

LE CINÉMA QUÉBÉCOIS

During the Christmas holidays, Films Mutuel released Denis Héroux' latest ripoff, *Quelques Arpents de Neige*. Perhaps it was unfair to the filmmaker to expect the film to be Quebec's first, great historical epic, but many people had been hoping it would be. After all, the 1837 Revolt was momentous and it has taken on historical and symbolic importance over the last hundred years. So when the film opened here and turned out to be a little film, full of flaws, poorly acted and generally insignificant, many of the critics were outraged. The film is now in its third week and, according to the distributors, running stronger than *Les Colombes*, which did very well indeed. At any rate, Mutuel will have another chance to win back the critics when they open *Le Mort d'Un Bucheron* at the end of January. Written by Gilles Carle with some help from Arthur Lamôthe and directed by Carle, the film stars Carole Laure, Denise Filiatrault, Willie Lamôthe, Daniel Pilon, Pauline Julien and the tireless Marcel Sabourin.

Meanwhile, France Film, one of Québec's more important distributors, will be releasing four new films shortly. Two of them, *La Conquête* by Jacques Gagné and *Montréal Blues* by Pascal Gélinas, have been finished for some time and have already had screenings. *La Conquête* was shown in the Film Market at Cannes last May, and *Montréal Blues* was shown once in Montréal at the Cinémathèque. They were both presented in Toronto at the Film Awards. They are both counter-culture films, the first being about two happily married folk who have a one week affair "without fear or guilt", and the second being about communal life at a local health food restaurant. The distributor's hesitation (both have been informally announced for release and then withdrawn) leads one to believe that these films are not expected to be big commercial successes. But then, *Mon Oncle Antoine* was released by France Film one year after its completion, so maybe it's a good sign.

The other two films may well be the two most important Québec films of the year. *Taureau*, written and directed by Clément Perron (who wrote *Mon Oncle*) and produced by the NFB will open at the St. Denis Theatre during the last week of January. It's a heavy film about intolerance, and about the system of relationships which can exist in a small town (or anywhere) and which can ostracise a man, exploit him, and drive him to self-affirmation, violence and more. André Mélançon, President of the Professional Association of Filmmakers of Québec, has the lead role of *Taureau*. By March, *Kamouraska* should be ready for release. This is the \$750,000 co-production by Carle-Lamy of Montréal and Mag Bodard's Société Parc Film of Paris. The director and cameraman are also from *Mon Oncle* and are, respectively, Claude Jutra and Michel Brault. The scenario, taken from Anne Hébert's novel, was written by her and Jutra. What with Geneviève Bujold in the leading role, and the excellent response given the novel here and in France, anticipation is running high.

Censure at the Film Board

Swiftly and unexpectedly, Mr. Sydney Newman, as Government Film Commissioner, announced in December that he was stopping the production of Gilles Groulx's latest film *Vingt-quatre Heures ou Plus* (Twenty-Four Hours or More). Writing to the Director of French Production, he explained: "It's (the film's) content and conclusions would be difficult to accept by the people who uphold our democratic society. These people could not pardon the National Film Board for having per-

mitted the film's production. In the interest of all the filmmakers of the NFB, and so that the NFB can continue to work throughout Canada, I can't imagine permitting the work to be finished on the film or permitting the distribution of the film".

Gilles Groulx started out at the Film Board in 1956, and has directed, among other films, the classic short *Les Raquetteurs*, and the three feature films *La Chat dans le Sac*, *Ou Etes-Vous Donc?* and *Entre Tu et Vous*. All of these films are sharply analytical and critical. Groulx's new film was shot in November and December of 1971 and was based on current events during that time. He filmed meetings and speeches, went to demonstrations and used cuts from television and the newspapers. The film was meant to review the state of things in Québec and, according to those few who have seen the film, its conclusions were drastic, if not surprising. The film accuses the capitalistic system of being responsible for the current ills in the province.

These conclusions did not escape Mr. Newman who continued, saying "It would be inexcusable for the NFB to distribute a film which calls for the total rejection of the economical-political system as it is currently in Canada."

The Commissioner's decision provoked lively reactions in the filming milieu here, and a movement was soon afoot to pressure the NFB for a reversal of the decision. Among other things, Groulx's contract called for a zero copy of his film, and as it stood, the titles and the commentary still needed to be added. Within a few weeks, the NFB announced what seems, for the moment, like an uneasy compromise. The film will be completed at the NFB, but there is no mention of its eventual distribution. It looks like Denys Arcand (*On Est Au Coton*) and Jacques Leduc (*Cap d'Espoir*) both of whom have finished films at the NFB only to have them gather dust, may soon be moving over to welcome Gilles Groulx.

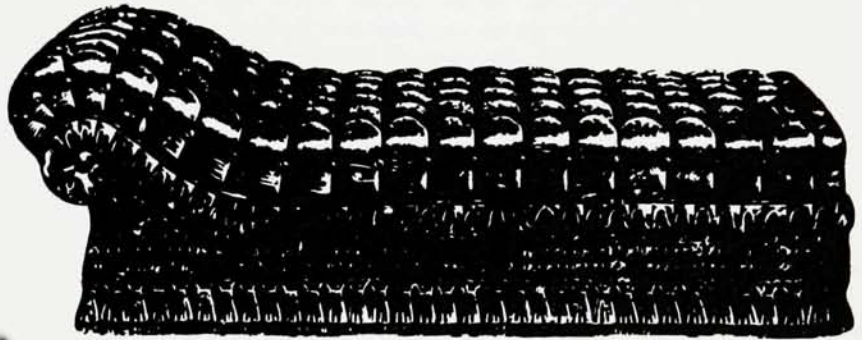
Cinevision

The biggest, and most unexpected, business news seems to be coming from Cinevision this winter. The Montréal based equipment rental firm with an office in Toronto went public this winter, and the shares have already risen from \$1.00 to \$8.00 in a few months. Becoming a public company was already big news, as so few Canadian-owned firms in the movie industry are; but Cinevision followed this up with an announcement in early January that it just bought a major interest in the American Film Theatre, and so is heavily into the production of eight feature films.

The American Film Theatre is a sort of "movie of the month" deal. Ely Landau Organization Inc. plans to produce eight plays (*The Iceman Cometh*, *A Delicate Balance*, *Luther*, etc.), using well-known directors (Frankenheimer, O'Horgan, Richardson) and top talent (K. Hepburn, Stacy Keach, Lee Marvin) at low cost, because the personnel will participate in the profits. These films will open, one a month, in selected theaters and will be shown four times on a regular schedule. One subscribes to them, like for a concert, paying \$3.50 a shot. It's as easy as that. Cinevision and Ely Landau both own 45.5 per cent of the venture, the cost to Cinevision being 3.1 million dollars.

This sum is one third of the budget originally allocated to the Canadian Film Development Corp., for investment in the Canadian film industry over a period of five years. If one Canadian company can get together 3.1 million to invest in American productions, one wonders if other initiatives couldn't be taken, by them or by others, to increase investment in Canadian films. Hopefully, Cinevision's investment might cause some of the films to be shot in Canada, thereby repatriating a part of the monies. ●

Compiled and written by Connie Tadros of Cinéma Québec



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