

# Decisions reveal rising dissension among CRTC commissioners

OTTAWA - A wave of dissension seems to be taking place in normally unanimous Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) decisions in recent months.

Three recent decisions, all with long-term impact, have produced dissenting opinions from CRTC commissioners.

In a majority decision Apr. 19, the Commission renewed the television broadcasting licences of the CTV Television Network including some 200 private television stations, all due to expire Sept. 30, to Sept. 30 1987 until completion of the federal government broadcasting review. "The Commission has decided," a CRTC public notice said, "that the public interest would best be served if public hearings on the renewals of these licenses were not held until the government's Task Force recommendations are known." The Task Force is expected to report back to Communications minister Marcel Masse by January, 1986.

CRTC commissioner Monique Coupal dissented from the decision, stating:

"Under the Broadcasting Act, the Commission is obliged to hold a public hearing for the renewal of a broadcasting license in order to review the performance of a licensee. Notwithstanding the government's Task Force to review the broadcasting policy, it is still the legal obligation and responsibility of the Commission to supervise and regulate the Canadian broadcasting system, and it should continue to do so in all areas of its activities.

"The Commission is failing to live up to its duties by granting an automatic license renewal of two years to private commercial licensees."

In an earlier decision Mar. 27, a majority of the Commission approved Mid-Canada Com-

munications Corp. of Sudbury's take-over of six radio stations in the Sudbury, Blind River, Elliot Lake and Espanola areas.

The decision met with the dissent of commissioners Coupal, Rosalie Gower and Paul McRae who stated "there are no compelling reasons in the present case to warrant the increased concentration of ownership."

Approval of the application, the dissenting commissioners said, would create "such a strengthened single voice (that it) could well be overwhelming in a market such as Sudbury." The acquisition by Mid-Canada of the AM and FM English-language radio stations and the AM French-language station in Sudbury would not be "in the interest of the Sudbury and neighboring communities and could put the only other

English-language radio service in Sudbury in a severe competitive disadvantage." The other station is a CBC affiliate. The CRTC decision noted that the CBC had "yet to develop a full regional service in these northern communities." In their dissent, the minority Commissioners said "The need for a strong alternative voice was clearly expressed in interventions during the (Dec. 1) public hearing and would be welcomed by the community."

Finally, in a decision Mar. 14, following a public hearing at Hull Feb. 5, the CRTC approved an application for a network license to distribute an English-language Canadian health and lifestyle specialty programming service. The Life Channel Inc., which is authorised to go into operation Sept. 1, on a 24-hour per day,

seven-days a week basis as part of the Canadian specialty tier, will receive "the major components of its programming from the Lifetime Channel, a U.S. specialty service." The Canadian portion will initially be comprised of some 25 hours per week of Canadian-originated programming, "which will gradually increase, as revenues permit." The Life Channel joins the 11 other optional Canadian specialty services, the House of Commons parliamentary channel, the four U.S. networks, the four Canadian commercial signals, and the 20 U.S. specialty services available to Canadian payable subscribers.

Commissioner Coupal dissented from the Life Channel decision. But no reasons for the dissent given by the CRTC in making the decision public.

## Pearson wins ACTRA honour

TORONTO - Former Broadcast Fund head Peter Pearson has been awarded the 1985 Crystal Club Award by the Toronto branch of ACTRA Writers' Guild.

In making the award May 16, the group which represents broadcast and film writers as well as broadcast journalists cited Pearson's contribution to the industry as a writer, director (*Paperback Hero*) and as head of the Broadcast Fund. Pearson resigned that position May 2.

At the same time the Toronto branch council sent a message to Communications minister Marcel Masse and prime-minister Brian Mulroney proposing and endorsing Pearson for the position of executive-director of Telefilm Canada. Present executive-director André Lamy's term has not been extended past July 31 by Masse. Council president Roger Abbott cited Pearson's credentials and commitment to Canada's cultural future. "There is a danger in our land right now of cultural invasion and it is imperative that a position such as executive director of Telefilm Canada be filled by a person who has demonstrated his sensitivity to that danger," Abbott said.

The Crystal Cube award was founded in 1980 to honor an individual's unusual contribution to the writing community. Previous winners have been Jim Henshaw, Rob Forsyth, Jack Gray and Margaret Collier.

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(Filmline)

**THE HITCHHIKER**  
(Quintina Productions)

**POLICE ACADEMY**  
(The Ladd Company)

**LET'S BE CAREFUL...**  
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**TOLLER CRANSTON SPECIAL**  
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**MY AMERICAN COUSIN**  
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**CLEMENCE ALLATI**  
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(Paramount Pictures)

**DOCTOR KNOWS BEST**  
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**MRS. SOFFEL**  
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(C.B.C.)

**STUNT TEAM VIDEO**  
(Team Productions)

**JOY**  
(R.S.L. Films)

**FATHER CHRISTMAS**  
(Disney Productions)

**THE PARK IS MINE**  
(Ramble Films/H.B.O.)

**JOSHUA THEN AND NOW**  
(R.S.L. Films)

**SHOWSTOPPER**  
(C.B.C.)

**APRIL FOOL**  
(M.G.M./U.A.)

**AT THE WHEEL**  
(N.F.B.)

**MARTIN'S DAY**  
(I.F.S./M.G.M.)

**STRANGE BREW**  
(M.G.M./U.A.)

**ODD BALLS**  
(New World)

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**CROSS COUNTRY**  
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**STUNT SHIP**  
(Kings Productions)

**GAS**  
(Paramount Pictures)

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