Robert Lantos, RSL Entertainment Corp., Toronto:

“Overall, I feel it’s a very positive step, long overdue and one which will substantially aid the film industry and create an environment of stability which has not existed until now in Canada. The redefinition of the National Film Board role is equally overdue and reflects the reality of what the NFB should be and is necessary. The NFB has a crucial role in preserving the heritage of the past and ensuring the future of the industry, not only as a producer but also as a distributor and exhibitor. The NFB’s role is vital to the survival of the industry as a whole, and its future success will depend on its ability to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the film industry.”

Rene Malo, Les Films Rene Malo, Montreal:

“The policy is not a Kafkasque. There are excellent chances that the policy will simply be reversed because no government can live with it. The entire milieu is against it. I’m talking, of course, about the distribution policy. But there’s nothing else in the policy. What else is there? It’s completely superficial. It only repeats what everyone has been saying for the last five years. It supposedly injects $7.5 million, but when you analyse it, there’s only $1.5 million for distribution, and $1 million for script development. All the rest goes toward making Telefilm even larger – it’s already becoming a huge monster – and Telefilm wants to become even more and more important. We’re going toward a system where production in Canada is going to be a production for the television, and the producers are going to be in the service of the CBC and Telefilm. And, curiosity, both organizations are run by just about the same person since Andre Lamir has been given his post by Pierre Trudeau, who is his minister in law, and who controls him completely. It’s really a ‘gam-mick,’ and I think it’s deplorable that the producers don’t understand things more clearly. Especially since the policy just buries the entire film industry, the Hindenburg – it’s not the same thing as the television industry. It’s completely idiotic. The Austra­lians have refused to sign a co-production treaty agreement with Canada, saying that the Canadian conception was evil.

“I have to judge the policy on a scale of 1 to 10. It’s zero. There’s just nothing in it. No, there’s $1 million for scripts, so I’ll give it a one.”

Tom Shandel, Jericho Films Ltd., Vancouver:

“You know for those of us on the Coast, or in the provincial enclaves like the Montreal English, who are, I imagine more or less in the same boat, I don’t think this is very progressive and it’s a step in the right direction and it’s a bigger step I think than I’ve ever seen before in my working lifetime which is about 13 years in this business. It’s a thorough, well thought­out policy. One of the things I’ve said many times is that if you could get rid of the NFB we would be doing that. If you could get rid of the CBC we would be doing that. And this, I find shocking because I thought that the move for the kind of cultural com­ponents of this film business staying in the Department of Cinema has actually been basically salutary for those of us in the industry.

“Fox understood in a traditional liberal small ‘T’ liberal sense and big ‘L’ liberal sense in terms of Canada, in terms of distribution, there are certain costs to independent culture and that, regardless of what these costs are, there are certain moral thresholds that we were prepared to stand for and fight on. You can’t just do something like a minimum number of Canadian films being produced yearly even if the argument could be made that they’d be self-financing. Or else we’d be absorbed in the American culture. And I would look at the policy with that kind of attitude that going back to 1929 and the Aird Commission which really called for the establishment of the CBC for exactly the same reason that if we had left it to a kind of Tory thinking, we’d just be absorbed in the United States.

“Considering the NFB is a very important employer in our area, only a small core staff that hires exclusively free­lancers, contractors, anything that disbands the Cote-de-Liesse facility and gets rid of the lab there and puts those people who do the shooting of the weekend kinds of things, I think it’s a very future­mistic move. It even pleases the kind of right-wing, free-market types that exist out here. So I think that getting away from the idea of a kind of institutionalization of Canada, of centralization which prevailed in the Film Board and still prevails in the CBC of course, the future we’re going away from that, I would say that I support the policy.

“The fact that it’s the deinstitutional­izing, kind of getting away from the monolithic structures – the staff kind of civil servants and bureaucrats and the other things – giving them back programs out to the private sector, that makes sense. Those that want to make sponsored films constitute a certain part of the film industry. That’s my number one priority in the agenda that work here – I’m just looking for a middle ground between the help producers, the help distributors and I see myself as part of the public sector of the film industry. It’s healthy, I think that getting away from the monarchy is a step in the right direction and it’s a bigger step I think than I’ve ever seen before.”

Pierre Rene, France Telecom:

“I haven’t even read it so you see the kind of importance it has in my eyes. All I know is that it was announced by the Telefilm Minister and that’s it. And that’s all. Even if some have said that it kills the sector, I can’t see how you can kill something that you don’t know about as far as I know distribution in English Canada is almost dead.

“Anyway, for the moment, the policy doesn’t affect me. It might have if the federal government had taken the decision to re­vitalize the independent film sector and it’s obvious that it’s been made for the Quebec and the Ontario and the Vancouver and the Toronto and that’s it. And that’s all. Finally, it’s been three years, Fox has now done what it has to do, it’s time for the government to get in the game and do what it can, but I think it’s obvious that it’s not going to happen. That’s why there is this whole anti-competitive government out there – only the Federal government offers the opportunity for some enlightenment now, but I think Fox was a very intelligent thing from what I can tell. All the other policies had been self­sponsored films represent an important employer in the country’s film industry. They are certain costs to independent culture and that, regardless of what these costs are, there are certain moral thresholds that we were prepared to stand for and fight on. You can’t just do something like a minimum number of Canadian films being produced yearly even if the argument could be made that they’d be self-financing. Or else we’d be absorbed in the American culture. And I would look at the policy with that kind of attitude that going back to 1929 and the Aird Commission which really called for the establishment of the CBC for exactly the same reason that if we had left it to a kind of Tory thinking, we’d just be absorbed in the United States.

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Michael Spencer, Filmline Productions, Montreal:

“My general reactions were that the film policy was not a clear call for any particular thrust or action over another action. It covered the entire water-front.

(cont. on p. 38)
Random opinions
(cont. from p. 37)

"They could have put a lot more stress on the question of video-cassettes, for example. Video movies in video stores and all that. They could have said, 'That's an important area. We will come up with some special programs to assist Canadian producers to get their stuff marketed.' But they seem to be treading in every area, except in the case of theatrical distribution. There it appears that the main thrust of their idea is to tell Canadian producers, 'Try and get into Canada via the U.S. I think they should be honest with Canadian distributors and say, 'Look, you guys, your business is going down the tube. Why should we put any money into it?' But they didn't say that. On the one hand, they say, 'Let's get Americans to distribute more Canadian films in Canada, and then they have these programs of support for marketing of Canadian productions but it remains to be seen if what they're going to be doing is assisting Americans.'

"This negation with the U.S. Majors for more Canadian films in theatres is all being presented to us as if it has never happened before. But, in fact, attempts have been made by various ministers to negotiate this kind of a deal, to my knowledge. In 1965, in 1972, probably in 1977. None of it has ever worked because the government of Canada has never taken a solid position up-front with legislation in place that they can use to convince the other side that they are really serious. And I don't have any hope that this will be any better than any of the other efforts.

"So on a scale from 1 to 10, I'd be tempted to give the policy a 5, but that sounds like I have no opinion. So I'll give it a 4."

George Christofi,
Filmwest, Edmonton:
"We were hurt a great two years ago when the tax shelter was removed and people no longer had an investment incentive. Until then, we were doing quite well. There is nothing in the most recent policy which repairs the damage which has been done.

"This impetus is good. It's structurally valid with the future technology and all that. But it's too early to tell whether it's just going to be centered in the Montreal-Toronto-Ottawa triangle again, or whether it's going to get here.

"The Film Board has always been good to us out here. The first thing the people button-holed about the Film Board were the lab people down East or the film policy does not address the situation. The Film Board provides us with work over the rough periods - it's a very symbiotic relationship... The new measures won't have any effect; it's just words.'"

Peter Simpson, Simcom Ltd., Toronto:
"I guess my impression is generally favorable. It seems to draw all the areas together. From washing the events over the years, there wasn't a single policy before. Now what they've done is amalgamated all the various policies into one cohesive body. I don't think they all necessarily fit that well together. It wasn't really thought out as one policy; it's simply an amalgamation.

"The policy is weak in its attempt at regional marketing, in the distribution of Canadian film... Having quiet chats with the majors just doesn't work. Funding the films is one thing, making sure they have access to the screens in this country is another, and I don't think they've been realistic about insuring that that is going to happen.

"If we had support, if we had people who could handle the promotion, the ads, the money for this, it could be a good thing. It's no idea, that's all.

"I think the policy is irrelevant to distribution. It is going to Americanize whatever Canadian production is done here in Canada. It puts the control which people like myself had - the entrepreneurs - into the hands of the government and Telefilm Canada. Canadian distributors used to be involved, because we knew the marketplace from the ground up - better than the producer at certain given times. Now the Majors are to handle the films, not only in the States but in Canada. Aside from putting us down in our own country, we don't have a chance to extend outside of the country either."

"The film policy wasn't worth waiting for. It doesn't solve any problems. It will affect the industry adversely. The Canadian part of the film industry up here is still a small part of the whole. Most of the films, the vast majority, are American. We can't take all facets of the industry - producers, directors, actors, writers, distributors - the policy is still going to lead the good Canadian people out of Canada because the Americans will learn to cultivate people up here by bribing them down. It's not going to prove the industry in any way."

Allen Stein,
Filmwest, Edmonton:
"I think almost everybody in the private film industry applauds the spirit of the film policy, and I join with them. But there are quite a few things which alarm me about it. The main thing is that I don't want to have to compete with the majors. Telefilm, the other body, the Metropolis - but those of us who are helping the majors, we're at a disadvantage no matter how open and warm and sensitive the people in the central institutions are to us, because of the centralization of these very institutions. Just to make the phone calls and the trips to Toronto, we're at a huge financial disadvantage because that's an expensive and time-consuming proposition. And we're not part of the gossip mill and the socializing that goes on in Toronto so, just for starters, we're at a disadvantage and the film policy does not address that issue at all. The word 'regional' only crops up once in the film policy, and only with reference to the Film Board part of the policy. So what scares me is that there are no directives in the policy to govern the basic principles by which Telefilm will operate via a vis regional parity and regional development. In fact, its developmental role is very subject to question because Telefilm, in the past, has shown itself to be more interested in the Hollywood orientation. The problem is that a few people or even one person has a lot of discretionary power. Without guidelines that would satisfy people here, it's a little bit scary. With all its money, Telefilm doesn't seem to be very oriented toward the first-time producer, or the producer who is outside of the standard clique.

"Most people are pretty skeptical about the distribution part. It seems to me that the problem is so much more fundamental than just quotas or whatever they try to do. It's a whole cultural kind of thing, and it's so deep and it's so broad that we have to attack this problem without trying to kindle the whole national imagination, which is really what it's all about... It (cont. on p. 39)

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Random opinions

(cont. from p. 38)

Jack Darcus, Exile Film Productions, Vancouver: "I'm impressed with what they are talking about. The main problem is the elections. I'm worried about the removal of Francis Fox and I'm not sure that was the best thing to do in the middle of the process. The election is going to matter very much for the filmmakers because of the implementation of the policy, I expect, going to be questionable.

"The most promising part of the policy is that something is going to be done about distribution of Canadian films in Canadian theatres. The surface thrust is that a lot of money is going to be distributed to people in the industry but behind it is the idea of a fair system in Canada for Canadian films and Canadian theatres. All the details of the thing sound very positive.

"I think that what's happened in the past is that a 'good will' system has been put into place. And that was eroded and never brought into practice. My understanding, from the film policy meetings we've had out here, is that they will explore ways to bring pressure upon the Americans to do something about this. I'm not interested in good will myself because I just don't believe it works, but after a six-month period of evaluation, they will talk about such things as tax levies, quotas and all that. I think the idea that the Americans will somehow run more Canadian films in America might add up to a little more than tokenism. The problem to be addressed is that all the money leaves the country every year without any of it resting here, doing what it should for us as it does in other countries."

Andre Link, Cinepix, Montreal: "Generally, I think it's a step in the right direction, with one extremely disturbing factor which concerns distribution. I think that, in so far as distribution is concerned, the policy is short-sighted, erroneous, ignorant and devastating. It should be changed. As it stands, it's an absolute negation of what has been said and done for the past ten years and more. You still have to show me a country in which there is indigenous production without national distributors. If Canada is to be the new model, well, I'd like to see that."

Victor Loewy, VivaFilms, Montreal: "There's not a single word of new facts, new suggestions, new ideas. They are simply rehashing the same paper I've seen for the last six years. Basically, what I see is that they have hired more people, and they came up with the same policies. They watered down everything via a vis the Majors, they left the field totally open to us, and we're extremely unhappy with them.

"I'm falling back to my old position. I don't give a shit one way or the other what the government does because they're not helping us. I'm going to suggest to my organization (of distributors) that we should stop operating with them in any way and treat them as if they don't exist. They have never, never done anything we have told them to do. We submitted a very specific paper about pay-TV which they have never followed. We have submitted suggestions on the video policy. It hasn't been followed, and everything is, once again, controlled by the Majors.

"I was totally and completely surprised by the policy. I would never believe that Francis Fox would sell out to such an extent. It's a joke. What are their conclusions? I've seen that they are going to go to the majors to tell them to agree to take money from Telefilm to launch Canadian films. That's all. Basically, I thought that the policy was going to give Telefilm Canada something to do. Before, 80% of the money given to them was used up to pay the debt. Now they're just hiring more incompetent people. But what are they doing? I've asked Lamy now for years, I want to know what they're doing, what they've done since Lamy took over. I never had any beef before, but since Lamy took over, there's been nothing. I'm deeply dissapointed, so much so that in my case it's going to influence the way I'm going to vote."

Allocations by the Société

MONTREAL - Since the Société générale du cinéma became Quebec's principal film-financing agency Feb. 20, it has allocated over $2 million of public money to 75 private-sector projects.

Figures released July 17 report an allocation of $3,65,144 to 75 projects between Feb. 20 and July 13, 1984. Thirty two projects ($32,233) fall under the development category; 16 projects ($1,665,000) have been selected for distribution; 17 special projects ($329,064) and 119 projects ($43,260) in the marketing category.

Since the 1984-85 aid plan has been in effect June 1, the SGC had by July 9 received applications for a total of 109 projects with budgets totalling $40 million, of which the SGC was being requested to invest $7 million.

"The state has allocated $10 million towards cinema this year," SGC CEO Nicole M. Bousquet told Cinema Canada. "Just think what we could do with $10 million a year!"

The Fournier Report, which recommended the creation of the Société, also recommended an annual film-financing budget of $25 million.

Allegations by the Société

The Canadian Filmmakers Distibution Centre invites applications for the Position of Administrator.

Founded in 1967, the CFMDC (a non-profit arts organization) distributes and promotes the work of Canada's finest filmmakers.

The successful candidate will:

- administrate daily business affairs of the organization
- work with and be responsible for the Centre's staff of 5
- represent the Centre at various film festivals and forums
- work with the elected Board of Directors
- prepare grant applications and maintain relations with government granting bodies.

Qualifications for this position include:

- experience in arts administration and financial planning
- knowledge of the issues relating to independent film production
- well developed interpersonal, communication, and problem solving skills essential.

Salary: $18,000 to $22,000 per annum, commensurate with experience and qualifications. Written applications will be accepted until September 7, 1984.

Please submit to:
Search Committee, Canadian Filmmakers Distibution Centre, 299, Queen St. West, Unit 204A, Toronto, M5V 129.