

EDITORIAL

'Business as normal' is risky enough

The object of the exercise was to create a Canadian productions industry capable of building an infrastructure to sustain itself once the tax shelter encouragements were withdrawn. Obviously, Canadian film-businessmen would have to move into the mainstream of the international film community if they were to accomplish this.

Concurrently – and perhaps absurdly – the agency which was to foster this development has always been called a "cultural agency," and originated as a complement to the National Film Board. The Canadian Minister of Culture (a.k.a. the Secretary of State) was to oversee the growth of the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

Somewhere along the way the Minister of Finance was convinced that a 100% capital cost allowance would be just the thing to get the plan off the ground, and away we all went.

Today, nothing is working as planned, and the slow realization is dawning on everyone that neither the government, nor the banks and brokers, nor even the majority of the producers had a clear understanding of how that international film market worked.

For the moment, the cart is clearly before the horse, as Michel Roy explains in the following interview. Normally, you see if the product has the potential to sell, and then you make it. It's simple. But, because of Canada's income tax regulations, producers here must make the product first and then see if there are any buyers.

Unfortunately, in any given project which has been successfully sold to the public, it is the investor and not the producer who takes it on the nose, and that investor has been hit once too hard, at least for the present time.

We hear it over and over: "The brokers don't understand the film business, the bankers don't understand, the investors don't understand." The government is not behaving as if it fully understands either.

If the government wants a strong private sector, then it must encourage Canadians to do business as it is done in other filmmaking countries around the world. Why offer such a tempting capital cost allowance and then tie the producers' hands by refusing to let him make pre-sales? The federal approach, from a private enterprise point of view, is incoherent. No wonder the moneymen and investors can't quite get a handle on our industry.

One needn't work very hard to show that money remains "at risk" despite agreements made before a film is shot. After all, only three out of seven films make their money back anyway, regardless of pre-sales, and that would seem to be risk enough for any investor.

Unless the government eventually allows for the pre-sale of films without jeopardizing the capital cost allowance, one of two things will happen: either the producers will continue to lose their investors' cash on projects which have no future, or the present level of misinformation concerning pre-sales will continue, making a mockery of those income tax regulations.

If the government wants to free the producer from the tax shelter, then it must modify its attitude toward pre-sales and allow the producer to shoulder the risk of making a saleable film.

If, on the other hand, it wishes to foster cultural productions of national importance, then it must encourage the growth of a private sector which it is prepared to support with policies and financial measures.

The industry can indeed bounce back. Returns must flow to investors, and sales must be made to allow that to happen. Sales, in the film industry, begin before the camera starts to roll. The federal government must provide the leadership and, with clarity of vision, "orchestrate its policies" as André Lamy requested earlier this month.

The opportunities promised by program production for pay-television seem too good to be true, but if the inconsistencies are not sorted out quickly, they will be just one more opportunity lost.

The editors

LETTERS

An affair of the Hartt

At the age of sixteen I decided to become an artist in the medium of the motion picture. That was nineteen years ago. There were no schools to teach me what I wanted to learn and so I began a process of teaching myself.

I acquired copies of the great films (at

first by doing jobs like cutting chickens for Colonel Saunders) and then looked to the films to pay their own way. I also acquired books, records, posters & files.

I have now learned what I wanted to learn from this material and am preparing to move to the next phase of my life.

I am preparing to dispose of this material. I feel that it should be preserved for the future. Much of it is extremely

rare. I am looking for the right place for it.

This represents nearly twenty years of labour on my part. My goal was not so much to acquire the films as it was to learn from them. We learn through a process of repetition and assimilation so this will be a factor in the decision making process.

There will also be a financial factor to consider.

I am looking for a sincere appreciation of the love and labour that went into building up and maintaining this collection.

Such an attitude will, I am certain, go a long way to guarantee the collection a living and useful future.

I do not have an inventory but you are welcome to send someone to examine the material.

R.W. Hartt
Cineforum
Toronto

Hardly synonymous

Your reviewer, Lloyd Wasser, finishes his review of "You've Come a Long Way, Katie" by saying that the drama "is a fine example of just how far the Canadian film industry has come."

Unless Mr. Wasser considers film and television to be synonymous, it would have been more appropriate to say how far CBC television has come. All key people in that production work for CBC and have acquired their skills and expertise while working for the Corporation.

G. Desmond
Toronto

Bye bye beaver

I found copies of Cinema Canada in the public library in Metro and am moved enough to tell you how exciting your new design is. What a remarkable improvement from the old style which reminded me of Canadian Geographic or the Hudson Bay Beaver.

Cinema Canada has come up with a world class presentation, in my opinion. If only the producers can achieve the same high standard in movie production!

John Richmond
Upper Canada Scribble Works

A letter of resignation

The following letter, addressed to the National Executive, Directors Guild of Canada, was sent to Cinema Canada for publication.

The I.A.T.S.E. International President and General Executive Board determined at their March 5th, 1981 meeting that the D.G.C. is a rival union. That determination is only partially correct, as the D.G.C. is NOT a union! It means that no member of the I.A.T.S.E. in any category shall be allowed to remain a member and also hold membership in the D.G.C., as per International By-Law 15.

A close examination of the facts leads to the conclusion that the D.G.C. is a management dominated organization! Its attempt to masquerade as a trade or craft union in order to rationalize raiding the Art Department categories of Production Designer/Art Director and their assistants is more than ludicrous. This

attempt to mislead and manipulate your members will be exposed when the B.C. Labour Relations Board renders its decision shortly.

Having been a member of this organization since 1973, I have watched its mandate and egalitarian principles become subverted and warped by a series of executive boards dominated by management peons. I especially rue the lot of the Production Designers, Art Directors and assistants, 2nd and 3rd A.D.'s and Production Assistants whose total lack of a fair and just labour organization to represent their interests will continue, to keep them poorly paid and unhappy in their working conditions.

Please accept this as my resignation and utter withdrawal from your membership.

Spencer Hyde
(former D.G.C. member)

A fairy tale

Re: "Setting the Record Straight" and "straighter": A few comments to fairy-fy the record (it can't take much more straightening).

My heart went out to that poor Kastner fellow – having those nasties perpetrate a fraud like that on him! I mean here he is shining in his role as white knight to the gay community's beleaguered *princesse* and what happens? The damsel turns schizo: "Bless you, you saved me from the dragon!" she says and, in the next breath, "Butt out I was doing fine fighting the dragon," and then, "You are the dragon!" Why, you'd think he was rescuing a whole flock of individuals, each with a different mind – like real people. Of course he was, but you shouldn't get that impression. Things might have gone better if the community had understood its role as composite damsel.

In a business like this the white knight requires damsels who are 1) indiscriminately accepting of unsolicited rescue, 2) heart-redeeringly pitiable, and 3) showily grateful.

But, oh poor Johnny, he picked a proud ingrate. What could he do but wing it? So, holding one unsolicited hand over the damsel's discriminating mouth, he proceeded, eloquently, to invoke pity for her. She squirmed a bit when he described what a poor wretched craven little thing she was, but never mind, it worked. So successful was he that he reduced the dragon, by degrees, from tears to cheers to wild applause.

This is a feat unique in the annals of white knighthood – without ever releasing the damsel or disarming the dragon he performed his rescue. In such a case it is incumbent upon the princesse to be absolutely awed by his masterful technique and grovellingly grateful for the dragon's pity.

But, tacky dame, she's not too keen on pity and tends to dwell on the detail of not having been released. She's even been so brazen as to suggest that the whole act was for the dragon's benefit.

Under the circumstances one fears that Johnny will turn in his steed. Alas, I, for one, shall cry real tears. Dragon variety.

Merv Walker
Montreal