

Bernard Ostry comes to defence of public broadcasting and CBC

TORONTO — In a well-timed defence of public broadcasting, TVOntario chairman and chief executive officer Bernard Ostry has urged the government of Ontario to reverse the attack on public broadcasting sweeping the technically advanced democracies.

Speaking April 10 to the Association of Cultural Executives, a 200-member national association of cultural organizations from symphony orchestras to film funding agencies, Ostry pointed to the "surge of radicalism in search of freer markets" as a result of which "public broadcasting like most forms of public investment for social goods is being criticized, more often attacked, starved for funds, threatened with extinction, sold off.

"This is bad news," Ostry said, "because public broadcasting in any country takes years to develop and bring to fruition," and if it is killed off "may never recover."

Surveying the precarious state of public television networks in the U.S., Britain, in continental Europe, and in Canada, Ostry said that with the disappearance of public broadcasting, audiences lose freedom of choice. "Without it they no longer have any possibility of choosing between broadcasting that treats them mainly as markets and broadcasting that respects them mainly as viewers."

In the U.S. — Ostry cited Annenberg School of Communication dean George Grebner's view that "Television is the new state religion run by a private Ministry of Culture (the three U.S. networks)" — Washington is planning to phase out federal funding for PBS. In Britain, "public broadcasting is sharing in the general opprobrium of all government enterprise except military ones." Similar trends away from public broadcasting, Ostry continued, may be seen in continental Europe "as cables are installed and satellite technology, distributing mostly U.S. products, obliterates frontiers."

In Canada, we find our national institution, the long established CBC, in danger of deterioration and possible collapse, unable to carry out its mandate."

"Make no mistake," Ostry warned, "if the CBC is allowed to die, the whole system of public broadcasting, the principle itself, is fatally compromised."

However, in the second half of his address, Ostry was able to "drop the mask of Cassandra and become the messenger of spring" with "the good news"

that "at TVOntario the principle of broadcasting for viewers and learners is alive and well."

As public broadcasters and an integral part of the public education system serving Ontario, TVO distinguishes itself "from most other broadcasting enterprises which are networks for consumers." Admitting to "a bias in favour of public broadcasting" Ostry observed that did not mean he had a bias against broadcasting by the private sector: "Canadian have always welcomed the private broadcasters. However, the current North American and European animus against public broadcasting destroys a hard-won balance."

Reviewing some of TVO's achievements, Ostry noted it was "the second or third largest network in Canada depending on how you calculate size," that TVO programs and learning materials were used in more than 90% of Ontario elementary and secondary schools, that it was the largest producer/distributor in the U.S. instructional television market, and that TVO productions are used not only across Canada and in the U.S. but in 40 other countries and in six languages.

Looking ahead to TVO's commitment to French-language equality in Ontario, and recent involvement in international coproductions such as *Alvin Toffler's 3rd Wave*, Ostry said "It is fair to say that TVO has become a cultural symbol, standing for what is excellent and distinctive in our country."

However, TVO's successes had raised "the danger of expanding expectations." A 9% increase in viewers in the last year alone had expanded TVO's audience to 2.75 million weekly. The danger, said Ostry, was "that expectations will grow more rapidly than funding."

"I believe that the best protection a public educational broadcasting system can have is stout financial support by the province."

TVOntario has proven that "we are capable of bringing pu-

TORONTO — Pat Clancy, a graduate student in his final year at Centennial College's Broadcast and Film Program, has been chosen the winner of this year's City of Toronto Apprenticeship Screen Award. The program, first begun in 1984 to commemorate Toronto's sesquicentennial, is funded by the city to \$4,000 to provide an outstanding, aspiring filmmaker with 16 weeks of hands-on production experience during the summer.

blic television to its full potential. Here, in Ontario, we have the talent.

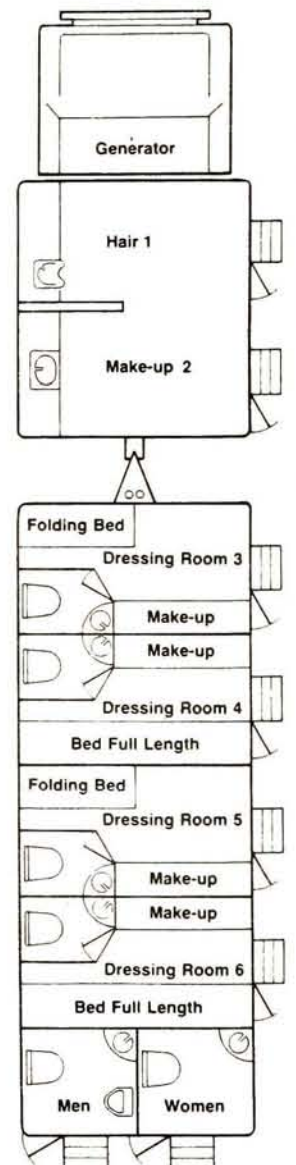
"We also have a new government which with a little en-

couragement, could stand alone in the free world in its commitment to public broadcasting. In no other country or jurisdiction within our group of

nations can that be said," Ostry concluded, hoping that "The happy ending could be that we also have the financial resources."

WHO STARTED THESE RUMORS?

- The word on the grapevine is that 3 full-sized motion picture dressing room trucks have come up from L.A. and are permanently based in Eastern Canada.
- We've heard they have their own generators, make-up and hair rooms, actors' rooms with beds, air-conditioning, gas heaters, personal make-up stations, and crew washrooms.
- They say four CANADIAN driver-operators have been trained to operate these rigs and the producers and production managers are very happy with their performance.
- And you can save a bundle of cash with these production trucks. Imagine one driver-operator works a vehicle with 6 rooms. We even heard that all jobs are worked on a flat rate.



Who started these rumors? We did:



Los Angeles
Montreal

Ken Rich
1445 Bishop No. 12
Montreal H3G 2E4
(514) 843-3745
(514) 288-3585