

# Télé Quatre Saisons takes stock after rocky start

MONTREAL – Engineering and administrative problems aside, Quebec's newest television network, Television Quatre Saisons, now proposes to take a hard look at its programming.

Adrien Pouliot, vice-president and general manager of CFCF Inc., majority owners of TQS, says looking back on the first six months of network operation (on air, Sept. 6) is not a painful experience, regardless of what the industry doomsayers say.

He contends that on-air technical difficulties and the departure of several senior employees – namely Réal Barnabé, vice-president of news; program directors Madeleine Careau and Lise Either; anchorman Stéphane Boisjoly and, most recently, Guy Fournier, vice-president of programming – are the growing pains expected of a network in its infancy.

Also expected, he says, is the financial loss incurred during the first year of operation. Although he refuses to give details of TQS financial status, a CFCF quarterly report for the first three months ending Nov. 30, 1986 shows a TQS deficit of \$3 million after revenues of

\$5.3 million, costs of \$10.6 million and future tax credits of \$2.3 million.

Pouliot denies reports that the annual deficit will exceed a projected \$8 million and reach \$12 million.

"This rumour was started by a disgruntled former employee," says Pouliot, explaining that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission granted a broadcasting license on the basis that TQS, with the support of CFCF, could absorb start-up losses.

"We can absorb the financial losses and it is our intention to nurse this baby until it walks and runs. So the question is not is TQS going to stay on the air, rather, the question should be how fast is TQS going to become number one," says Pouliot.

According to the latest (March 5) Bureau of Broadcast Measurement release, the rating average for CFJP-35 (TQS) in the Montreal French-language market is seven per cent, well behind CFTM-10 (Télé-Métropole) with 34 per cent, CBFT-2 (Radio-Canada) with a 32 per cent average and Radio-Québec with 8 per cent.

An 11 per cent year-end market share projected by TQS for the CRTC (and thus for the advertisers) is a "conservative figure," says Pouliot. Cautiously he adds that "Global TV came in (1972) with 3 per cent."

TQS has dropped its advertising rates since September but rates in the French-language market are down right across the board, says Pouliot.

"We are following the market."

Now that engineering and administrative problems have been settled, Pouliot says, TQS will concentrate on increasing the quality of its programming. The original "revolutionary" programming orientation, espoused by Guy Fournier, former vice-president of programming prior to leaving TQS on "amicable terms," remains intact, but the ratings have resulted in shifts and cancellations.

Close to 60 per cent of the production budget goes to independent producers and approximately 50 per cent of program hours per week is live-television.

Pouliot says that the first rule in revolutionizing the look

of network television (in an effort to adapt to changing viewer habits with the advent of pay-TV and VCR) is to develop a sense of achievement and self-confidence among the employees behind the scenes.

He says, TQS news is a good example of what a reorganized department (following the dismissal of Barnabé and the hiring of Jean Rivard from the CFCF Pulse newsroom) can do.

"He (Rivard) has the experience to get the new staff to do what it does best without getting caught in equipment and assignment problems."

The news remains predominantly local with a human interest angle but camera (carrying)-reporters, an idea borrowed from CITY-TV, are used less frequently as reporters found it difficult to handle both jobs in busy and crowded situations.

Though not new or revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination, the late night erotic movies, once weekly, do appeal to a certain market, says Pouliot.

He rejects any suggestion that *Cinéma Bleu Nuit*, scheduled for three consecu-

tive Saturday nights in March, is a desperate grasp by TQS at higher ratings." We have scheduled only three movies at this point in time. They are not cheap films. They have been successful in international distribution and they are not pornography."

Pouliot adds, however, that he would not want the *Emmanuelle* series to effect the general perception of TQS.

"We will try it and see what happens," says Pouliot. And so it goes with TQS.

## Fest on art

MONTREAL – The 5th Festival international du film sur l'art will be held at la Cinémathèque Québécoise in Montreal, March 24-29.

International film and video entries on a variety of art forms will be shown in five sections.

The opening night program entitled *Colour and Contrast* will include two animated films *A Little Phantasy on a 19th-Century Painting* (Canada), a tribute to Norman McLaren; *Un tragédie grecque* (Belgium) and a feature by Didier Baussy (France) entitled *Picasso*.

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