

# Broadcasting Task Force forges ahead

TORONTO — The federal task force reviewing broadcasting in Canada may well work right down to the Jan. 15, 1986, deadline set for the presentation of its report to the minister of Communications.

Cross-country consultations, comprising 14 meetings that began Aug. 14 in Ottawa and ended in Yellowknife at the end of October, resulted in the presentation of what task force consultant Phil Smith estimates as a minimum of 300 briefs. Now past the original Sept. 16 deadline for submission of briefs (with no revised deadline set yet), Smith says the task force is busy categorizing the briefs and their orientations. The briefs, many of which were verbal and ranged from, in Smith's description, "marginal coherence to the cogent," came from unions, employees, linguistic groups, and broadcast and media interest groups (among them the Association of Canadian Television & Film Directors, the Independent Film Production Association of B.C., and, in a private meeting, the National Film Board).

Once all the information submitted and commissioned by the task force is collated (two-three months have been set aside in its timetable for the preparation of a report), the

next step will be one of focus. "We're going to have to decide where we're going once we have a sense of it all," says Caplan, stressing "We want to have all our philosophies clear and

spell our's out so the one we give the Minister is coherent."

Although the task force is still trying to come to grips with what Caplan described as the "complexities" of the issues in the current broadcast environment, he expressed gratitude for the cross-country consultations.

"We are very glad we decided to go ahead with the public hearings. We all feel we learned a great deal," he told Cinema Canada. Given the duration of those evening hearings (the last major one, held in Toronto on Sept. 16, ran

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Two groups not present at the Sept. 16 Toronto meeting, the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers and the Canadian Film and Television Association, presented their briefs in October. The CFTA's brief, arrived at after a private meeting and several telephone conversations, contains over 30 recommendations, according to CFTA Secretary Samuel Jephcott.

As to when the task force's report will be presented to the communications minister, Wanda Hamilton, an assistant to task force executive-director Paul Audley, said "We're still gearing for the (original) Jan. 15, 1986 presentation." And task force co-chairman Gerald Chaplan agrees. "We may well go all the way," Caplan told Cinema Canada referring to consultations with various private groups, research the task force has in progress, and additional meetings with groups and individuals who made submissions during the cross-country public meetings.

Research for the task force involves a number of separate studies (into programming and stereotyping of women, among others), the aim of which, says Caplan, is "to ensure we have data we didn't have." Caplan told Cinema Canada there's no general drift just yet as to what recommendations will be made to the Communications minister either in terms of the role of CBC, private-sector regulation, or policy options available to the government.

beyond its 11 p.m. finish and consisted of 60 presentations by groups and individuals), Caplan also expressed a sense of self-satisfaction.

"We hung in and paid attention right to the end; we tried," he said.

Hoping that the attention paid by the task force will have ameliorated some of the cynicism the seven members en-

countered (one oft-heard complaint about the CBC was its behavior as some sort of "Toronto Broadcasting Corporation"), Caplan observed that the preponderance of submissions generally came from people who were either strong supporters or critics of the public broadcasting body.

Support for the CBC was largely defined as a means of unifying Canada (Roger Abbot, representing the ACTRA Writ-

ers' Guild, called it "the closest thing we have to a national railway"). John MacFarlane, representing the 2,000-strong Friends of Public Broadcasting at the Toronto meeting, noted "Canada's identity and sovereignty have been achieved by acts of public determination" and that "only a public broadcaster can protect Canada's interest by presenting superior quality, Canadian programming."

MacFarlane articulated another common observation when he criticized the private broadcasting sector for its "lamentably low" performance on spending on original programming. The private networks, he said, amounted to conduits for light American entertainment.

Another area in which the CBC received commendation was in sports. Bruce Kidd praised it for being "the only network which focuses in any

way on Canadian sports" and urged the task force to take Canada's sporting culture into its consideration.

Criticism of the public network ranged from its size (suggestions included its down-sizing to instantaneous, news-oriented programming), to promoting an ideological slant in its foreign affairs and defence coverage, and in being, in the words of Paul Fromm (research director of the competitive, pro-free enterprise group Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform), "a fairly incestuous group of people with a coherent view of the world that's not shared elsewhere."

The CBC was also faulted for not realizing that TV is an international phenomenon and that the successful export of more Canadian programs to the world market can't occur without reciprocity. At the same time, it was found wanting in pride at its own accomplishments. "I can't understand why the CBC has no sense of its own traditions," remarked author Dr. Mary Jane Miller, "and why you have no pride in its programs - this isn't PBS North!"

While the CBC provided the bulk of the grist for the Toronto public meeting, the task force too drew some flak.

In a departure from the usually attentive, good-humored banter the task force met, the Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform's Paul Fromm called the task force "a completely foolish process. What we have here is virtually nothing; the government is simply going through a public relations exercise." From went on to add that, for a federal government with a conservative mandate, "the lack of any Conservative candidates on the panel is a major oversight."

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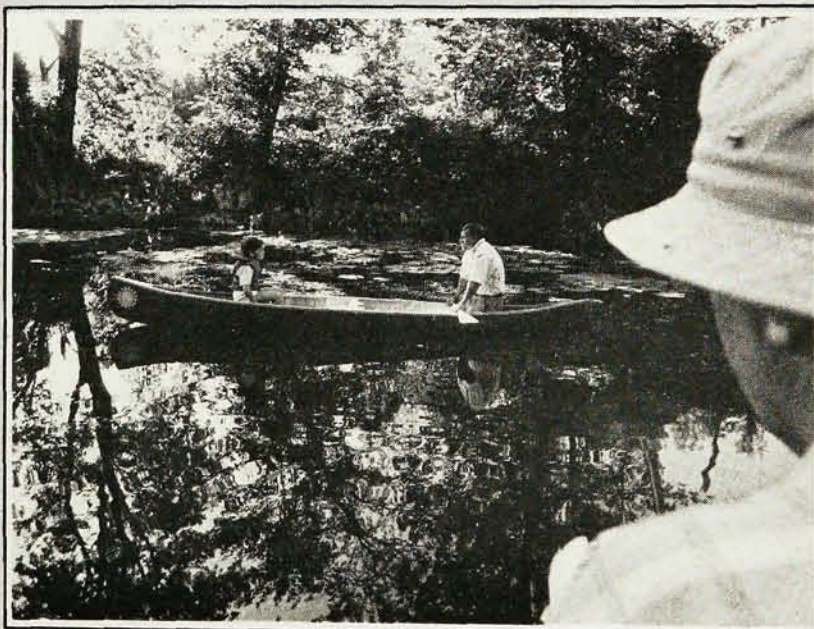
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**Malo and MGM/UA  
into video distrib deal**

MONTREAL - René Malo, president of Les Films René Malo and René Malo Vidéo, has announced that he will be distributing in Quebec a new exclusive collection of videotapes for MGM/UA.

Malo will be distributing 220 of MGM/UA and Cannon's latest films, as well as some yet-to-be released features. Distribution will be in French dubbed versions and will begin in October at a rate of approximately eight titles per month.

Some of the films Malo will be distributing are *2001 L'Odyssée de l'espace*, *2010, L'Année du premier contact*, *Mrs Soffel*, *Midnight Cowboy* and *True Confessions*.