

EDITORIAL

'Business as normal' is risky enough

The object of the exercise was to create a Canadian productions industry capable of building an infrastructure to sustain itself once the tax shelter encouragements were withdrawn. Obviously, Canadian film-businessmen would have to move into the mainstream of the international film community if they were to accomplish this.

Concurrently – and perhaps absurdly – the agency which was to foster this development has always been called a "cultural agency," and originated as a complement to the National Film Board. The Canadian Minister of Culture (a.k.a. the Secretary of State) was to oversee the growth of the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

Somewhere along the way the Minister of Finance was convinced that a 100% capital cost allowance would be just the thing to get the plan off the ground, and away we all went.

Today, nothing is working as planned, and the slow realization is dawning on everyone that neither the government, nor the banks and brokers, nor even the majority of the producers had a clear understanding of how that international film market worked.

For the moment, the cart is clearly before the horse, as Michel Roy explains in the following interview. Normally, you see if the product has the potential to sell, and then you make it. It's simple. But, because of Canada's income tax regulations, producers here must make the product first and then see if there are any buyers.

Unfortunately, in any given project which has been successfully sold to the public, it is the investor and not the producer who takes it on the nose, and that investor has been hit once too hard, at least for the present time.

We hear it over and over: "The brokers don't understand the film business, the bankers don't understand, the investors don't understand." The government is not behaving as if it fully understands either.

If the government wants a strong private sector, then it must encourage Canadians to do business as it is done in other filmmaking countries around the world. Why offer such a tempting capital cost allowance and then tie the producers' hands by refusing to let him make pre-sales? The federal approach, from a private enterprise point of view, is incoherent. No wonder the moneymen and investors can't quite get a handle on our industry.

One needn't work very hard to show that money remains "at risk" despite agreements made before a film is shot. After all, only three out of seven films make their money back anyway, regardless of pre-sales, and that would seem to be risk enough for any investor.

Unless the government eventually allows for the pre-sale of films without jeopardizing the capital cost allowance, one of two things will happen: either the producers will continue to lose their investors' cash on projects which have no future, or the present level of misinformation concerning pre-sales will continue, making a mockery of those income tax regulations.

If the government wants to free the producer from the tax shelter, then it must modify its attitude toward pre-sales and allow the producer to shoulder the risk of making a saleable film.

If, on the other hand, it wishes to foster cultural productions of national importance, then it must encourage the growth of a private sector which it is prepared to support with policies and financial measures.

The industry can indeed bounce back. Returns must flow to investors, and sales must be made to allow that to happen. Sales, in the film industry, begin before the camera starts to roll. The federal government must provide the leadership and, with clarity of vision, "orchestrate its policies" as André Lamy requested earlier this month.

The opportunities promised by program production for pay-television seem too good to be true, but if the inconsistencies are not sorted out quickly, they will be just one more opportunity lost.

The editors

LETTERS

An affair of the Hartt

At the age of sixteen I decided to become an artist in the medium of the motion picture. That was nineteen years ago. There were no schools to teach me what I wanted to learn and so I began a process of teaching myself.

I acquired copies of the great films (at

first by doing jobs like cutting chickens for Colonel Saunders) and then looked to the films to pay their own way. I also acquired books, records, posters & files.

I have now learned what I wanted to learn from this material and am preparing to move to the next phase of my life.

I am preparing to dispose of this material. I feel that it should be preserved for the future. Much of it is extremely

rare. I am looking for the right place for it.

This represents nearly twenty years of labour on my part. My goal was not so much to acquire the films as it was to learn from them. We learn through a process of repetition and assimilation so this will be a factor in the decision making process.

There will also be a financial factor to consider.

I am looking for a sincere appreciation of the love and labour that went into building up and maintaining this collection.

Such an attitude will, I am certain, go a long way to guarantee the collection a living and useful future.

I do not have an inventory but you are welcome to send someone to examine the material.

R.W. Hartt
Cineforum
Toronto

Hardly synonymous

Your reviewer, Lloyd Wasser, finishes his review of "You've Come a Long Way, Katie" by saying that the drama "is a fine example of just how far the Canadian film industry has come."

Unless Mr. Wasser considers film and television to be synonymous, it would have been more appropriate to say how far CBC television has come. All key people in that production work for CBC and have acquired their skills and expertise while working for the Corporation.

G. Desmond
Toronto

Bye bye beaver

I found copies of Cinema Canada in the public library in Metro and am moved enough to tell you how exciting your new design is. What a remarkable improvement from the old style which reminded me of Canadian Geographic or the Hudson Bay Beaver.

Cinema Canada has come up with a world class presentation, in my opinion. If only the producers can achieve the same high standard in movie production!

John Richmond
Upper Canada Scribble Works

A letter of resignation

The following letter, addressed to the National Executive, Directors Guild of Canada, was sent to Cinema Canada for publication.

The I.A.T.S.E. International President and General Executive Board determined at their March 5th, 1981 meeting that the D.G.C. is a rival union. That determination is only partially correct, as the D.G.C. is NOT a union! It means that no member of the I.A.T.S.E. in any category shall be allowed to remain a member and also hold membership in the D.G.C., as per International By-Law 15.

A close examination of the facts leads to the conclusion that the D.G.C. is a management dominated organization! Its attempt to masquerade as a trade or craft union in order to rationalize raiding the Art Department categories of Production Designer/Art Director and their assistants is more than ludicrous. This

attempt to mislead and manipulate your members will be exposed when the B.C. Labour Relations Board renders its decision shortly.

Having been a member of this organization since 1973, I have watched its mandate and egalitarian principles become subverted and warped by a series of executive boards dominated by management peons. I especially rue the lot of the Production Designers, Art Directors and assistants, 2nd and 3rd A.D.'s and Production Assistants whose total lack of a fair and just labour organization to represent their interests will continue, to keep them poorly paid and unhappy in their working conditions.

Please accept this as my resignation and utter withdrawal from your membership.

Spencer Hyde
(former D.G.C. member)

A fairy tale

Re: "Setting the Record Straight" and "straighter": A few comments to fairy-fy the record (it can't take much more straightening).

My heart went out to that poor Kastner fellow – having those nasties perpetrate a fraud like that on him! I mean here he is shining in his role as white knight to the gay community's beleaguered *princesse* and what happens? The damsel turns schizo: "Bless you, you saved me from the dragon!" she says and, in the next breath, "Butt out I was doing fine fighting the dragon," and then, "You are the dragon!" Why, you'd think he was rescuing a whole flock of individuals, each with a different mind – like real people. Of course he was, but you shouldn't get that impression. Things might have gone better if the community had understood its role as composite damsel.

In a business like this the white knight requires damsels who are 1) indiscriminately accepting of unsolicited rescue, 2) heart-redeeringly pitiable, and 3) showily grateful.

But, oh poor Johnny, he picked a proud ingrate. What could he do but wing it? So, holding one unsolicited hand over the damsel's discriminating mouth, he proceeded, eloquently, to invoke pity for her. She squirmed a bit when he described what a poor wretched craven little thing she was, but never mind, it worked. So successful was he that he reduced the dragon, by degrees, from tears to cheers to wild applause.

This is a feat unique in the annals of white knighthood – without ever releasing the damsel or disarming the dragon he performed his rescue. In such a case it is incumbent upon the princesse to be absolutely awed by his masterful technique and grovellingly grateful for the dragon's pity.

But, tacky dame, she's not too keen on pity and tends to dwell on the detail of not having been released. She's even been so brazen as to suggest that the whole act was for the dragon's benefit.

Under the circumstances one fears that Johnny will turn in his steed. Alas, I, for one, shall cry real tears. Dragon variety.

Merv Walker
Montreal

Open letter

Open letter to members of the University Film Association (U.S.), the Society for Cinema Studies (U.S.), and the Film Studies Association of Canada, and to the at-large academic film community of Canada and the United States.

Dear Colleagues,

Negotiations are now underway leading to the first joint convention of the three film studies organizations of Canada and the United States next spring at York University, Toronto, Ontario. While such a meeting would promise to be an exciting opportunity for the sharing of ideas and experiences among film teachers and scholars, the current political situation in Ontario demands that the ongoing negotiations be carefully reconsidered by the membership of the three organizations.

Censorship: Four organizers of the 1981 Canadian Images film festival in Peterborough, Ontario, have recently been arrested and charged with exhibiting an experimental film refused for public exhibition by the Ontario censor. The film in question, Al Razut's *A Message from our Sponsor*, intercuts a few hard-core "found" images, reprinted and abstracted, with images of women in television advertising, suggesting a comic, quasi-feminist theme.

This is only one development in the Ontario government's escalation of its campaign against freedom of expression and access in the film community. It is well known how in recent years films by Louis Malle, Volker Schlöndorff, Bernar-

do Bertolucci and George Kaczender have been cut or banned outright. By now this list also includes the names of Michael Snow (!) and the Québécois director Pierre Harel. Harel's film, banned outright, is a non-hardcore feature psychodrama which depicts a couple locked in simulated intercourse as a metaphor for the filmmaker's view of the impasse between the sexes. Hardly a film to be championed by feminists, but feminists could be the next target—censors do not distinguish between a vagina in a pornographic film and a vagina in a feminist film by, say, Chantal Akerman or Barbara Hammer. The censor's singling out of the gay minority for special interference is only one example of the political implications of the unrestrained power allowed the censor by the Ontario government: Jack Hazan's *A Bigger Splash*, the semi-documentary "biography" of painter David Hockney, was cut for images of gay male eroticism (non-hardcore) whose heterosexual equivalent would have passed unnoticed. The Toronto Festival of Festivals is still recovering from the censor's attempted interference with its Godard retrospective last year, and is now openly considering cancellation of the entire festival.

The latest escalation has added experimental, political and independent filmmakers and exhibition spaces to its targets. So far, at least one experimental gallery vital to Toronto artistic life, The Funnel, is being forced to fight for its existence, not only against the censor, but against the fire inspectors etc., that the censor's friends in the government have unleashed. Even the academic community has not been immune to the

censor's harassment. The Peterborough screening was in the context of a panel discussion about censorship! Our recent FSAC meeting in Ottawa was barely able to cope with the punitive bureaucratic and financial pressures imposed by the censor on all screenings of films. Would a film convention at York, assembling 500 instead of 50, succeed in arranging the dozens of necessary screenings?

Campaign against lesbians and gays: The police and judiciary persecution of lesbians and gays has reached unprecedented proportions in 1981 and continues to escalate weekly. The obscenity case against our national gay newspaper, *The Body Politic*, still drags on, now in its fourth year, with punitive legal costs, despite a 1979 acquittal appealed by the government; the mass arrests and violations of gays' civil rights in gay gathering places are now wildly out of control (see enclosed ad); gay community leaders are now being harassed and intimidated by arrests on trumped up charges; the Toronto police have unilaterally succeeded in effectively rescinding the 1968 decriminalization of sodomy by using obsolete "bawdy house" laws to arrest adults for consensual sexual activity in the privacy of their own homes; the Ontario and Toronto governments have refused to institute civilian review procedures to consider complaints of police brutality by gays, blacks and other minorities (liquor law regulations are being used by the police to harass blacks in their gathering places). The Right to Privacy Committee, a group organizing defense in the face of the recent attacks by police, has called for a boycott of Ontario

by conventions in order to pressure the government to let up its attacks on gays' and minorities' civil rights.

The two state offensives against freedom of expression and access and against the civil rights of lesbian and gays are one and the same. Film scholars, teachers, and filmmakers have a vital stake in the struggle that is now being waged in Ontario. Americans who support the ban on conventions in anti-ERA states must consider the Boycott Ontario campaign as part of the same mobilization against the same enemies. Americans and Canadians from outside Ontario must not think that exotic, friendly Toronto is beyond the grip of the Moral Majority. Ontario may be the crucial testing ground for the New Right's efforts against women, lesbians, gays, other minorities, and freedom of expression. It is no accident that the Klan has shown an alarming resurgence in Toronto.

It would be unfortunate to have to pass up the gracious hospitality of the York University Film Department, who would certainly provide excellent facilities and a dynamic atmosphere. However, to meet in Ontario in 1982 is to lend legitimacy to the state-police apparatus that is threatening the freedom of filmmakers, film scholars, and film audiences, and the political survival of lesbians and gays and other minorities. I urge you to make known your views to the executive of your organization.

BOYCOTT ONTARIO!

Thomas Waugh
Concordia University,
Montreal
Member, Film Studies Association
of Canada

WHAT THE CRITICS HAVE TO SAY

Alvin Rakoff's "Dirty Tricks"

"The plot has something to do with a letter from George Washington — and because we are in Massachusetts, Old Montreal becomes Boston and McGill stands in for Harvard. (It could have been worse Dept.: at least McGill's reputation is not splashed by the notion that its personnel department would hire Elliot Gould to teach any thing.) Coeds at this citadel of expensive and exclusive education use expressions like "Holy crow! Is that the time? I've got to get dressed!" (When was the last time you heard an earthling say "Holy crow!" seriously?)

— Jay Scott,
The Globe and Mail

"*Dirty Tricks* isn't a movie, it's part of a philanthropy established by independent producers all over the world to keep Elliot Gould working... Rich Little and Arthur Hill are posted as lookouts for director Alvin Rakoff, but from the looks of things he never showed up. Rakoff may be resting on his laurels, having already directed one great comedy, *Death Ship*."

— Ron Base,
The Toronto Star

"We've recently enjoyed a cycle of quality Canadian films, from *Atlantic City* to *Improper Channels* and *Les Plouffe*. We were ripe for a rotter. This is it."

— Bruce Kirkland,
The Toronto Sun

Eric Till's "Improper Channels"

"*Improper Channels* is a little bit wan. But its idiosyncracies are entertaining. Alan Arkin, gives a warm, accessible performance that makes one wish better material would come his way."

— Janet Maslin,
N.Y. Times

Alfred Sole's "Tanya's Island"

"(This is) the sort of awesome-ly terrible movie that comes out of the fevered imaginings of a scriptwriter (Pierre Bousseau) who wonders what might have happened if King Kong had lived in the vicinity of The Blue Lagoon, or if Marian Engel's Bear was transformed into a Fantasy Island episode."

— Ron Base,
The Toronto Star

J. Lee Thompson's "Happy Birthday to Me"

"The teenagers in *Happy Birthday to Me* are the dumbest yet, and the film is one of the most unpleasant. This ramshackle Canadian gore store displays its wares as if they were brand new, but underneath every item is the signature of another, better film."

— Jay Scott,
The Globe and Mail

"Although he has made effective horror-oriented movies like *Cape Fear* and *Eye of the Devil*, veteran director J. Lee Thompson displays little feel for this material. The film is tedious — badly edited and misshapen. The acting has a pallid TV feel, as does its visual sense."

— Bill Landis, *Soho News*

"There's nothing to be said for the acting direction or story, which is monumentally stupid, dependent throughout on a frail girl to kill and carry the bodies so they can't be found, taking time out along the way to dig up a casket and haul away the contents."

— Har., *Variety*

"The worst thing about *Tanya's Island* is that it is weighted down with pretentious, heavy-handed metaphors for "primal" urges and behaviour. It's all played fairly straight, but when Tanya's boyfriend starts acting animalistically, it becomes quite funny. The movie is so original and eccentric that it ultimately engrosses the viewer. The setting is attractive, D.D. Winters as the heroine is suitably exotic looking, and the gorilla suit is excellent."

— Bill Landis, *Soho News*

"Plotline is thinnest excuse for Sole to show off Winters' undraped form. Plentiful nudity will satisfy voyeurs, but the acting scenes are crude and laughable. Plodding pace makes film most suitable for drive-ins... will find patrons visiting the concession stand."

— Lor., *Variety*

Martyn Burke's "The Last Chase"

"Quirky vision of where the oil shortage will lead us holds some interest in *The Last Chase*. However, filmmakers fail to give new life to clichéd story and characters laid out against that background. Ques-

tionable is whether the car chase sequences and the presence of Lee Majors in the lead role will guarantee pic any B.O. success."

— Tina, *Variety*

Ralph Thomas' "Ticket to Heaven"

"A first class social thriller dealing with cult religions in California. This hard-hitting docu-drama ranks as one of the most outstanding films to emerge from Canada in recent years and should have no problem finding international distribution and audiences."

— Klad., *Variety*

Richard Loncraine's "The Haunting of Julia" ("Full Circle")

"This one might do well at wickets everywhere thanks to a fairly tight script which, in first half of film at least, builds up scary tensions nicely."

— Besa, *Variety*

"*The Haunting of Julia* is virtually scareless, and the few camera angles provide advance tipoffs to the few frightening scenes. Only occasionally are there red herrings, like the overhead shots that suggest — erroneously — that lamps may soon be dropping on the character's heads."

— Janet Maslin,
N.Y. Times

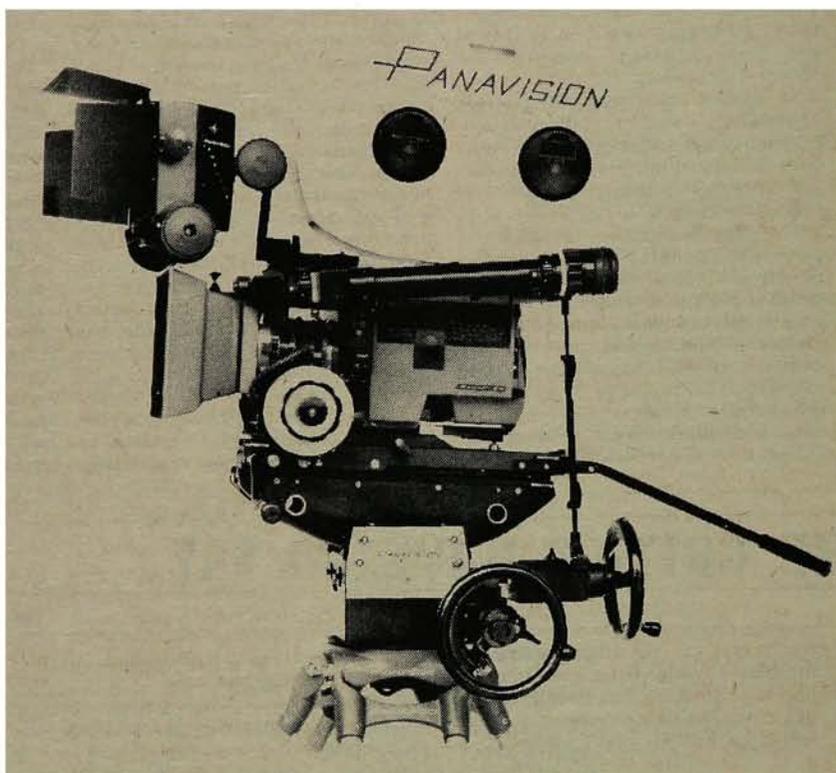
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