More vitally, almost no money outside budgets committed to hardpressed institutional programs infuses archival endeavour among institutions or for the advancement of society's appreciation and use of its documentary heritage. In spite of the prevailing impoverishment of the federal government, the Applebaum-Hébert Committee calls for an infusion of money into heritage endeavours, among which it includes archives. Whether the Canadian Heritage Council of the National Archival Records Commission ever come about, neither archivists nor the Government of Canada nor our provincial governments should be allowed to neglect the modest but crucial financial needs of the Canadian archival community as they are admirably outlined by the Consultative Group. Canadians have rarely got such good return on their dollar as they have from archives over the years, in large measure because dedicated archivists have persisted despite skimpy resources to accomplish even their basic tasks. The Applebaum-Hébert Committee quotes the Association of Canadian Archivists' brief to the effect that money isn't everything in the sense that we must first know how to spend it. Would that we had a fraction of the money allotted to libraries or museums in this country to spend on development of archives for the public good, then we could think of wise ways to spend it. No one learned how to spend money wisely without it.

The recognition that archives need to join the community of cultural institutions supported by the national government is a signal victory for professional archivists. In contrast to the Massey Commission, the Applebaum-Hébert Committee was bombarded by archivists from all over the country with briefs and testimony at hearings. Much fuss was made in sections of the archival community about the muddled recitation of what archivists had to say as it was portrayed in the Committee's *Summary of Briefs and Hearings*, which was surely a silly document through and through, but archivists were heard and taken into account. The few archivists this country has have organized themselves and begun to insist the activity they represent be recognized in deliberations about cultural and heritage policy. It could have happened no other way. In their institutional guise, archives are still meek by comparison (and what do they inherit for their meekness?).

The notion that the Applebaum-Hébert Committee's recommendations for archives — whatever comes from them — represent a failure of archivists is the worst sort of unproductive professional navel gazing, and ought to be exposed for the unseemly professional faithlessness it entails. The question is not whether the *Summary* or the *Report* constitutes a truthful representation of the nitty-gritty of archives (all that is well enough portrayed in the Consultative Group Report for all, even cultural and heritage planners, to see) but whether archivists will keep up the pressure and satisfy themselves with a productive outcome, that is, one that will create a source of funds for encouragement and support of the further development of Canadian archives.

What of the Public Archives of Canada in all this? To C.P. Stacey in the 1950s, the Public Archives of Canada was archives. Some of his fellow historians spoke to the Applebaum-Hébert Committee as if it still is. Much muttering (it has hardly ever been open debate) in the archival community has agonized over whether we should have an Extension Branch at the Public Archives of Canada as recommended by the Consultative Group or a National Archival Records Commission as recommended by the Association of Canadian Archivists and accepted by Applebaum-Hébert. The two are not mutually exclusive. Of course, the Public Archives should spread its wings. It should be the archivist's archives in Canada in the sense that its leadership role in the national sphere is needed. It should be the best possible archives of the federal government and national concerns in the sense historians want it to be. Without the Public Archives of Canada's leadership in its rightful sphere, such as, for example, in archival research and development, or in the preservation of records of national significance, we will suffer as the United States these last years has from a singular lack of national archival focus. Canadian archivists must ever insist that their national archives not suffer from any new policies, structures, or financial arrangements set up as a result of any review of policy, but rather that it expand in consonance with the rest of the system.

Right at this moment it is all too easy to suppose there is no money. We must certainly be prepared to spend money wisely. Nothing could be clearer than that what little money has come to archives from programs not well-advised or directed by archivists, such as from Wintario, the British Columbia Heritage Trust or the SSHRCC's Research Tools Program, has most often been ill-spent because there are no well-articulated goals for archival development, something the National Historical Publications Commission in the United States began to realize just as its strength was sapped by budgetary cutbacks. The ACA was correct to insist that

archivists sit down and plan before spending. Some structure like the National Archival Records Commission backed up by comparable provincial planning bodies is necessary. The provinces and the federal government share responsibility for culture and heritage, so we must have some means of coordinating effort. Without some planning structure supported by government, we will lack the vital mechanism to allow us to spend wisely. Without the mechanism it is foolish to expect we will ever wisely determine the terms on which we are going to spend any money that comes our way.

The fruitful cacophony of voices arrayed before Applebaum-Hébert will become so much fruitless babble — largely archivists talking to themselves. And the likelihood is that more money, for money will be spent, will go down the drain.

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The FCPRC in its report clearly recognizes archives as the collective cultural memory of this country and has made some wise recommendations. We have clearly come a long way from the dark ages of 1975 when archives were all but excluded from a national heritage conference.

For the first time, archivists have been heard singly and in concert (though not always in harmony) from one end of the country to the other and have elicited a positive response.

The Canadian Heritage Council would articulate at the national level the multifaceted approach to heritage which is becoming increasingly evident in regions and provinces. The proposed National Archival Records Commission should sit quite comfortably in association with the council, sharing some of the administrative resource, but preferably with its own secretariat, and with funding independent of the council. A similar arrangement would alternatively be possible with the Public Archives of Canada where the same “arm’s-length” provisions would have to protect the PAC from even the appearance of influencing the commission.

A commission with adequate funding would be able, for example, to give teeth to the admirable proposal for a project on archival descriptive standards prepared by Marcel Caya and Terry Eastwood on behalf of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists which emerged from a resolution of the Kingston conference. This is one instance where the associations and not the repositories can make professional proposals much in the same way as the Society of American Archivists has realised through its National Information Systems Task Force: that whereas the professional association is primarily concerned with *standards*, the repositories are more likely to be concerned with *systems*, databases and networks. Likewise the ACA could make proposals to the commission on archival education and publishing since these are fields which could concern all archivists individually.

The most delicate area of diplomacy and cooperation would be between the

emerging regional networks and the commission whereby allowance is made for a wide variety of networks and policies which can initiate local projects and work synergistically toward an overall acceptance pattern of achievement. I do *not* use the expression “national plan” because I do not believe the archival environment in Canada lends itself to such a hard-edged solution. Something much more sophisticated is needed and I believe that the solution lies in first developing standard data elements, formats and thesauri (with and without automation) which will allow for a feasible approach to data bases and other information links by which both the users in the search room and the archivists in the vault are best served.

Again, this problem of conservation should more properly be addressed by networks and repositories rather than individuals. The attachment of the Canadian Conservation Institute to the Canadian Heritage Council would seem very appropriate.

The committee also saw the need for increased funding for audio and video archives, but there needs to be much more study given to what constitutes a film archive as opposed to a film library (which could of course exist in the same institution). One reason archives collect feature films is because film libraries are primarily concerned with the distribution of production prints. Are not feature films analagous to published books and cannot unique copies be kept in a film reference library under proper safeguards? This would then restrict the archival operation to documentation, “outs” and all that went to the making of the film. The question has considerable bearing on the future disposition of materials in the CBC and National Film Board.

Let us hope that the work of the committee translates into something more than a few more metres of paper on the shelves of the Public Archives of Canada.

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Those of us who work with the preservation of broadcasting have every reason to be gratified with the Applebert report. The report clearly and unequivocally recognizes the importance of the broadcasting heritage. The logical consequence of the preoccupation of the Applebert report with broadcasting as a fundamental component of Canadian culture is the recognition that the past record of broadcasting deserves to be preserved. There are references throughout the report to neglect of preservation of broadcasting . Indeed, the recommendation for the establishment of a Contemporary Arts Centre was, in part, motivated by the concern for the neglect of this contemporary creativity. This awareness culminated in a discussion of broadcasting archives (pp. 297-98) and recommendation 73 urging the federal government to immediately provide funds to the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) to adequately deal with the backlogs and “to operate a soundly based, ongoing archival program in this area” (p. 298).

Admittedly, this recommendation has a very evident centralist bias and I must admit to being in a most uncomfortable position to comment upon this.

Nonetheless, I am going to venture the suggestion that this bias may not be necessarily as contentious as it may be in other domains. The obvious urgency and considerable expense of the preservation of broadcasting have militated against the duplication of effort. The report goes on to point out that the PAC "should work closely with all those who have audio and visual archival materials, especially broadcasters and film producers, as well as with provincial and other repositories, to coordinate and facilitate the efforts of this field" (p. 298). This is precisely what the National Film, Television and Sound Archives Division (NFTSA) of the PAC has been attempting to do with some modest success. The surveys of existing film and broadcasting collections in many of the provinces that have been funded by the PAC have stimulated the development of audio and visual archives. Conservation work, particularly on nitrate film for example, is so expensive and specialized that the willingness of the NFTSA to take on these projects has been welcomed.

The report explicitly suggests that the PAC should become the archives for the National Film Board (p. 265) and for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (p. 298). The NFTSA has been developing archival plans with the NFB and the CBC for some years and admittedly there exists a natural reluctance within both organizations to part with their productions. Nonetheless, the increasingly scarce resources within production organizations for archival functions and the growing backlogs have facilitated a healthy, if also sceptical, collaboration. Also, there exists a recognition that much of CBC broadcasting that originates outside of the network centres deserves to be preserved and accessible in the regions where it originated. A three-day planning session was hosted by the CBC and NFTSA in Toronto in January 1982 with representation from most of the provincial archives and other concerned archives to begin to plan the coordinated preservation of as much CBC broadcasting as present resources allow. Much consultation and negotiation, not to mention more resources, are still necessary to develop a coordinated and adequate scheme for the preservation of CBC broadcasting, but the commitment exists and the process has begun. Thus the centralist bias of the Applebert recommendations need not become a problem if the goodwill and regular mutual consultation among archivists involved with the preservation of broadcasting can continue.

This favourable notice in the Applebert report did not come about by accident and was not simply the result of the attention given to broadcasting questions in the report. The Association for the Study of Canadian Radio and Television (ASCRT) submitted a brief and appeared before the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. Howard Fink from Concordia University, as president of the association followed up these representations with a further submission in response to specific queries that members of the committee had posed. Also the association invited Ted Chapman, vice-chairman of the committee and the broadcast representative on the committee, to an executive meeting and to address the ASCRT conference. Thus he was fully aware of the case that needed to be made on behalf of the preservation of broadcasting.

Archivists have been understandably shy about involvement with academic and research communities after our sometimes painful withdrawal from the historical profession. Thus the active involvement of archivists in the Association for the Study of Canadian Radio and Television with very specific research and creator communities is somewhat unusual. Admittedly, it is not always a comfortable involvement as archival principle and practice can sometimes be rudely questioned

within such an association. Nonetheless, such involvement makes for better archives and improved archivists, and in this instance also facilitated the recognition of specific archival problems by the Federal Cultural Policy Review.

What will become of the many and diverse recommendations of the Applebert report is, of course, the “bottom line” that we are all terribly curious about. Favourable notice is empty solace for the urgency that many archival programs are facing. One fears that the much-discussed Applebert recommendations to significantly cut back the activities of the National Film Board and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will rather overwhelm the many areas where the report recommended greater federal largess. The proposal to establish a National Archival Records Commission is another recommendation that one fears may fall on deaf ears in times of government restraint. One only hopes that the archival community and leadership will summon the political acumen to join forces wherever the best opportunities present themselves and not dissipate energies as happened on the SSHRC consultative committee report’s recommendation to establish an Extension Branch at the PAC. The conspicuous absence of any reference to the Applebert discussion of the archives of broadcasting in the *ACA Bulletin* summary (vol. 8, no. 1) of the Applebert report does not auger well for successful cooperation on any front. Rather than seizing upon the broadcast archives recommendation as another opportunity to gain more resources, I rather fear that our archival leadership may ignore the opportunity.

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Public Archives of Canada

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The request by the General Editor of *Archivaria* for a short commentary on the report of the FCPRC can be approached in one of several ways. It is tempting to take the position that the profession’s interests best can be served by a unified response, as in that formulated by the Toronto Area Archivists Group and the upcoming one by the Association of Canadian Archivists’ Executive Committee. This position is not only attractive from the vantage point of the individual whose time constraints and/or familiarity with the report may not allow for a fully considered response, but also of merit given the background of Applebert, and the generally accepted need for the archival profession to present a “common front” when lobbying.

With the above in mind, I nevertheless have decided that my involvement in writing and presenting both the ACA and TAAG presentations to the Applebert Committee, and my position as Past President of the ACA demand some summation of the process of Applebert and the implications of the Report.

Participating in the drafting of TAAG’s response to the Report and in the deliberations of the CMA’s National Policy meetings (see *ACA Bulletin*, January 1983) has given me the opportunity over the months since the report’s release to review the document, its generation and its possible future impact, in company with

a number of informed colleagues. This may be the best result of the Applebert experience for our profession; we have acquired the habit of meeting in forums and discussion groups with representatives of archives, related cultural organizations and government agencies.

The FCPRC accepted and endorsed many of the concerns and plans for action presented by those representing our profession. Given our inexperience, our lack of established communications lines with such committees and our several false starts, our success in persuading the committee's members of the soundness of our reasoning should be underscored. The fact that the committee recommended the establishment of a National Archival Records Commission (and I do not intend to discuss the merits and deficiencies of this body here) is little short of amazing, given that the NARC is a creation of the ACA which exists in concept only. The lesson in this for future consideration by our representatives is that when a federal committee gives us the opportunity to review our situation, we always should propose a concrete solution to the problems we outline. "Action plans" are a far more effective way of managing our institutions and our professional associations than managing by complaint and reaction.

The report itself best is dealt with in the TAAG response: "Further clarification and discussion will no doubt be required as the recommendations are developed into policy and we strongly recommend that policies, as they relate to archival matters, be developed in conjunction with the full archival community, both public and private as represented by the ACA and affiliated regional associations such as TAAG."

In the main, the report is of value as a call for action, as a focused consideration of the problems we face, as a directional signpost for future government support. Criticisms of particular elements of the report are irrelevant at this point. As a document, it is simply part of the ongoing process, of the cultural motion of the federal government. Whether that process will be productive, whether the government will choose to act on the recommendations, indeed whether the capital can be found to provide the underpinnings of any new cultural initiatives remains in question (if not is serious doubt).

As a profession, we cannot afford to forget or ignore Applebert now that the report is written; we must continue to lobby on behalf of its recommendations through our associations.

As a profession, we cannot afford to stand still waiting for a decision on Applebert. We must continue to restructure our associations into effective operations with dynamic programs and strong public images; we must build on our successes in providing forums, such as the 1982 Archives Congress, for planning and reviewing our plans in the context of the larger "heritage" arena; we must pursue the goals of our profession at all levels, translate concepts such as "networking" into practical realities as best we can without external (federal government) support. To those who may comment that the above is impossible, I would suggest that pinning

our collective hopes on any outside agency is a dream which may just turn into a nightmare.

Jane E. Nokes
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The vagueness of the “Applebaum” report, I hope, allows us to work out our own role within the Heritage Council. I agree that we should support the concepts of a National Archival Records Commission and the Heritage Council in general terms.

Our concern in Nova Scotia is to work out our Council of Nova Scotia Archives and ensure that we fit into the broader national scheme. I look forward to hearing other people’s opinions on how this could work at the conference in Vancouver.

Having been a member of the Wilson Committee and having attended and endorsed the resolutions passed in Kingston last June, I hope that the executive will do all in their power to ensure that those recommendations are brought to the notice of the minister.

I still feel that the role of the PAC in relation to other archives in Canada, and the role of the SSHRC needs clarification. I have never been happy with the role of the PAC which I feel has not taken on enough responsibility in assisting other archives. I have always considered the role of the Dominion-Provincial-Territorial Archives Committee vague and élitist. Its role will have to change with the birth of local archival networks and perhaps more practical things can be accomplished. As for the SSHRC, we in Nova Scotia (I am now speaking for the Nova Scotia Council of Archives) are still not happy with its funding programme nor the composition of committees who pass judgement (alas, often in ignorance) on applications for assistance to archives. We hope the establishment of our council and its endorsement of archives applications will have some influence on committees conceived in the bureaucratic towers 1500 miles away.

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