

REVERB

Dear Sir:

With regard to your recent issue no. 15, and your editorial therein:

I am getting a bit tired of *not* being mentioned in connection with the film "Grierson".

All I did was: obtain the initial written consent from John Grierson; obtain the money from a reluctant Director of Production after John Grierson's death; obtain the consent of Mrs. Grierson, without which none of the other personalities would have cooperated; coordinate the work of the people you *have* mentioned; supervise the editing, done by the excellent Les Halman; direct the voice recording by Michael Kane; approve the final tracks, including the excellent music by Donald Douglas; direct the final mix; approve the provisional test print, and look after changes insisted on by Mrs. Grierson, who had right of final approval; approve the final test print.

It was a great team effort, but if any one person saw it through from start to finish, that was me.

Among my many other claims to fame, is the unpublished fact that I persuaded a reluctant Film Board management to hire Don Brittain, "wunderkind" of the Ottawa Journal, as a potential filmmaker, one who could *actually* write!

Yours sincerely,
David Bairstow,
Executive Producer
"Grierson"

(The full credit list for the film was typeset, but lack of space forced us to omit it. We apologise to Mr. Bairstow, whose work at the Board is known and respected far and wide. —Ed.)

The Editors,

For a journal which professes itself so devoted to the saving of Canadian culture, one of the essentials of such a system seems to have escaped your notice: its parliamentary system.

Central to such a system is the concept of ministerial responsibility: the minister of a department becomes responsible for its policies and their application because only a minister is free to defend such policies from attack.

A civil servant like Robert Desjardins is not. Without in any way judging what it is that led to Cox's current bile attack and to his smug and meandering piece on Desjardins, such a journalistically irresponsible move cannot go unnoticed. It is a cowardly and rotten thing to do.

The Secretary of State of this government is doing a lousy job with regard to film and the disparate ways in which the performing and the cinematic arts are treated is enough to give us all wall-to-wall ulcers. But competent criticism, well documented, well thought out

and well presented is desperately needed. If you or Cox believe that the U.S. idea, in which every civil servant with a good p.r. man can say what he pleases, is good, then work for that. If you really want to deal with the problems here then recognize that ministerial responsibility is an important part of how things work and start from there.

Sheila Kieran
Toronto

Kirwan Cox replies:

I do believe in ministerial responsibility and hold Mr. Faulkner ultimately responsible for the fact that his office has been a disaster for the arts in this country since he took over. I have told him so in person and in print. I say "fact" because I have not encountered anyone anywhere outside his office who contends otherwise — including Ms. Kieran. In discussing her letter with Ms. Kieran, I found that she does not disagree with my assessment of the cultural policies of the government nor does she appear to disagree with my analysis of Mr. Desjardins's performance in office.

She objects to naming names on the theory that civil servants cannot defend themselves. Ms. Kieran believes that since the minister is ultimately responsible he should be the sole object of criticism for any failure in his department. Naturally he must assume the majority of the blame along with cabinet. However, the civil service does exist and does wield policy-making power.

The question of public accountability of public servants is not purely academic since many senior civil servants have more influence on the conduct of affairs in this country than many government backbenchers or opposition members. Some of these civil servants work tirelessly against frustrating odds and deserve praise. Others seem to accept their post in a manner which suggests that they have retired from active work. If civil service jobs are not to become sinecures acquired by passing the C.S. exam and the cocktail party exam, they cannot be regarded as beyond reproach or evaluation for life.

Public servants must be responsible for their actions and decisions when they accept positions of responsibility. I do not know of legal immunity which exempts public servants from scrutiny or criticism under the parliamentary system anymore than it exempts oil company executives, union leaders, or freelance journalists. There is, of course, a gentleman's agreement among the old boy network that populates bureaucracies to the effect that you don't rat on me and I won't rat on you. Silence is the result and government of silence is kafkaesque. The Secretary of State's office has been singularly silent and secretive and non-communicative to the film community at large (for good reason). Thus the necessity for the ungentlemanly press.

The former film officer indeed held a responsible position charged with devising a film policy. That policy was not successfully completed. I refrained from mention of the officer's performance while he held the job in the hope that quiet groundwork had been laid for significant results. Faulkner's July 4th speech stripped me of that hope.

Press criticism of civil servants below ministerial level certainly did not begin with my last article in *Cinema Canada*. A responsible press should report poor or non-existent government policy and try to pinpoint responsibility as clearly as possible.

However, if I am mistaken in thinking that Mr. Desjardins's performance was partly responsible for the present deplorable situation in government film policy, then I stand ready to be corrected and apologize to the former film officer. If I have misidentified the source of the irresponsibility, I await the proper identification from the Minister and will gladly redirect my criticism to the appropriate door. If Mr. Desjardins or Mr. Faulkner or anyone else feels unfairly maligned by me I invite their response in the "Opinion" space of this magazine. It may begin a fruitful dialogue which has been too rare in the past.

No matter where the fault lies in the Secretary of State's office (and most of it does stop at Mr. Faulkner's door), there has been no cultural policy worth mentioning so far and I cannot agree to watch in silence the abdication of responsibility at all levels which has characterized the last two years.

—Kirwan Cox

Dear Ms. Kieran,

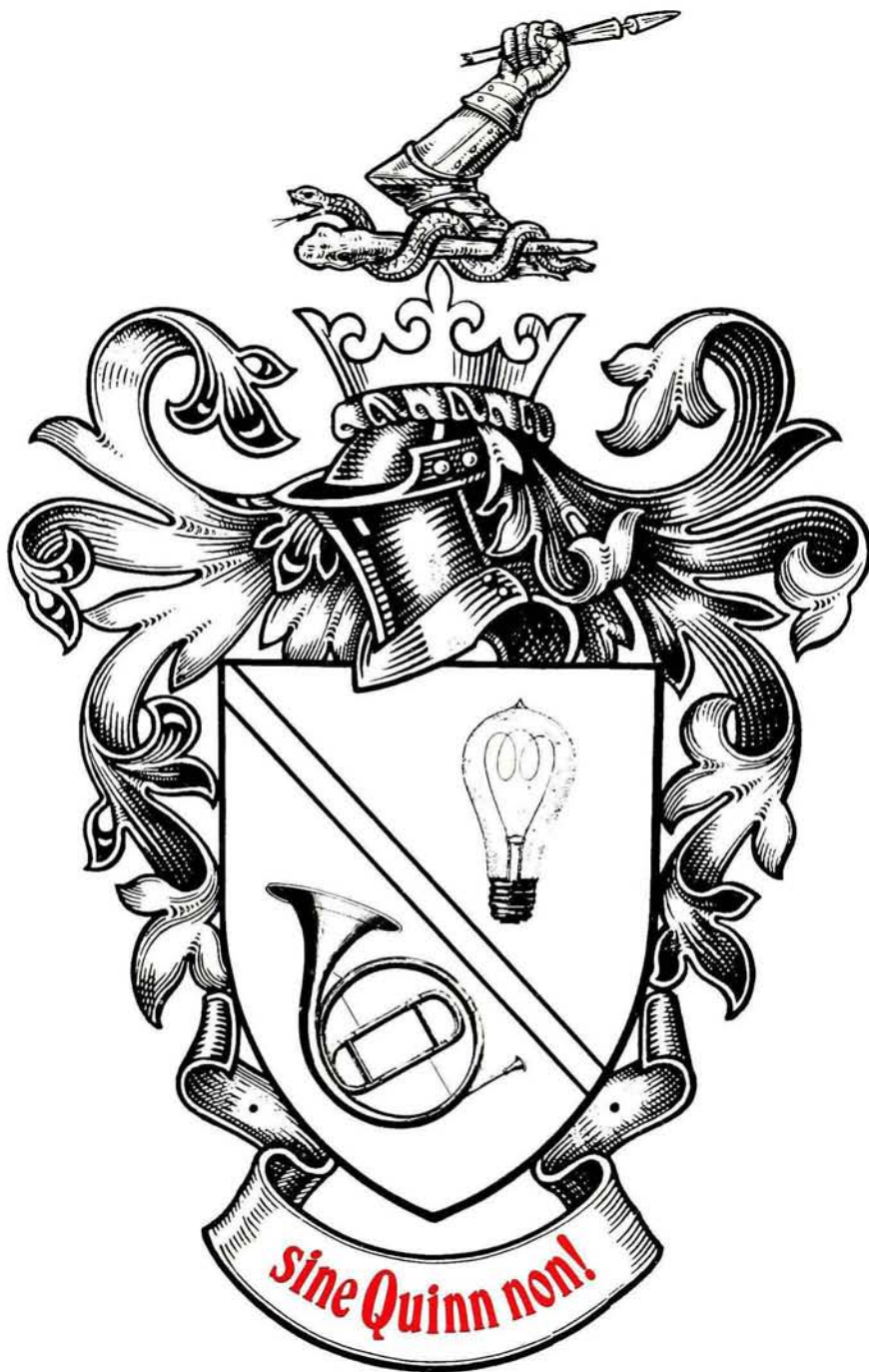
We are very sorry to read that our devotion to Canadian culture can be questioned on the basis of an article clearly titled "Opinion".

Doubtless, our readers are aware that we have always supported the concept of free press and have tried our best to be a forum for Canada's film community. This film community should have the right to question, criticise or laud the achievements of people working in either the public or private sectors. We hope that most of our readers understand that one writer's opinion is exactly that — one writer's opinion.

You might find it interesting to note that Issue No. 15 included many opinions about Sydney Newman, for example, although he is also a civil servant and not an elected government official.

Cinema Canada feels that censoring Mr. Cox's article would have been far more cowardly than allowing all our writers the basic and most precious freedom of the press. We hope most of our readers agree.

Á. Ibrányi-Kiss
Managing Editor



si-ne qua non (sĭn'a kwā nōn', sĭ'nē kwā nōn'). An essential element or condition. [Latin, "without which not."]

si-ne Quinn non Same as above, especially in 35 mm. processing and complete sound facilities.

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