

## Peter Pearson to top Telefilm position

MONTREAL – The official news of Peter Pearson's appointment as executive director of Telefilm Canada came on July 8 as minister of Communications Marcel Masse confirmed the order-in-council appointment. The announcement follows weeks of persistent rumor, and was generally well-received in the film and television industry.

Until last May, Pearson had headed up the Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund, the number-two post at Telefilm. He resigned that position suddenly and unexpectedly, following the an-

nouncement that Masse had requested André Lamy, the Telefilm executive director, to step down by August 1. Pearson then became an active candidate for the top job, finally beating out others (Ron Cohen, Frank Jacobs, Bill Marshall) rumored to be under consideration.

Pearson has fought in the trenches for Canadian film policy, and was a major voice during the early '70s when he served as president of the Directors Guild of Canada and then as the chairman of the Council of Canadian Filmmakers. On April 25, 1974, he

appeared before the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts and made this statement about filmmaking in Canada:

"We commend the government for its bold concept in taking Canada into the feature film industry.

"The taxpayers have committed \$20 million in expectation of seeing Canadian films for the first time in their neighbourhood theatres. These films have seldom appeared.

"In six years we have learned that the system does not work for Canadians.

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## Masse in L.A. sends message to Majors

TORONTO – Federal Communications Minister Marcel Masse put the major American studios on notice that they must do better for Canada in a speech aimed at studio heads in Los Angeles on June 17. But the studio heads weren't there to listen. Millard Roth, executive secretary of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association, the Canadian lobby group for the majors, told Cinema Canada that studio executives invited to a private luncheon were not informed that the minister would be present. Roth said that "there was not a large representation of our member companies there."

David Silcox, assistant deputy minister in the department of Communications, told Cinema Canada that Hollywood had ample warning. "His trip was confirmed two weeks before," Silcox said. He added that nonetheless "attendance was disappointing." He agreed that none of the studio heads had attended. He named the president of distribution for Universal and the heads of distribution and production for Disney as among the most senior guests at the luncheon.

Martin Bockner, general manager of New World/Mutual Pictures, told Cinema Canada that it didn't matter who was present as long as the message was delivered and got through which he believed it had.

In his speech Masse expressed concern over the inadequate commercial distribution of Canadian films "even in our own country because historically Canada has been treated as part of a single North American market." He added that "for their part Canadian film distributors have not had the opportunity to distribute films produced in other countries or even the most commercially

attractive Canadian films. This situation is of increasing concern to the Canadian people."

In his speech Masse took pains to note that the Canadian government was responding positively to American representations about copyright. He made it clear that he expected a reciprocal response to Canadian concerns. (The Majors have been lobbying for royalty rights on cable retransmission of their product. The issue was raised in discussions between President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney at the Shamrock Conference last March.)

Masse went on to express his frustration that negotiations had been ongoing with the Majors since January with "no practical results whatsoever." He added that "all negotiations must someday come to an end. I am obliged to report back to my cabinet colleagues early in the fall on the results of our discussions. We will at that point have to consider our options."

Masse made it clear that the stakes were rather high. In a brief historical review he noted that since the 1920s "American film and television productions have pervaded Canadian screens. There have been no levies, as have existed for example in Britain and France; there have been no screen quotas, discriminatory taxes or local work requirements. Between the United States and Canada there has flourished a virtual free trade in theatrical films." The result has been that in 1984 "productions distributed by the Majors earned over 80% of the theatrical box office receipts in Canada, about \$400 million. But the screentime devoted to Canadian films held steady at less than 2%" at a time when Cana-

dians were producing "from 30 to 80 feature films a year. But how many Canadians and Americans have seen them? For example, in 1984 only one Canadian film was released by a Major."

Masse pointed out to his audience that American films cannot supply a Canadian identity. "Only Canadians can do that." He told an anecdote of Cecil B. De Mille's "Canadian" film with its American cast, American writer, American assistants, American technicians and American crew. "Then they prepared to embark for Canada. That kind of film is, of course, not recognizable as Canadian."

Masse said the days of the open market are now passed. "Canadians believe that we must support our own domestic production and distribution industries."

Masse threatened the Majors with options which included legislated limits to the cultural activities of foreigners in Canada: quotas, levies or taxes; or legislation, similar to Quebec's Bill 109 to regulate distribution.

Masse noted that while the Canadian government has been generally supportive of open trade with the States, cultural industries were specifically exempted from the liberalization of the foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) in its transformation to Investment Canada.

Whether government action will support cultural protection remains to be seen as decisions are awaited on Gulf & Western's takeover of Prentice-Hall and Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of 20th Century-Fox. In both cases the government must decide whether the takeovers will include the Canadian subsidiaries.

## Reactions to appointment

TORONTO – The Ontario production industry has reacted positively to the announcement that Peter Pearson, former director of the Broadcast Fund, has been named executive director of Telefilm Canada, the federal government's film agency. Victor Solnicki, chairman of the Canadian Film and Television Association's Telefilm committee, said "it's wonderful news. Peter has had the support of a great many of us in the industry. I'm extremely pleased. He did a wonderful job as head of the Broadcast Fund. We'll have the continuity we've been seeking."

Michael MacMillan of Atlantis Films said he was "very pleased" He added that Pearson will be faced with tough decisions as a result of the rapid deletion of Telefilm's 1985-86 production allocation.

Stephen Ellis, immediate past-president of the CFTA, felt "that Peter is best qualified for the job." Pat Ferns of Primedia, was "delighted at the appointment." He said that Pearson will provide the leadership Telefilm needs.

Iain Patterson, president of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, said he was very pleased because "Peter knows the ropes and won't require a six-month breaking in period."

Peter Mortimer, executive vice president of the ACFTP, released the following statement to Cinema Canada.

"Peter Pearson has always been very committed to the development of the Canadian production industry. This commitment has taken a variety of incarnations, president of the Directors Guild of Canada, spokesman for the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, a principle in the Per-

formance pay-TV application, and, most recently, as director of the Broadcast Fund. In addition he has had a distinguished career as a director both inside and outside the CBC. He has now been appointed to possibly the most influential position in the country to shape and build the future of our industry.

"Peter has always been energetic and outspoken as well as being possessed of the courage of his own convictions. This was evident in his recent abrupt resignation from Telefilm to identify his candidacy for the executive director's position. That energy and commitment are important assets in what has to be one of the most difficult and often thankless jobs in the industry.

"I have great confidence that Peter will now bring his considerable energies and experience to bear on the job at hand – no one is more familiar with the critical 2 1/2-year timetable which presently faces our industry. I also believe that Peter recognizes fully the vital importance of full consultation with independent producers, the entrepreneurs who drive the industry, in developing new policies and strategies for Telefilm. In a true climate of consultation before the fact the ACFTP, and its Quebec affiliate, the AFPQ, will be ready and willing to work enthusiastically with Peter in building better prospects and opportunities for our industry. He's to be congratulated on his appointment."

MONTREAL – The reaction of those Quebec producers reached by Cinema Canada towards the appointment of Peter Pearson as head of Tele-

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## Reactions to Minister's speech

TORONTO – Response to Communications Minister Marcel Masse's Hollywood speech has been mixed. Peter Mortimer, executive secretary of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, is cautious about a protectionist speech in a government which has a predominantly open-door policy.

Millard Roth, executive secretary of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association, the Majors' lobby group, objected to Masse's veiled threat to withhold copyright revisions. He said that "Canada has a responsibility to itself as a country that wants to stand tall in the community of nations." He also disagreed with Masse's analysis of the situation.

"In terms of distribution of films in the U.S. our performance," said Roth, "can stand on its own. It exceeds our undertakings and the ambitions of previous ministers." He quoted figures indicating that in 1976 the Majors released four out of nine Canadian films distributed in the U.S., 1/9 in 1977, 2/8 in 1978, 7/14 in 1979, 18/22 in 1980, 9/25 in 1981, 5/13 in 1982, 3/6 in 1983, 4/5 in 1984. In his speech Masse said that the Majors distributed only one Canadian film in 1984.

Roth added that contrary to what Masse was saying there was not an adequate flow of Canadian theatrical productions. "Production activity goes

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## Vancouver Vistas

moting projects through any amount of festivals for the producer. This is known, in common parlance as, "special handling." It makes the difference in a marketplace that assumes the character of a vacuum for whatever isn't tied down. While submitting in international markets with the Festivals Bureau, Telefilm is

building contacts with producers' representatives.

In response to questions about television marketability, Wendel and Good spoke of the syndicators who have risen like phoenixes from the ashes of pay-TV. As the 'repetition factor' almost killed pay, the competitive edge today is hungry for fresh works. However, the pay-TV that previously paid \$100,000-400,000 for licensing fees, now offers minis-

cule sums and no strong marketplace for much other than good mini-series.

Home video is now the great prize, while ironically presenting a great dilemma to filmmakers. Telefilm urges a good research plan before leaping, for the lure of up to 50% buy-in spells danger. The attractive offer also dictates that a large amount of royalties from cassette sales be signed over, often world rights, theatrical rights,

product rights, while with maximized performance, the production's worth rises with each market. The price should be built-in to recognize this escalation clause, initially.

Lastly, Good and Wendel offered insight into how to gain greater favorability with Telefilm. Since the days of the 100% tax shelters, greater weight is now being given those who do their homework. Now, as a sign of good faith from players in

the field, Telefilm demands letters of support, not necessarily financial commitment, but proffering encouragement and enthusiasm, in the initial stages of bargaining.

The general feeling, as a 'wrap' was declared on the meeting, was that contrary to many beliefs within the Canadian film community, with Telefilm assistance, the game's a whole lot easier on our side of the border.

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## Pearson appointed

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"The film financing system does not work. Thirteen major features were produced in English Canada in 1972. Six in 1973. Only one in 1974 (to date).

"The film distribution system does not work. In 1972 less than 2% of the movies shown in Ontario were Canadian, less than 5% in Quebec - the supposed bedrock of Canadian cinema.

"The film exhibition system does not work. The foreign-dominated theatre industry, grossing over \$140 million at the box office in 1972, is recycling only nickels and dimes into future domestic production.

"Clearly something is wrong.

"It is no wonder then that the Canadian Film Development Corporation cannot possibly work and neither can we."

When the government failed to move on distribution Pearson called the voluntary quota then in place "tokenism" and stated, "I think it's all fiction and the generation that has fought since 1968 to make a film industry is basically lost. Every country in the world has solved this problem... It's a political problem."

In the last five years, Pearson has had a strong sense of purpose. He told Cinema Canada then that he felt his generation of filmmakers had been given their chance, and that it was time they move on and assume leadership positions within the industry to try, yet again, to create that vital industry which had yet to be realized. His feeling was that if they had not already made their marks as filmmakers it was less interesting to keep plugging away than to enter the government agencies which, in Canada, are ultimately responsible for the state of filmmaking. Shortly after that conversation, Pearson was named to head the Broadcast Fund. With this recent appointment, Pearson now has a major role to play in the shaping of Canadian film and television policy.

As readers of Cinema Canada know, Pearson's film credits include *The Best Damn Fiddler from Calabogie to Kaladar* which won eight Canadian Film Awards, *Paperback Hero*, many CBC programs including *Insurance Man from Ingersoll* and

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## SHOOT ALBERTA

by Linda Kupecek

Shout "action" in Alberta this summer, with (finally) a flurry of location shooting, as well as a number of Alberta-based productions on the go.

Alberta has been rediscovered as a location site, with *Rad*, a teenage adventure set in the world of BMX bicycle racing, on the track August 15 in Bowness, a suburb of Calgary. Hal Needham (*Cannonball Run*) will helm the seven-week shoot.

*Loyalties*, \$2.7 million feature for Lauron Productions Ltd. (Toronto) and Wheeler-Hendren Enterprises Ltd. (Edmonton) with a July start in Lac la Biche, is funded by the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation (AMPDC) Telefilm and private investors.

The television series, *The Little Vampire*, also funded by

the AMPDC (with Polyphon, Primedia and CITV) is also in production in Edmonton. Director is René Bonnière, and associate producer is Patricia Mahon for Norflicks Productions Ltd.

*Striker's Mountain* completed principal photography May 14, ahead of schedule and on its \$2.3 million budget, according to producer Wendy Wacko. The two-hour feature was directed by Alan Simmonds on location in Jasper and the Caribou Mountains, with leading players Leslie Nielsen, Bruce Greenwood, Mimi Kuzyk and Tom Peacocke.

Other projects (in varying stages of production) added to the AMPDC lineup are: *Shooting Stars: the Story of an Amazing Basketball Team*, a \$325,000 one-hour docudrama

produced by Allan Stein (completed); *Hail Alley*, a \$1.8 million adventure TV feature about a weather research station, to be produced by Peter Campbell of the Dreamland Picture Company in Edmonton, and written by Michael Mercer; *Connecting*, a nine-episode videotaped television series for young adults, produced by HBW/Toth Co-productions of Calgary (completed); *Wildcat*, a half-hour television pilot, a Tinsel Media and Atlantis Film Ltd. co-production (completed); *Whispering Willow*, a \$1.5 million TV movie mixing kung fu and computers in Vancouver, to be produced by Bradshaw MacLeod and Associates of Calgary; *Escape*, a \$700,000 feature to be produced by Montesi and Haynes of Trapped Productions (the team that swooped through with *Birds of Prey*); *Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes?* a mini-series co-production of Great Oaks Productions Limited (England) and

the King Motion Picture Corporation (Edmonton); *Riders of the Plains*, a \$4 million mini-series from the team of Marie-Josée Raymond, Michelle Stirling and Claude Fournier; *By Special Appointment*, a television feature about Burmese, the lead horse of the RCMP Musical Ride, now the ceremonial mount of Queen Elizabeth II, to be produced by Pat Ferns and Judith Crawley, written by W.O. Mitchell; and *The Dream Horses*, a \$7.5 million romance adventure to be produced by Ronald Cohen, written by Harvey Spaak and Allan Stein.

Dramalab, a three-phase program for young producers, directors and writers with the sponsorship of the National Film Board, Telefilm Canada, and the Department of Communications, is underway in Edmonton and Montreal under the leadership of Allan King.

Seven teams from across the country worked creatively in a workshop situation in phase one (Alberta) with a discussion piece to follow in Montreal (phase two). Tom Radford is executive producer of Dramalab... CBC reports its local evening newscasts are drawing a quarter of a million viewers in Alberta, with the children's program, *Switchback*, produced in Calgary drawing a provincial audience of 85,000... Fred Keating, host/writer of *Mailbag*, aired nationally on First Choice/Superchannel on a daily basis, has departed his post at Alberta Culture to freelance with his new company, Lindisfarne Productions... Thunder Road Studios in Calgary, in receivership for two years, has closed its doors and put its equipment up for tender, leaving Smooth Rock Studios as the remaining 24-track facility... The Independent Motion Picture Association of Calgary (IMPAC) is sponsoring "Personal Computers in the Film and Video Industry", a workshop given by specialist Mary McGuire...

Border scenes: A crew from NFB Studio D landed in Regina in May to shoot a documentary on disabled women and employment, helmed by Anne Henderson, with a.d./researcher Margot Ouimet, cameraman Carlos Ferrand, soundperson Esther Auger, camera assistant Nastaron Dibai and electrician Normand Lecuyer... The Golden Sheaf Awards, North America's oldest continuous short film festival, is gearing up for 1985, with deadline for entries September 30. A treasure in the middle of Saskatchewan, full of good short films and good never-ending fun, the Golden Sheaf Awards are slated for October 30 to November 3.

### Pearson appointed

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*The Tar Sands*; he also co-authored the screenplays for *One Man* which won a Canadian Film Award, *Insurance Man* and *Snowbird*, the latter with Margaret Atwood.

Pearson said of himself in 1973, "I'm sort of the Mike Marshall of Canadian movies. I took over from Al Waxman on my current film (*Only God Knows*) and of course Peter Carter on *Paperback Hero*. Mike Marshall is the relief pitcher for the Montreal Expos who always comes in and saves the Expo's baseball games."

So Mike, a.k.a. Peter Pearson, is on the mound again. This is one game which deserves to be won.

Pearson is married to Suzanne Vachon, is the father of Louis-Charles de Beauce Vachon-Pearson, and is 47 years old. The family is expected to move to Montreal, where Telefilm Canada has its head office, shortly.

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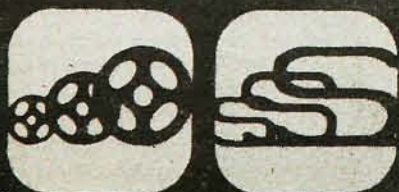
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