

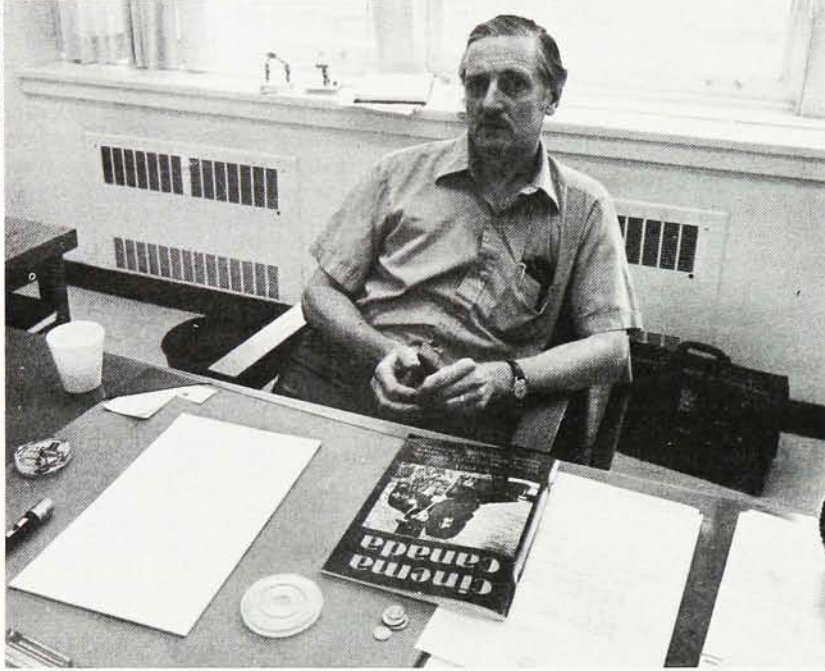


TOM DALY

Laurinda Hartt

PIONEER PRODUCER

Photo: Baltazar



The National Film Act of May, 1939, created the National Film Board on the recommendation of film documentarian, John Grierson. He had, at the request of the Canadian government submitted a report in 1938 urging the establishment of a new film agency to co-ordinate and oversee all government film production.

The Film Board's concern, as described in the Act, was with films "designed to help Canadians in all parts of Canada to understand the ways of living and problems of Canadians in other parts." Initially, however, the Board operated in an advisory capacity to the Canadian government Motion Picture Bureau which had been making films for government departments since 1921.

Then in June, 1941, the Board absorbed the reluctant but outdated Motion Picture Bureau, and became actively involved in the production of films.

Tom Daly was one of a number of university graduates (including James Beveridge, Michael Spencer and Donald Fraser) who at the invitation of Film Commissioner Grierson joined the newly-formed Board. Now a senior producer with 34 years at the Board, Daly says: "This place has been my real education after I thought I had given up an education for some temporary war work."

The following is a compilation of some of Daly's observations relating to Grierson, the history of the Board and the nature of film producing.

"One of the things that has been striking me recently is that the newest generation of young people coming into film are the most like the people Grierson picked to join the Board.

"An interesting thing to me is that most of the young people I meet who are trying to get into film are much more interested in working with the community, with other people — to be in teams together, to share work. They care about the

audience and the people they shoot. They don't want to misuse or use the people. It's as if they have the same purposes Grierson brought to us when we knew nothing. This is the first era in a long time in which I feel that young people coming up are of the same mind as Grierson.

"It makes me particularly happy because I think it's a very good, human approach from which we can derive a lot of hope for the world at a time when there's so much negativity and violence. This type of person is not only not destructive but somehow gives a little lift towards something that could be done, or something that is possible to feel or something that actually exists and isn't just a dream.

"Grierson was going to be directly involved in the film about himself. Unfortunately, very little of it was done before he died in February, 1972. The students at McGill University in Montreal where he lectured prior to his death were very excited about him, and his challenging of them on all matters whether philosophical, moral or filmmaking. They felt he took them as definite people worthy of criticizing on a fundamental basis. If he was hard on them they felt he was hard because he cared.

"Grierson always began by telling people: 'You're not here for your own pleasure or vanity. There are needs to fulfill. If you make a film about certain people, it must be recognized as true by those people, and be something they recognize themselves in. It's not just what you want to do or how you would use them.'

"I think that the crucial factor about the present time is that people find it very hard to feel that they count as individuals. There are such huge governments and companies on an international scale — every organization so big that an individual is lost in it. Committees do things instead of individuals. Everybody wants to get in on the authority but

nobody wants to be in on the responsibility. In a time like this, anything that can give an individual the feeling that it's worth being an individual, that in fact nothing can ever happen unless one or more individuals do it, then all of a sudden it just changes their life view. I think that Grierson was a person they could see was an individual and they could see that he had done a great deal by being one, and so it just renewed their lives a little bit.

"Certainly he's left behind a lot of momentum — people that knew him, not only the old ones but the new, have the same feelings about it. I think these younger people are much less naive about the world than we were and therefore, might be starting a bit further ahead. Of course, the world has much graver problems to meet, so maybe relatively they're not that much further ahead, but it is still an advantage.

"I think it is interesting there have been different periods of growth at the Board:

"Like the wartime period which came almost on top of the origin of the Board. The Board was set up for the country as a whole, then the war came. So there was that whole concentration on achieving the aims of winning the war as well as an attempt to create an understanding of what was going on in the world at the time.

"Then there was the five or six year period (1945-50) of adjusting to peacetime. First of all, of course, trying to find out what peacetime purposes should be, and then trying to take a group of people and adapt them to dealing with these purposes. It was very different — being positive and synthetic, instead of analytical and pro-war winning, which had been very specific.

"Onward from around 1950, there developed the very first signs of Canadian identity and character, both on the part of filmmakers and their subjects.

"From then, until about 1967, there was a great progression and procession of all sorts of exploration and development in many fields — technical, experimental, animation, candid, actuality — all except possibly the area of dramatic fiction, in the English area at least. And then there was the development of the English and French branches. All that was an expanding thing that looked like it might never stop. It was the austerity program that broke that all apart and made things very difficult.

"Now the period from 1968 on has been characterized by the Board being in a world it is unsure of its direction. As a result, the organization has reflected the general uncertainty of direction. It is becoming clear that the Board has to and wants to be related to all those ways in which people can live together in difficult times.

"The Challenge for Change program, an experimental program whose mandate expires in 1975, is an indication that the Board and the government no longer wish to, or have to, deal with what individual filmmakers would like to do. There is the realization that to have the right, the opportunity and money to do what they would like to do, individuals first have to have a world in which the world can exist.

"In the original years, there were no credits on films. It was just a 'Film Board Film' — everybody involved felt they shared in it and nobody was singled out. Then as years went by and we got into more distribution, the vanities of the people wanting to have their names on the screen, and the distribution need to have things and people identified led to the use of credits.

"As long as I can contribute something active and original to the work at the Board then I'll be happy. The only time I wondered about it was during the difficult period after 1967. 1967 was kind of an euphoric peak with Canada's centennial and Expo '67 — I had an absolutely marvellous year editing *Labyrinth* which was the first time in years I only had one thing to do for a year. It was a big thing but to be able to concentrate on one thing was a delight whereas producing

means constantly being divided into little compartments that are forever competing for your attention. Well, after that came the whole complexity of the government's austerity program, the money problems, the political problems, the development for the first time of union/management problems. And the whole question of aging and at the same time having the inability to take on new people because we couldn't add to staff. Then you really wonder whether you're really worth your weight in man years as against another need — you have to think about that very much . . . it's a very real question.

"At the moment I think producing is not a popular kind of work. Everybody would like to be a director, to be an author — to have the fun, the freedom and the choice of selecting the subject and doing it the way you like with a team at your command.

"Perhaps the climax of all that came in the 'do your own thing' era when people liked to be paid to do what they liked thinking that is the best thing for the world and the country and the people. Whatever they did in spirit would be best for everybody else. That was really totally opposite to the Grierson approach."

"Maybe people don't mind producing their own films but they don't want to produce other people's because it takes their time for other people's pleasure. It's not a very popular thing because it means responsibility and authority — and authority is not a very popular question right now. For this reason, it's hard to get younger people to take on their own kind of responsibility in this field.

"I've always been learning something about a subject or another way of making a film. That's perhaps one reason I've stayed as long as I have. With the variety of people with whom I've worked — their different ways of making a film; their different subjects.

"My wish as a producer was to help them make their film their way, only perhaps better than they could themselves. If that was possible — it was a pleasure for me and a help to them."



Grierson in his early years at his Ottawa office

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Roger Blais, Paul Rotha and James Beveridge shooting "Grierson"





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If you have film(s) in the Centre, make sure we have all necessary information by September 1, or your work won't be listed.

If you are involved in booking films, orders for this catalogue will be processed starting on September 1 also. Catalogue \$2.00.

The Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 406 Jarvis Street, Toronto M4Y 2G6, phone (416) 921-2259.

Film House Appointments



Dave Herrington



Mike Ryan



Ian Jacobson

Dave Herrington. Our Chief Timer. Why he's doing that is because he knows how to do his stuff. So that clients don't have to go to half a dozen A-prints before colour balances are right. Before he was with us, he was with Rank, and with Police Surgeon, and with Ross Briggs and VIDEfx. Impressive technician.

Mike Ryan. Our Post Production Co-ordinator. That's because he knows how to uncomplicate messy problems and keep things rolling smoothly. Keep the lab on time. Keep clients smiling. He learned how to do all these things the hard way. Six years as a freelance production manager. Six years repping labs. Glad he's on our side.

Ian Jacobson. Our re-recording Mixer. A fairly fussy job, but he does it well. He spent 5 years with the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation. Then another five as music recording mixer with the CBC in Toronto. And then sharpened that training at Film House as a re-recording mixer on commercials and documentaries. A very good feel for what he does.

FILM HOUSE

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