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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Theatre Seen Happy, Complex Is Problem

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EVERYONE ASSOCIATED with the Confederation Theatre here is enthusiastically happy about the measure of success their summer theatre shows are attaining, though there are problems of finances and of physical plant that necessarily are cause for concern, so far as the Memorial Building Complex is concerned.

Col. Frank Storey, general manager of the complex, is confident there's no longer the slightest room for doubt that theatre will sell on the Island. The sell out crowds that greeted Anne of Green Gables, and what Publicity Director Pat Paterson calls the "phenomenal" advance sale for Wayne and Shuster are solid indications of what the general manager means.

Johnny and Frank endeared themselves to Islanders when they were here last summer and they will get a tremendous "welcome home" when they open here on Aug. 17.

The Storey-Paterson combination informed me that Artistic Director Mavor Moore, generally rated as "Mr. Theatre" in Canada, is most happy about the stage play adaptation of L. M. Montgomery's book "Anne of Green Gables" which has been done by Don Harron, with Norman Campbell writing the musical score, and Alan Lund directing.

It was Col. Storey who observed with appreciation "not once have they taken Anne out of the delightful fantasy land which Miss Montgomery created for her".

### Finest Thing In Canadian Theatre

BOTH MEN quoted Mr. Moore as feeling this is the finest thing ever done in Canadian theatre, and Paterson suggested that the artistic director's most satisfying thought is "we've proven that an all-Canadian festival will work".

Before I leave this part of the story, I should explain that Miss Montgomery married Rev. Ewan MacDonald, a Presbyterian minister who was born in this province – Roddie MacDonald, Grandview is a brother – and the Island's most famous writer ended her days in "Journey's End" a home which she had built for them near Toronto.

This is not intended as a review of the entertainment available at Confederation Theatre, but having mentioned two attractions, I just have to say that productions like "Spring Thaw" and "Laugh With Leacock" are playing an important part in what has been described as "an all-Canadian Festival".

And of course I've a warm spot in my heart for the popular puppet theatre. Master of Ceremonies Alexis Eftimoff and Puppeteer John Rapsy share a spot in Langley with The Mathesons.

Sunday concerts and other entertainments have been a bit disappointing at the box office, I'm told. And that reminds me that I want to see and hear J Frank Willis and his Harmony Harbor Quartet in the theatre this coming Sunday evening.

Thousands of Islanders, and I was one of them, listened through the day, and at least once through the night, to Frank Willis telling the story of what was happening in the Moose River mine disaster back in the middle 1930's. I followed Frank's career with interest later, and enjoyed particularly a chat I had with him on a train ride between Toronto and Montreal something like 10 years ago. He's one chap I don't want to miss.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, as I have said, there are financial problems with Summer Theatre, and with the Memorial Building Complex. The problem with the theatre appears to be under control. When the "Complex" problem comes under control is a matter for future development.

The summer theatre budget was set at \$130,000 and of that amount \$95,000 was budgeted for the box office. "And we're right on target for the present time", Col. Storey told me a few days ago.

The general manager tells me "we've budgeted for the same amount at the box office this year in seven weeks as we did in 13 weeks last year". And that makes the "on target" observation even more impressive.

It should be explained here that no dramatic production pays its way. "If we had 100 per cent houses for every show, it still wouldn't pay. We just don't ask people to pay the kind of money that would support this type of production", he told me, "we'd only be denying the people the privilege of seeing it."

No less an authority than A. W. (Bud) Trueman said when he was chairman of the Canada Council that the best people can expect from "dramatic productions, ballet, etc." is to get 55 to 65 per cent of the cost at the box office. By that standard we're really doing good here in Confederation Theatre.

The Canada Council incidentally, provided a grant of \$10,000 for the summer theatre here but earmarked it for the production of Anne of Green Gables. Presumably the Canada Council will be more generous in future, now that the quality of the productions has been pretty well established.

Summer theatre operates on a balanced budget, so the rest had to be dug up locally, the general manager explained.

### This Is Real Financial Problem

BUT THE real money problem comes to light when we talk of the Memorial Building Complex. The estimated budget for the operation and maintenance of the complex for the year was \$300,000, and that does not include the summer theatre of which I've been talking. The directors of the Memorial Foundation felt that at least \$100,000 should be set aside for structural maintenance of buildings that cost roughly \$5 ½ million to erect. That makes a total of \$400,000 estimated for the year.

The P.E.I. Government provided \$80,000 – of that amount \$20,000 is for rental of the library and archives space – and the Government of Canada provided \$150,000 in the supplementary estimates, but \$50,000 of that is to apply on the deficit for last year after the building was opened officially. The indications are that there will be an annual grant from Canada of \$100,000.

So the amount of \$180,000 in revenue is in sight for an estimated budget requirement of \$400,000. It's a problem that has to await a future solution.

Back to the brighter side of Confederation Complex, General Manager Storey is happiest about the way Island people have been visiting the memorial to Canada's fathers.

It's the mid-winter period for the most part, when interest in such things might be expected to be dull, but 54,000 people visited the Building Complex in the period January 1 to April 14 of this year, and these people were Islanders, he observed. "We don't have visitors in volume here during those winter months."

More than 70,000 visitors toured the buildings in July.

### Problems Of Construction

PROBLEMS OF construction of Confederation Complex have received but little publicity here, but there have been problems. I believe that it was during the winter months a story broke which said the construction company was suing the Confederation Memorial Trust for something like \$1 ¼ million for money that had not been paid to them. The answer given by the trust spokesmen was that the building complex had not been completed satisfactorily. There were leaks in various parts of the building, among other things. And the laws of the province, I'm told, do not permit final payment until the building is completed.

This problem has given additional headaches to those responsible for seeing the building is completed satisfactorily. Just a few days ago Col. Storey told me they have engaged the services of a capable man to look into the matter of seeing just who is responsible, the architects or the contractors. Apparently there have been some sharp differences of opinion on that score.

### Four Island Boys Are All Stars

SAY, WASN'T that really something, when our four Island boys were chosen on Canada's all-star baseball squad to play in the international tournament in Mexico this fall. I couldn't be any happier if it had happened to me.

To Mike Kelly, Billy Weatherbie, Freddie MacDonald and Barry Ellis, I'm just 'busting' with pride over your outstanding feat. "Across The Island" takes pleasure in saluting all four of you.