

POWER AND PARTICIPATION

Filmmakers are at a crossroads which can lead to much greater influence on government film policy at all levels if they take advantage of the mechanisms that exist for this purpose. Traditionally Canadians have been ignorant of the decision-making process being waged for their benefit in New York, Los Angeles, or London while what little was happening in this country was the game preserve of the privileged few, or 'les rois negres'.

When you don't know what is happening you can't influence it, change it, better it. Sometimes you don't know anything because the decision-makers prefer to work in olympian isolation of old school ties away from embarrassing and 'ill-informed' questions. Other times they seem to be left in isolation as a result of indifference by the rest of us.

The following information is printed to help people interested in the decisions being made in Ontario and Canada gain access to the decision-makers. At present there are two Ontario studies being conducted plus many changes in personnel at the Secretary of State's office in Ottawa, including the new Advisory Committee on film.

Ontario

The Select Committee on Economic and Cultural Nationalism has been meeting since the beginning of the year to receive testimony and briefs on all aspects of economic questions and very little in cultural problems, including film and television. The interim report mentions only education and publishing as possible cultural problems.

Remember that licensing theatres and distributors, tax, censorship, and quotas are a provincial responsibility. If you wish to make your views known, write to: Mr. J.A. Holtby, Select committee on Economic and Cultural Nationalism, Room 104, Main Parliament Bldg., Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario.

On a more informal and secretive level, the Ontario government's Minister of Industry and Tourism, John White, has set up a study group to look into all

aspects of provincial participation in film from taxes and censorship to film festivals and film schools. This film study group is one of ten similar groups studying things that even include Irish immigration. Among the ten members of the group headed by John F. Bassett, Jr., are Budge Crawley, Bennet Fode, Joan Fox, and Peter Rowe. Their recommendations will be made to Mr. Holland, Director of the Office of Standards, Design, and Innovation at the Ministry of Industry and Tourism. Unfortunately they have not solicited information from members of the film community beyond their circle, but I am sure that they will be happy to receive any concrete proposals on the role of the provincial government in film that you may have. Write to John F. Bassett Jr., c/o CFTO-TV, Box 9, Toronto 375, Ontario.

Ottawa

The Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Film is being formed and will presumably be charged with developing a long term cultural policy for the country. Its first members will set precedents for action or inaction that will be difficult to change later.

The committee will include the heads of the CBC, NFB, CFDC, Canada Council, and public archives. One can only hope that the five representatives from private industry are located with a minimum concern for geographical, sexual, or ethnic fairness and a great overriding concern for imagination and energy.

However, to please everybody the representatives would have to have the qualities of a mythic Canadian god. The ideal candidate would be an omniseual hermaphroditic (to satisfy obligations for sexual fairness) consulting lawyer/engineer owning a television-film production, distribution, exhibition company while living in both Vancouver and Halifax. He would be a French-Canadian of Indian-German-Greek-Italian-Irish-Scottish extraction under 35 with over-

tones of radical chic about his prematurely grey and conservative ideas. Oh yes, graduate studies abroad where he developed a trick knee playing hockey.

If this person cannot be found what lesser mortals will we have on the committee? Probably one woman, one television personality not working for the CBC, one person from big exhibition-distribution, one Quebecois from the established industry and one Quebecois from the alternative industry. This arrangement should not leave out unions, labs, producers, the West Coast, and, of course, filmmakers.

If you want to play the Advisory Committee sweepstakes, fill in five names that fit all the above (for example, Joyce Wieland, Patrick Watson, George Destounis, Rock Demers, Guy Bergeron) and send to the Under Secretary of State Jules Leger at 66 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario. If you win, you will probably have voted for the wrong people.

There have been a number of recent personnel changes in the Secretary of State's office involving film, such as Wendy Porteous' resignation as visual arts officer to take a management training course (following her report on distribution which was finished September 1). Danielle Sauvage has left as the Secretary of States' special assistant to take a research position with the CFDC and Andre Fortier has left to head the Canada Council.

I think the most important change is Robert Desjardin's appointment as director of the film section. This fills a hole that has existed for years. Desjardins is the penultimate Québec technocrat. He is 38 with a degree from the Université de Montréal in psychology and held the impressive sounding position with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec titled directeur-général de la création. Before that he worked in school and community services in the city of Vaudreuil, spent four years with Expo 67 as Pierre deBellefeuille's assistant, and has worked for the NFB and the Quebec cinema supervisory board.

Hopefully you will take advantage of this information to open up communication between the creators and implementors of government film policy and your ideas. If knowledge is power, then the ignorant man is too often being used by the knowledgeable for ends he may not agree with. If you have knowledge that you think should be shared, send it in. If you feel that you alone cannot really influence decisions in Ottawa or Toronto or elsewhere, form an interest group of like-minded people. It is true that there is strength in numbers.