

Distribution Fund ready in November

TORONTO - November 1 is the date Telefilm Canada has set to introduce its new Film Distribution Fund. The Fund was announced by the Minister of Communications, Flora MacDonald, as part of a larger package of financial assistance to the industry, in May of this year.

According to a draft of the memorandum of understanding between Communications Canada and Telefilm Canada received by *Cinema Canada*, the fund will provide an annual predetermined line of credit, which will be made available to eligible Canadian feature film distribution companies. This recoverable line of credit will assist those companies in the acquisition of Canadian and foreign rights to Canadian feature films, augment risk capital, and assist in the domestic marketing and promotion of Canadian productions.

Telefilm will advance monies for assistance in acquiring Canadian and foreign rights to Canadian films on a sliding scale, depending on the number of Canadian content points the film has - 75 per cent for films with eight out of 10 points, which have been produced with the financial participation of Telefilm or other federal or provincial agencies, 60 per cent for films with eight out of 10 points, but which are produced without the participation of Telefilm or other government agencies, and 50 per cent for those films that only have six or seven Canadian content points.

There are stringent rules for eligibility for support through the Fund, including the stipulation that the applicant must have at least 24 months of recognized experience as a theatrical distributor, must have theatrically distributed directly a least 12 eligible pictures in Canada in the 24 months immediately preceding the application, and that at least two of the 12 eligible pictures must be certified Canadian productions. Sources within the ministry put the number of eligible distributors in this country at 14.

Some distributors are saying the Fund, while a temporary financial boost, is little compensation for the minister's failure to take tougher legislative action against the American domination of Canada's film market. Trudy Grant, president of Sullivan Films, told *Cinema Canada*, "It's a closed-door situation for someone like myself who's developed a company and who would like to get more into theatrical distribution. From what I understand, people like myself won't even get into the fund even though I have distributed a picture theatrically in parts of Canada and I've also distributed internationally. My feeling is that it is a sop to the industry because the Film Importation Bill

was watered down substantially."

On the other hand, others within the industry speculate that the federal government, in its desire to have a Free Trade Agreement acceptable to the Americans, has abandoned the industry in favour of protecting more artistic cultural interests. They see it as a fundamental shift in policy to re-emphasize the cultural component at the expense of the commercial interests.

Peter Mortimer, executive vice-president of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, puts it this way, "The amount that the distribution companies get varies by the amount of points that the film achieves and it is weighed heavily in favour of those with a higher number of Canadian content points. There's a bit of a contradiction in terms of supporting the market end of the industry in distributing the less commercial films."

Peter Simpson of Norstar Entertainment puts it more bluntly. "The more commercial the picture is, the less access you have to the fund. Telefilm, in the name of all good things cultural, can rationalize their involvement. However, Norstar, as a distributor which has handled more Canadian films than most other companies, has taken financial beatings preaching the gospel according to *John And The Missus*. I can't make money on those films."

However, Barry Young of SpectraFilm sees the fund as having a positive effect on the business of distributing films in Canada. "The important thing from a distributor's point of view is that the government is finally recognizing that there is a need to support Canadian production. It's a start. How much help it's going to be will only be known one or two years down the road."

Bishop flies for Baton

TORONTO - Baton Broadcasting has announced that it will produce a \$3 million feature on the life of Billy Bishop, the flying ace who won the Victoria Cross for his daring raid on a German aerodrome in the First World War.

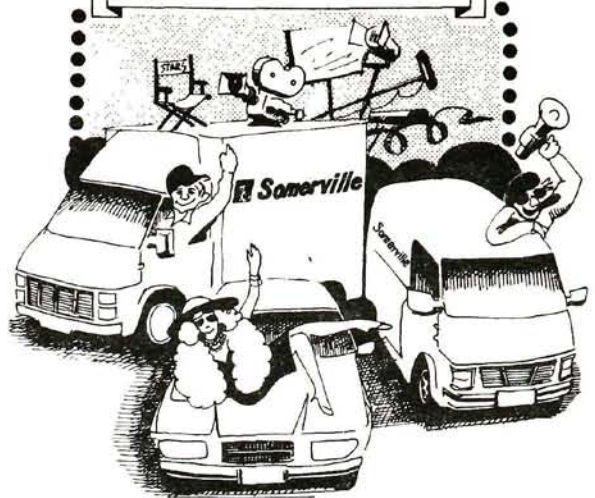
Baton said *The Courage of Early Morning* is expected to be shown on CTV in the fall of 1990 and is based on a book by Bishop's son, Arthur Bishop. A 1983 NFB film, *The Kid Who Couldn't Miss*, angered many war veterans who believed it slandered Bishop by implying that he faked the raid.

Last year, the film board announced plans to make another Bishop film but it has since decided the new film will concentrate more generally on Canada's role in aviation during World War I and will be called *Aces*.

TORONTO - Ted Riley, president of Atlantis Releasing with offices in Holland and England has been appointed European representative for WTTW Chicago.

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