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FRONTS WEST

by Kathryn Allison

Chris Bruyere, the newly elected President of the British Columbia Film and Video Association (BCFIA), attended the CBC regional producers meeting (held in Winnipeg on January 29) as a representative of the BC sector of the new Western coalition of independent producers' organizations. ACRIMPIA (Alliance of Canadian Regional Motion Picture Industries Association).

Also attending from Vancouver were Wayne Sterloff (Telefilm) and Ron Devion, Director of Television (Vancouver plant). ACRIMPIA reps had been invited to participate in one day of talks concerning the failure of Telefilm money to filter down to independent regional producers through the CBC.

While the meeting was non-confrontational, the basic centralist philosophy of both Telefilm and the CBC was seen as the major problem facing independent regional producers. Before the meeting, CBC people handed out their in-house document on Telefilm project guidelines which, Bruyere reports, were then openly discussed by ACRIMPIA reps.

"What it boiled down to was that the network comes first at the CBC, and that there's no room for feature production in the CBC's regional plants," commented Bruyere.

One note in the section on Development illuminated the state of regional decision-making: "If it appears that a project may be of such large scale that it may require more than \$500 development, this must be approved by Brian O'Leary (Network Director of Television)." ACRIMPIA reps politely suggested that regional decision-making over the \$500 mark would be a worthy goal for the Corporation. They also suggested that it would be more equitable for the regions if the network expanded its interest in regional dramas to formats longer than one hour.

The Telefilm Feature Film fund was described as having too rigid a mandate, which contributed to its underutilization by regional producers and the subsequent millions of dollars leftover at the end of the 1986 funding year. ACRIMPIA reps would like to see a portion of that leftover money earmarked for the regions and more co-operation between CBC and Telefilm to pump up regional production.

While CBC regional directors have a directive from

Juneau to listen, take notes and consider the independence suggestions, Bruyere hedged when asked if the ACRIMPIA reps were hopeful or dejected after the meeting. "I feel that it was an initial discussion, and can't really say what I think will happen until the next meeting sometime in March, and after Flora MacDonald's Feb. 13 announcement on the use of Telefilm's \$25 million. Certainly some members of our coalition are more optimistic than others."

Happily, Bruyere's feature **Shelley**, whose sale to the Vancouver region of the CBC had been stalled over a low CBC offer and the corporation's inclination to cut it into three parts, ended happily early in February when it was sold intact for the **Lies from Lotus Land** series for a better price. It will air March 28 in the region. With a sale to Global completed, Bruyere now faces selling it to Superchannel/First Choice in the midst of the CBC-Pay TV battle. (Apparently, Superchannel/First Choice won't buy anything that's had a first run on CBC citing bad experiences with a couple of recent projects out of Alberta.)

When he's not out lobbying, Bruyere is busy writing — he just finished his second draft of **Cinderella Ballerina**, his forthcoming feature which got Superchannel development money. He's waiting to hear from one of the two BC distributors he's pitched it to, and says that if one responds quickly, he could be shooting the feature in April or May. He also has finished an action feature that will be shot in Saskatchewan and BC this summer. It is being developed by Jonathon Prangle's company, Man Tracks, which has got several projects on the go, including a teen comedy feature being scripted by Phil Savath.

Another Superchannel/First Choice development fund recipient is Peg Campbell, who is in the treatment stage on a feature which she describes as "a conceptual murder mystery about a single mother private eye who investigates the death of a relationship." She and co-producer Peggy Thompson have three other writers working on the script with them: Peter Eliot Weiss, Banuta Rubess and Raymond Dang. They plan to workshop it in Vancouver and Toronto this spring.

Congratulations to the BC Genie nominees — Peg Campbell's **It's a Party** and Wendy Tilby's **Tables of Con-**

tent; as well, three out of the total of five nominated documentaries are from BC — Steve de Nure's **Ranch — the Alan Woods Ranch Project**, Kirk Tougas' **Return to Departure**, and Chris Bruyere's **Dads and Kids**. As well, Michael Conway Baker's score for **John and the Missus** was nominated, and Vancouver's Winston Rekert got nominated for best actor in a leading role for **The Blue Man**.

According to Cari Green, Director of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution West the two hottest sellers these days are de Nure's **Ranch** and Tilby's **Tables of Content**. 1986 was a good year for the CFDW, with total sales this year coming in at \$82,595.00.

She says that the CFDW has had increasing success with the television market, and reports not only an increase in U.S. buys (through their U.S. distributor Coe Film Associates in New York), but an increase in buying by local broadcasters and the CBC network (thanks to continuing interest by Rena Krawagna at the corporation).

Green, who has been working closely with Tom Howe in co-distributing a series called **North American Indian Portraits**, is going to Saskatchewan Film Week (March 9-16) where she and Howe will give workshops on their joint work on the native series, as well as outline access to markets for new independent productions.

Green will also go to Regina and work with the Saskatchewan Film Pool to introduce them to potential buyers and illustrate how the CFDW has been expanding into the educational and television markets. She recently completed similar work with the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op, and picked up two films from there — Linda Joy-Busby's **Linda Joy** and Heather MacLead's **World In Edgewise**.

In June she will be leaving her post at the CFDW and plans to work in the private sector.

Tom Howe is no longer the only Vancouver distributor now that Marilyn Cole is up and running with MCM, but he is certainly the fastest moving one. He's been expanding into production financing as well as hitting all the major markets in the States. Apparently response to his wares was very positive at the NATPE market in New Orleans, with some serious nibbles at the **Breakaway** series pilot produced by Terry David Mulligan and David Foster's company, Fame.

Now Howe is getting ready for the American Film Market (AFM) to which he is taking five feature projects, including David Winning's latest script **Flash Frame**, Vic Nicollet's

cont. on p. 52

→ **First Seasons.** Marv Newland's **Tunes Times Nine**, and two from Petra – **Visa** and **Matinee Massacre**.

Tom Lightburn (formerly with Norstar and Cineplex Odeon) is joining Howe at the AFM to work on those projects. The two have been talking about doing business together for some time but this will be their first real whack at pooling their skills and making some deals. Howe has also invited old pal Melanie Friesen (former head of creative development at MGM/UA's London office) to the market to assist him in developing film projects and to identify feature material to distribute in Canada.

Booths for five Canadian distributors at the market were organized by Telefilm – two of them will be from Vancouver.

Diane Neufeld and Brent Clackson (BC Film Commission) will attend the "Locations Expo" part of the AFM. They put on their carnival barker hats with other Film Commissioners peddling their wares to the producers who stroll in and out of the Market.

She and Clackson will also participate in the "Producers Breakfast" which was initiated three years ago by IATSE 891's boy wonder business manager George Chapman. The breakfast information meeting, held during the market week (March 3 this year), draws 50 to 100 producers who get specific questions answered about shooting in BC. The result of this one is expected to be consistent with the past two years – four to six productions (producers?) in the bag.

Barbara Janes, the new Director of the Vancouver branch of the NFB, reports that they are well underway with two short dramas. The Vancouver plant produced its first drama last year (**Differences**) and is continuing the new foray into drama with Peg Campbell's \$200,000 **Nuclear Fear** film which shoots this March. Peggy Thompson was supervising writer, with co-writers Raymond Dang and Banuta Rubess. Jennifer Torrence is the producer. It will be included as part of a series called **Home Movies**, for kids between 11 and 13. Aside from **Differences** and **Nuclear Fear**, all the other segments are from Ontario.

The first of a series of teenage dramas is in the first draft stage for the Board. Annie O'Donoghue will direct the 20-minute drama on teenage pregnancy which is being scripted by Tricia Finn. Script consultant is Sandy Wilson.

Shooting will take place in May and June.

Bill Maylone is directing a series of six eight-minute films for kindergarten-age children which is aimed at "reaffirming scientific curiosity in kids." George Johnson is producing those. Haida Paul finished shooting a half-hour documentary on PMS, which she directed and will edit. Before that she had co-directed another documentary on menopause.

Moira Simpson will direct a new program of sex education films for kids in Grades 5-6, which will follow-up the popular **Feeling Yes, Feeling No** series.

The Pacific Cinémathèque and Praxis are co-hosting a screenwriters' workshop in late February, with public lectures to be given by Kit Carson (**Paris, Texas**), Stewart Kaminsky, Sharon Riis (**Loyalties**) and Joan Micklin Silver

(**Chilly Scenes of Winter**). As well, there will be a practical seminar for selected screenwriters to work on specific scripts.

Patrick Ramsay of Marathon Productions Inc. is pushing the sound end of his business with the help of a time-code NAGRA tape recorder. According to Ramsay, people are more aware of the type of audio quality they can get these days, with TV series like **Danger Bay** being done in

stereo, and the advent of digital audio. The problem is that the new technology baffles a lot of people who are reticent about jumping in and spending a lot of money learning the ropes. Ramsay says his time-code NAGRA is the highest quality portable production tape recorder available, and he's used it on several videos already with superb results. He plans to get into more audio production of rock videos on the Coast.

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