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On the subject of the Arts Council [1]

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As the American phrase goes, a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged by reality. The playwright, David Mamet, is of course far too bright to become merely a conservative after such a conversion and seems to be joining with us on the sides of the angels over in the classically liberal corner. Here's what he has to say in his latest book about subsidies to the stage arts [3]:

> The theatre is a magnificent example of the workings of that particular bulwark of democracy, the free-market economy. It is the most democratic of arts, for if the play does not appeal in its immediate presentation to the imagination or understanding of a sufficient constituency, it is replaced. ... It is the province not of ideologues (whether in the pay of the state and called commissars, or tax subsidized through the university system and called intellectuals) but of show folk trying to make a living.

Or rather, of course, it should be such and not be in the pay of the state and the commissars.

> Conversely, Mamet dismisses state subsidy for the theatrical arts as no more than a means of propping up incompetent ?champions of right thinking? whose work would otherwise be incapable of attracting an audience. Such playwrights, he says, are purveyors of politically correct ?pseudodramas? that ?begin with a conclusion (capitalism, America, men, and so on, are bad) and award the audience for applauding its agreement.?

It's not exactly difficult to divine his meaning there, is it?

All of which leads to an interesting conclusion. There might, just, be an arguable justification for subsidy to education in the arts: youth orchestras perhaps, drama lessons. But it would appear that there really is no justification for taxing the dustman so that the Duke can have his opera or the demagogue his drama. The conclusion being that we now have a policy prescription. The teaching of the arts, certainly, life enriching and part of any decent education. So put that in the education system and then we can close down the entirety of the Arts Council and all the luvvies that hang from it. A good half a billion in savings and as the man said, 500 million here and 500 million there and pretty soon you're talking real money.

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