

EDITORIAL

Of Financing and Freedom

"It's a question of information. If we lose control of our sources in this country, we've lost ourselves."

— Graham Spry
Saturday Night
November 1976

The international moneymen have arrived on the Canadian scene. They will finance a picture, provide top actors and directors, hire enough Canadian technicians to qualify, and guarantee a film 100% Canadian-pure. Look at Sophia Loren's *Angela*, directed by Boris Sagal, presently shooting in Montreal. It was the PR men in Los Angeles who wanted to hold the press conference at the Ritz!

It is becoming increasingly difficult to call things by their names, to identify where the money and influences are coming from, and what they mean or will mean in the long run for Canadian cinema. For the time being, certainly the more films which are made in Canada, the better things will be for the technicians who work and learn, and the stronger the industry will become. Given, of course, that the new interest and activity of the moneymen does not diminish the chances for Canadians to conceive and realize their own projects.

The arrival of the moneymen on the production scene is paralleled by their arrival on the film publication scene. Feeling the need for a publication which will serve their interests and "reflect the industry as it actually is," they have made their move. In December, the first issue of the revived *Canadian Film Digest* will be published. To quote Millard Roth, executive director of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors' Association, "We're going to take another determined crack at it." Though the *Digest* has always floundered and closed because of lack of support and interest, the CMPDA, the representatives of the American 'majors', have met with Nat Taylor, publisher of the *Digest*, and given him their backing.

Over the past year, *Cinema Canada* has been "monitored" by the CMPDA, according to Mr. Roth. As it was decided that its editors would not be susceptible to influences which would make the members of the CMPDA happy, the CMPDA did not mention the eventuality of a 'trade magazine'. In what one can only interpret as desperation, *Motion* magazine was approached and had begun to prepare a presentation when Taylor announced his availability and won the CMPDA's affections, hands down.

Now, there are only two questions of any importance: money and reliability of content. Heaven knows, there's enough fuel to fire 10 Canadian film magazines — if there were enough people out there to support them.

The *Digest* is starting off with a composer, a camera, and a full-time staff of four. With what money? This is like giving a film crew all the hardware and hoping that it can meet the lab costs from the total receipts. Meanwhile, *Cinema Canada* gets by with a staff of one and a half and another deferred salary, never mind the equipment.

But the real problem is the content of *Cinema Canada* and the attitude of its editors. The real problem is that it can't be bought.

Although both the Tompkins Report and the Draft Film Policy came to the same conclusion, it didn't take these studies to indicate that distribution and exhibition are part and parcel of the problem of fostering healthy Canadian production. They are the areas where foreign interests make it difficult for Canadians to compete. Even when *Cinema Canada* covers the areas of distribution and exhibition, it is unlikely that the CMPDA will find that its interests are better served.

And this is the root of the problem. In order to continue, *Cinema Canada* must compete in an already saturated market. In reviving the *Digest*, the CMPDA was well aware that one possible consequence would be to siphon off advertising revenue from *Cinema Canada*, eventually forcing it to stop publication. (David Novek of the National Film Board has already informed *Cinema Canada* that the NFB will advertise in the *Digest* — and this despite the fact that he has always insisted that his advertising budget cannot be expanded, i.e., the monies will have to be withdrawn from current advertising.)

If the CMPDA, via the American 'majors', is willing to back the *Digest*, it is because there is a supposition that the *Digest* will serve its interests. It's called putting your money where your mouth is. In the old days, before the threat of legislation, it didn't really matter. Now it does, and the stakes are high.

Cinema Canada, on the other hand, will continue on its way, printing news which is real news, antagonizing Bill Marshall by not giving the Festival enough free publicity, and the Festivals Bureau by washing its dirty linen, and aggravating the CCFM because it is not radical enough, and aggravating the CMPDA because it allows Kirwan Cox to write in its columns, and researching and printing the Production Guide free because the Film Archives has neither the personnel nor the money to pay for it, and the Canadian Film Development Corp. cannot find it within its discretionary powers to aid with the production of such a guide.

The object of *Cinema Canada* is not to promote the film industry. It is to look at the industry, and the films themselves, with a critical eye, to comment and provoke comment, and to serve as a sort of catalyst which permits an industry to grow and change and discover itself. A Toronto distributor commented recently that in Quebec there was a culture of cinema whereas in Ontario, one simply went to the movies. Be that as it may, *Cinema Canada* willingly lends itself to the creation of a film culture in Canada.

We ask the renewed support of those readers who believe that an informed, objective magazine is worth the effort. Take a subscription. Give one away at Christmastime. Encourage advertising. And keep the faith.

Connie and Jean-Pierre Tadros