

Porn bill to die of disinterest?

OTTAWA — Bill C-54, the highly controversial anti-pornography legislation, could "die on the order table" this fall, according to informed sources in Ottawa, if a new session of Parliament is opened in October.

Nancy Waugh, executive assistant to Communications critic Sheila Finestone (Lib.-Mount Royal) told *Cinema Canada* that the House of Commons may prorogue, in September, upon returning from the summer recess.

A new session of Parliament could mean, says Waugh, that many pieces of legislation, including Bill C-54, are dropped or assigned a new number and given the same status in the legislature with an all-party agreement.

When the House prorogued in July 1986, not all pieces of legislation died. An all-party agreement kept alive legislation such as Bill C-95 (Archives) by assigning a new number. Less fortunate was the last anti-pornography legislation, Bill C-114, which did not make it through three readings. To prorogue the House is a convenient way of dropping unwanted legislation, says Waugh.

She says strong opposition to C-54 by a large faction of the artistic community, women's groups and a groundswell of concerned citizens has weakened government resolve to give the bill a second reading.

"We have been hearing from people in the arts community that the bill is not a priority be-

cause of the negative reaction. They have been told the bill is going to be left to die," says Waugh.

Opponents of Bill C-54 claim that this legislation is too prohibitive and has gone too far in outlawing any depiction of heterosexual intercourse between consenting adults without regard for artistic merit. Within the legislation's definition of erotica, depictions of nudity would also be outlawed. Depicting basic nudity would become as much of a crime, says Waugh, as depicting the sexual exploitation of children.

"We have written a letter to the arts community informing them that this legislation has failed to come up with an acceptable balance which pro-

tests the community from obscenity while at the same time recognizing that adult Canadians expect their government and police to treat them like adults," says Waugh.

In May, François Macerola, government film commissioner and chairman of the National Film Board, clearly stated his opposition to Bill C-54 while appearing before the Parliamen-

tary Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. Under this legislation, the award-winning *Not a Love Story* and *The Decline of the American Empire* would not have been made. The NFB has also made its views known to the justice department, which is responsible for the legislation.

Baton buys into Ottawa TV market

TORONTO — Baton Broadcasting Inc. has bought Ottawa television station CJOH-TV for \$85 million in a move that further strengthens the CTV network's strongest component.

Baton, owners of CTV flagship station CFTO-TV in Toronto, bought CTV's Ottawa affiliate from Standard Broadcasting Corporation Limited.

Baton has also dropped its recently awarded license to operate a new independent English language television station in Ottawa.

At the same time, Standard and Baton both said they will withdraw any "current objections" to the licensing of a new English language station in Ottawa.

Douglas Bassett, president of Baton Broadcasting, said he wouldn't oppose someone else starting an independent station in Ottawa adding that "competition breeds success."

The federal cabinet earlier asked the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to review its approval of Baton's ownership of the new independent Ottawa station. Standard president Allan Slaight objected to Baton's ownership of an independent station that would be directly competing with CTV affiliate CJOH-TV.

The \$85 million CJOH-TV price tag also includes the purchase of Carleton Productions Ltd., a CJOH-TV subsidiary that includes a modern mobile production unit.

The sale of CJOH-TV to Baton must be approved by the CRTC. At press time, the com-

mission was waiting for Baton's CJOH application and had yet to set a hearing date.

Asked about the \$85 million price tag for CJOH-TV and Carleton Productions, Bassett simply said, "It's a fair deal for everybody."

Bassett told *Cinema Canada* he must show the federal broadcast regulator at the public hearing that the sale will bring "clear and unequivocal benefits to the Canadian broadcasting system" and the private broadcasting system.

He explained that the station, like other CTV affiliates, doesn't own or program all its air time. "So I have no control over what CTV sends down the line for

their own programming."

But Bassett said the station has strong local programming and promised that it will have even stronger local programming.

"Every year CJOH has stronger local programming so I'm not going to ruin that trait or thrust."

Baton, in its application to run the independent Ottawa television station, promised to spend \$31 million on Canadian productions over five years with a minimum of \$5.6 million in the first year.

A separate hearing will be held late this year or early in 1988 to consider a license renewal for CJOH-TV.

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