

Interim support for TV Canada

OTTAWA — Support for TV Canada and an immediate amendment to the broadcasting act to give the federal government power to issue policy direction to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) have been recommended in an interim report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

May 6 is the new date for a final report by the committee on legislative recommendations in the Caplan-Sauvageau report on broadcasting policy.

In the interim report, the committee asks Communications Minister Flora MacDonald to develop a proposal for TV Canada, a French and English nonprofit Canadian satellite television channel which will include Canadian programming exclusively.

Meanwhile, the CRTC had set an April 30 application deadline for specialty services. Following consultation with the standing committee, the original deadline of Oct. 24 has been pushed ahead twice by the CRTC.

Also in the report, the committee has asked the CRTC to leave open the option of establishing the satellite service "in any licensing decision it may make as a result of receiving applications to establish specialty services."

In a series of recommendations on specialty services policy, the committee approves case by case consideration of applications from Canadian specialty services on basic cable but opposes the carriage of non-Canadian services which would compete directly with Canadian specialty channels.

Immediate legislation, prior to a complete overhaul of the broadcasting act, would give the federal government power to issue policy direction to the CRTC. This power would be subject to a series of conditions including provisions for public comments before government directives go into effect.

The CRTC has agreed with this recommendation in the past and has suggested that the power of appeal (of a CRTC decision to the federal cabinet) should also be an open process.

Pierre Pontbriand, director of information for CRTC, told *Cinema Canada* that the CRTC is prepared to accept a government decision on policy direction and an open appeal process.

"The CRTC has stated that it is in favour of these recommendations and that it can live with both."

However, with the April 30 deadline approaching, the CRTC has also advised that

these directives not be issued while CRTC proceedings are underway.

"If the government is considering issuing directives, it should be done before CRTC starts considering specific applications. This will not preempt issuing directives, it is only fair to the parties involved," explains Pontbriand.

The interim report was released April 15 by the committee following two and a half months of hearings on the legislative recommendations in the Caplan-Sauvageau report. A second phase of the review to examine the non-legislative findings in the report was also announced April 15.

The tabling of the interim report in the House of Commons was delayed on April 15 due to a filibuster on another unrelated issue in the House of Commons.

Flora MacDonald has asked for the full (final) report on legislative recommendation prior to the summer recess beginning in June. Legislation of a new broadcasting act is expected in the fall.

Regions encouraged by Telefilm and CBC

MONTREAL — Regional production was a hot issue when independent film and television producers met behind closed doors, April 9-10, with Telefilm officials to future-gaze and discuss the next five years of coexistence.

Billed as Independent Production and Broadcasting: The Next Five Years, this Telefilm-sponsored confab drew public and private broadcasters, producers, representatives of unions and government agencies, politicians and regulators into a round table discussion at the Le Chantecler hotel in St-Adèle, north of Montreal.

The guest list was limited and the press uninvited in order to facilitate "open and honest discussion," according to a Telefilm spokesperson.

However, observers say discussion ranged from Telefilm funding disparities between Montreal/Toronto and the rest of Canada; a consensus that a capital cost allowance for film be maintained in upcoming federal tax reform legislation,

and ways and means to raise broadcast licensing fees.

Among higher profile guests at various round table discussion sessions were Pierre Juneau, president of the CBC-SRC; André Bureau, chairman of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission; Flora MacDonald, federal minister of Communications and Jim Edwards, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

Although the Chantecler conference did not yield any formal resolutions, Flora MacDonald did reiterate that the Broadcast Fund would be administered on a permanent basis.

CBC representatives, with the support of Telefilm, entered into the first phases of a production agreement with regional independent producers.

According to Brian O'Leary, director of regional programming, English television at CBC, details are sketchy. However, at press time, O'Leary told *Cinema Canada* that the "piddly little pot that CBC once had to work with in the regions," has expanded as a result of pressure from independent producers and Telefilm.

"Based on our own feelings that not enough was being done in the regions, we all had a meeting and worked out a ground plan together," explains O'Leary.

This ground plan, calls for a 26-part thematic drama series. 13 parts will be produced independently and 13 parts will be produced in-house by CBC in 1988-1989 and again during the following year.

"The independent producers will end up with 26 of their own programs which hopefully can be marketed elsewhere," says O'Leary.

The details concerning themes, script writing, who triggers the money, and who receives it have yet to be determined. CBC has approved of the project with an increase in the CBC budget for regional independent production of half-hour dramas to \$1.2 million in 1988-1989 plus a current \$650,000 for development and Telefilm has guaranteed 49 per cent participation.

"There is a lot to work with but little time to get it going," says O'Leary, who hopes to work out a process by the end of April.

Alliance/Cooper merge

TORONTO — In a Canadian version of 'the strong just get stronger', film and television giant Alliance Entertainment Corporation has joined forces with Los Angeles-based Robert Cooper Productions.

The two companies have agreed in principle to merge with the new venture operating under the banner of Alliance Entertainment Corporation.

Stephen Roth, former Alliance president, is chairman of the new firm with David Ginsburg, the former president of Robert Cooper Productions, stepping in as Alliance president.

Alliance, a Canadian production house with more than \$110 million in film and television shows in 21 months of operation, has joined with a Canadian company that has penetrated the U.S. film and television market.

Alliance spokesmen at a recent Toronto press conference stressed their commitment to remaining Canadian-based.

Robert Lantos, a principal owner of the new firm, said the merger is a major step towards achieving the goal of growing into a fully developed film and television company.

"We remain committed to our Canadian roots and intend to stem and reverse the long-standing tradition in the Canadian entertainment business of fleeing south at the first flash of success in the pursuit of greater opportunity," Lantos said.

"We're exporters and we're committed to staying exporters and not becoming émigrés," Lantos told reporters.

Robert Cooper said negotiations for a merger have been going on for a long time. He said the two companies have merged from a position of strength and not a position of weakness.

"You don't merge because of a restricted view of the past, but a clear vision of the future."

Robert Cooper has produced or co-produced four films for HBO including *The Terry Fox Story*, *Between Friends*, *The Guardians* and *Florida Straits*.

He also produced the 1985 television movie *Murder in Space* for Showtime and *First Choice* and in 1986 *Vanishing Act* for CBS and CTV. He is currently co-producing the *Adderly* adventure series that

cont. on p. 41

Contagion feared by Valenti

WASHINGTON — American movie industry attempts to stop a government plan to open up foreign movie distribution in Canada have run up against a head strong federal communications minister.

Despite protest from Jack Valenti, Hollywood's chief lobbyist and director of the Motion Picture Association of America, federal communications minister Flora MacDonald was not swayed, a spokesperson for the MPAA said.

Valenti and MacDonald discussed the issue at a meeting in Ottawa, April 21, said Barbara Dixon, a MPAA vice-president of public relations. The MPAA represents the major Hollywood distributors.

"She was very courteous to listen to our views but I don't think (she) gave us much indication that she was willing to move very far on the issue," Dixon said in a telephone interview from Washington.

Jeremy Kinsman, deputy minister of cultural affairs in the department of Communications referred to the meeting as "positive." He explained that both sides are aware that the proposed legislation, in effect, codifies U.S. film distribution rights to 85 per cent of the Canadian market and that Valenti cannot argue with that.

"No other country in the world is in our position," Kinsman told *Cinema Canada*. "Valenti has not found a way to address Canada's specific interests in film distribution and neither have we found a way to address their specific interests."

He said the distribution proposal will go to legislation intact as outlined in February.

The MPAA is opposed to proposed legislation that will set up a film import licensing system in Canada for the first time.

The film import licensing cont'd to p. 57