

World Copyright Summit

Washington DC, 09/06/2009 – 10/06/2009

Closing Speech by Robin Gibb to the World Copyright Summit

10 June 2009 (5.30pm)

1,500 years ago the Irish King Dermot of Tyrone uttered what is perhaps the first statement of a principle of copyright: "To every cow its calf and to every book its copy"

Things have moved on since then and this basic principle has developed over the succeeding 1,500 years, into the worldwide system of copyright we have today.

As I said in my opening words to the Summit on Monday, "copyright is facing challenges". This has been discussed over the past two days and many interesting points have been made

We have heard from Professor Heller about the "tragedy of the anti- commons"; we all knew that we needed to improve the way in which we granted online licences – we now have a name for the problem: ... "Copyright Gridlock". A small step perhaps, but at least we have identified the problem.

In all of the discussions over the last few days, there are three points which have struck a particular chord for me. We must not lose sight of these three points if we are to preserve the value and usefulness of copyright.

First of all, we must portray copyright as the right of the individual creator and not of corporations. It is important to remember that most of the time creators are not the target of the effective propaganda directed against copyright.

Opinion polls demonstrate that most consumers are overwhelmingly on the side of creators. We must pay heed to this. I believe that if we are to preserve our rights, then it must be acknowledged that the Anglo-American tradition of copyright as a pure economic right must be adapted. This Anglo-American tradition has a lot to learn from the continental European idea of copyright as an authors' right. Copyright and the restrictions that it places on the world at large, can only be justified if it is seen to protect the individual creator.

Few people have sympathy with the rights of what they see as faceless corporations. However many do have sympathy with the rights of the individual.

Secondly, copyright law must be applied consistently. I said a few minutes ago that we had a worldwide system of copyright. It is true that copyright is recognised around the whole world and progress has been made in areas such as China and the former Soviet Union. However, there is little consistency in the way in which it is applied. . . .

Thirdly, the importance of copyright must be recognised - not just for the creator, but also for society. I have, for more than 40 years, made my career and my living out of writing, recording and performing songs. Even without copyright, I might have written a song or two. But that is not the point. What I can say for sure is that without copyright, my brothers and I would not have written anything like the number of

songs which we have created. I can also say that without copyright only a very few people would have heard our songs.

Copyright is not a barrier to progress. It is a facilitator of progress, creativity and communication. The existence of strong copyright will not stifle the development of the digital utopia which Google, Microsoft and others promise. Copyright will promote such development. Without copyright you have chaos and this is a far greater barrier to progress.

I am conscious that these three points may sound idealistic; it may even sound old fashioned. This is not surprising.

The creator has always played the role of social and political commentator, a conscience of the people. This is how Picasso produced "*Guernica*". In performing this role, it is critical that the creator be protected. Fortunately, the protection of the creator can be found in most cultures around the world. The creator, be he troubadour, jester or fool, has always been afforded the right of free speech. The creator has always been permitted to criticise the great and the good, even when others were not. Modern copyright provides the creator today with the tools to tell the artistic truth.

I started this talk with a quotation and I will end on another one. These words were written by the humorist Tom Lehrer in his song "Lobachevsky"

"Plagiarize,
Let no one else's work evade your eyes,
Remember why the good lord made your eyes,
So don't shade your eyes,
But plagiarize, plagiarize, plagiarize -
Only be sure always to call it please 'research'."

Without strong protection for creators these words may become more than a funny song – they may be a vision of the future.

As for my own part allow me to say this....it is a personal mission and as President of CISAC I will fight the powers that be until we get a result.

Damn the torpedoes for there will always be torpedoes.

It will not be a smooth sail but again let me say this by being united dismissing the obstacles and keeping our eyes on the goalwe will win !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you.