



SYDNEY NEWMAN

George Csaba Koller

GOVERNMENT FILM COMMISSIONER

Photo: Baltazar



The man on the cover of this issue readily confesses to a strong dislike of the factory-like appearance of Film Board headquarters, and his antipathy grows every morning as his chauffeur-driven auto approaches the building. But, as Canadian Government Film Commissioner and NFB Chairman, he is the undisputed king of this somewhat tattered castle, making a salary of \$42,000 per year, and rolling high after four years' reign.

The controversial impresario of Canadian cinema, flamboyant successor to the late John Grierson and subsequent NFB bosses, former student of Grierson's and self-professed saviour of BBC drama; this man who juggles a tea cup on his knee in Toronto for the press to show how he gets by with a tight budget and who tells a Vancouver journalist after a widely publicized 'censorship' affair, "Let them fire me, let them find another pro like me,"; this is the Sydney Newman who represents the Film Board toward government and the public and, in this capacity, recently told a group of MP's in Ottawa . . .

"Believe it or not, the National Film Board of Canada is 35 years old," began our Film Commissioner. "It is my aim that it will provide the necessary benefits to Canada of a social and interpretive nature for at least another 35 years." Mr. Sydney Newman was addressing the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts in Ottawa this past April. The Parliamentary group responsible for monetary allocations in the above categories quizzed the Chairman and his top department heads before recommending to the House of Commons that the NFB be granted its \$17 million outright, which is only part of the Board's \$31 million global expenditures in the current fiscal year.

Self expression is the cornerstone of self-determination which, in turn, is the basis of our Canadian sovereignty," continued the Film Commissioner, and then went on to detail all the recent, current and imminent accomplishments of our federal filmmaking body. "At the board we produce, distribute and research in every form of film activity from creation to technology, and we disseminate our knowledge and experience widely." He characterized staff morale at the Board as "satisfactory to high," and recognized the need for increased participation of the creative staff in management decisions.

The regionalization program was touched upon briefly, even though it's open knowledge that Mr. Newman has consistently opposed undue emphasis on this. Nonetheless, it seems to be progressing nicely. (Please see article on Robert Verrall elsewhere in this issue.)

Mr. Newman claimed that relations between the NFB and private industry are "better than they have been for a long time," which is a diplomatic way of saying that little love is lost between the two groups in general, but that the Board's conscious attempts to woo the private film companies by sub-contracting out as much as 50 per cent of their sponsored work (\$1.5 million worth), and its promise that an increase to 60 or 70 per cent is being considered, is bridging the gap between the Film Board and the free-enterprise lobby, which has been badgering Ottawa to cut Board spending and throw more sponsored work their way.

Some recent highlights of NFB activities? *Adieu Alouette*, *West*, and the presently rolling *Coastal Regions* series for the CBC, will be augmented by films on Ontario in 1976-77. What better way to please the hearts of MP's who hail from coast to coast? Radio-Canada has shown its regular fifty ONF films during the past year and *Mon Oncle Antoine* had an audience of 2.5 million on that network, second only to the Canada/USSR hockey series.

Board features released during the previous fiscal year were *Taureau*, *Le Temps d'une Chasse* and *O.K. Laliberté*, as well as *Cry of the Wild*, which has grossed millions in four-wall exhibition deals throughout North America. (The Board expects to earn only \$250,000 from this film by 1975, since they claim that most four-wall money is eaten away by advertising and distributor's percentages. This conflicts sharply with what the *Globe and Mail* printed about the deal, but Messrs. Newman, Vielfaure and Novek claim that Betty Lee was misinformed. Maybe all concerned should go on *The Great Debate* and have it all out with Pierre Berton as moderator. It may not be wild, but we could all have a good cry afterwards.)

NFB theatrical shorts in Canada had over 17,000 bookings last year, an all time high, said Newman. He singled out the Société Nouvelle/Challenge for Change Program, which the Board produced with eight other government departments, and whose mandate runs out next Spring. The Film Commissioner called the Program "one of Canada's greatest achievements. If the Film Board had done nothing else in its 35 years, this program alone would have assured its place in history." He summed up with: "Sophisticated technology, cheap to buy, and easy to use in man's quest for a better democratic society. This is the year of evaluation for this five year program. We and the interdepartmental committee must recommend its termination or continuation as it is or in some other form." The latest word from inside sources is that it will continue but as part of the Board's regionalization program and not as a separate entity.

"As you probably know," continued Newman to the MP's, "the demand for films from schools and community organizations across Canada is far greater than the supply." He went on to give detailed figures of the Board's distribution operations, both here and abroad (see *Antonio Vielfaure's detailed account of this elsewhere*). To the question "who does see your films?" Mr. Newman replied later: "A little over 200 million people see our films in Canada each year. Now we only have 22 million Canadians . . . so what that really means is that there are over 200 million exposures. You would imagine, that every Canadian, if you did a simple division, would see it 10 times. It does not work out that way. What probably happens is that 4 or 5 million Canadians see a great number of our films and the rest might see some of them on television or in the cinemas. It does not necessarily mean that they know who made the films."

Putting the finishing touches on the "big and unique" series of "Language Learning Support Dramas" to help Canadians learn the second official language (slated for distribution this autumn with suitable teacher-support materials), the compiling of a package of films on drug problems, entitled "To Take or Not to Take," the burgeoning multicultural program which has seen four films produced and 900 prints of 356 different films in 19 languages distributed by the Film Board, and the Corporation series of six fascinating half-hours and another hour-and-a-half recap were cited by Newman as highlights of recent NFB output.

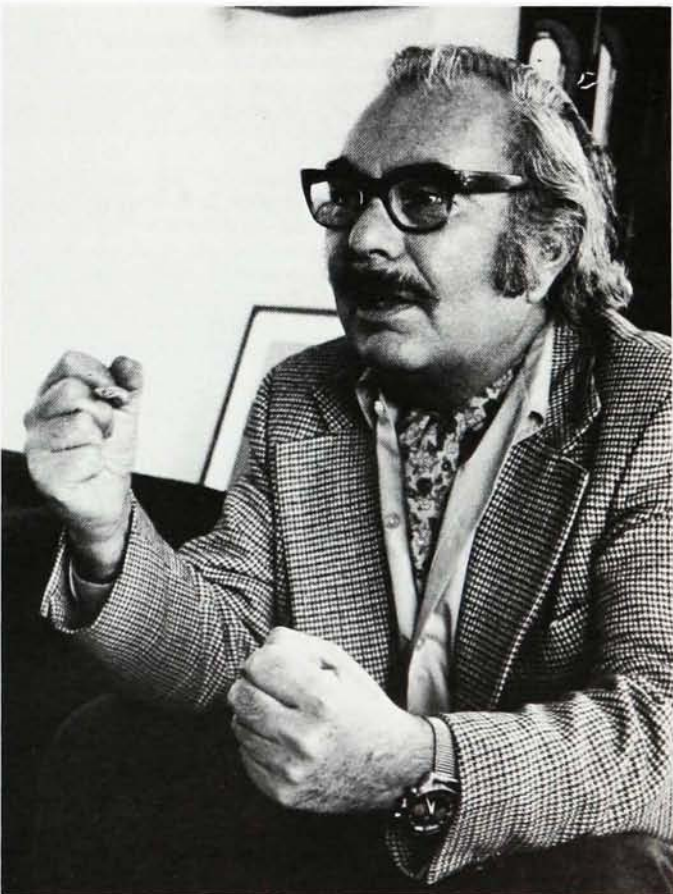
The planning of French and English women's production units, the role of French production personnel in a CIDA sponsored training program in Tunisia, an agreement with External Affairs for "the production of a large number of informative films to be added to the diplomatic libraries abroad, and the Board's heavy involvement in the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games were cited as further successful projects underway, although "American indecision forced

us to jettison" some spectacular plans for the American Bicentennial during the same year. "Habitat 2000, the United Nations International Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver, will involve the Board in a wide spectrum of activities ranging from film productions to various support services."

"Last year we participated in 62 festivals and took 54 major awards. . . . Many, many people admire Canada for its leadership in film. . . . Last year we had 1,106 official visitors from Canada and abroad . . . educators, government officials, filmmakers, the list is endless. "Among them was Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, as well as the President of the U.S.S.R. Association of Filmmakers. "In the fiscal year 1973-74, Canada's Film Board films were seen by an estimated 766 million people around the world at a cost of 78 cents for each Canadian.

"Regrettably," concluded Newman, "our rate of growth is too slow, too slow by far. It is almost a cliché to say that Canada's survival as a characterful, sovereign country is dependent upon communications. The Film Board and every filmmaker in Canada has a big job ahead. If there are any doubts about this, in our Canadian schools from Labrador to Victoria film is one of the most dramatic and widely used aids to teachers. Of all the films children see, we estimate - and we are spending a lot to verify this - that the majority of them are not made by Canadians. (As high as 80 per cent in some reports - ed.) I do not think it worries us that good films on physics or mathematics come from abroad, but what of films on social sciences, on history? For the price of two Hollywood musicals we can radically reverse this situation so that in ten year's time the films our children see in these vital subject areas will be predominantly Canadian. It will cost a lot but what price sovereignty?"

The same Sydney Newman is very concerned with his public image and - during a fascinating three-hour interview in May - turned the tables around to ask what people think of him in Toronto. Powerful, brash, autocratic, stubborn, yet talented and candid are some adjectives that come to mind about a man who refuses to learn French even though the organisation he heads has been given the mandate to interpret a bi-lingual country to its dual language inhabitants. His refusal to allow release of Gilles Groulx' documentary on Québec labour unrest two years ago caused a scandal of major proportions and gained him the ill will of the more radical segments of French



Production within the Board as well as that of the leading figures of Québec's private film industry.

Even though that storm has died down (a more recent example of official shelving is *Rapport de Force*, a Société Nouvelle project on, of all things, unions in Québec) and things are temporarily calm again, many stories leak out of closed meetings where the Francophone dilemma is: "If I give my report in French, everybody else but Sydney will understand, if in English, I'll have compromised my principles." Interestingly enough, this very same problem (corporate bi-lingualism) is explored at length in one of the episodes of the Corporation series.

On this topic, Newman defends himself by saying that the Board is seriously attempting to be internally bi-lingual, all his department heads speak both French and English, and that "the only real culprit in this whole matter is myself".

As the reporter approaches the interview, an urgent call is being placed to Michael Spencer of the CFDC, for which he is asked to leave the Commissioner's office. Suspicions at least supported that there are less than a dozen powerful men in this country who are constantly communicating and deciding how things should be run with Canada's filmmaking activities. Michael Spencer and George Destounis have cocktails in Cannes and a voluntary quota is born, Sydney Newman and John Hirsh attend a long policy meeting and some delineation is arrived at between the two government agencies (CBC/NFB) that are exhibiting new signs of vigour where this country's major filmmaking is concerned.

As an ex officio member of the Secretary of State's advisory committee on film policy matters, he is certainly very influential in helping to formulate our future, although he'd never admit it. He claims that he's no closer to the seats of power than you or I, but this journalist finds that very hard to believe. He claims that he's out for the Film Board and nothing but the Film Board and doesn't really think that this country ever had a feature industry. It was just a gleam in the eyes of some 'naive innocents' who haven't yet woken up to the facts of a cold, cruel, capitalist system.

These and many other candid observations were made after the recording was over, so Newman declined to be quoted on any of it. Between the two of us and a twice-filled glass of Vodka and orange juice from his private bar, the cathartic moment came when he sank back into his chair to respond in the affirmative to my question, "Should independent feature filmmakers not wishing to entertain a career at either the CBC or the Board shoot themselves in the head for lack of opportunities to produce films?" A heavy "yes!" — from a man who should know. And if he's as ignorant of what's to come as we are, God help us all.

Yet, I actually liked the guy — he's a hard person not to like. Certainly a controversial figure in Canada's film landscape, the extent to which he dominates or influences that scene is open to question. But even his detractors have to admit he is an energetic man characterised by great bursts of contagious enthusiasm mixed with long stretches of unassuming friendliness and candor. He boasts of his recent good relations with the press. (They used to call him the "primitive colonial" in England at the start of his BBC career; these same writers later sang his praises.) Yet, the NFB union's tabloid — *Corridor* — gives another viewpoint. Its 1973 calendar had the ever-present NFB logo with a circular drawing in the middle. The portrait depicted a famous namesake, Alfred E. of *Mad*-magazine fame, but wait a minute — where did he get grey sideburns and a cigar? Sydney in disguise?

The following is an interview with Government Film Commissioner, Sydney Newman —

Two years ago, during the Gilles Groulx affair, you made several public statements to the press coast to coast. Many of them contained the philosophy that if "we rock the boat too much, Parliament will not look kindly upon it. Why endanger 85 per cent of my filmmakers who are not, for the sake of the 15 per cent who are highly politicized." Do you still hold that view?

Absolutely. I don't know about the exact figures, I think I said 95 per cent, but the main point is that the Film Board represents a kind of mosaic of the widest shade of political views in Canada. Some of our films have touched upon socialism as a viable and natural progression of our present Canadian system. I personally think that it is absolutely permissible and proper for the Film Board to make *some films* related to a socialist theory, at least in proportion to the parliamentary representation. I think that our films — in one or two cases — have been allowed to be as radical as the filmmakers on my staff wanted them to be. But they have to

stop short of a certain permissible limit, which is commensurate with what Parliament intended when they allowed the Film Board to be created.

When you and André Lamy took over the leadership of the Board four years ago you initiated changes within both French and English Production (the turnover of heads of departments before Mr. Leduc and Mr. Verrall took over, was extensive) and your methods have caused some of your critics to refer to you as powerful, brash, autocratic, ruthless. . . .

Well, that's nonsense. It may not be nonsense in that I am a person of strong language and strong views which I express with some vigor and definiteness, but I don't think there is a single member of my staff who was ever dominated by me, who has not talked back to me and with whom I have not traded blows. Intellectually, not physically. And I have had marvellous rows and I defy any member of the staff to call me a bully or an 'autocratic person.' I have instincts which make me able to come forward with a precise view, but I also challenge anybody to prove that my mind cannot be changed. And my mind is changed in the daily pariah thrust, in the daily interrelations between me and my staff or group elements of our staff like our unions. I change my mind only after persuasion and argument, and if I've won my respect from the staff, it's because I've been absolutely consistent. I've got a precise point of view.

I've grown up in this whole metier, I know film, I know television. I've got a showbiz flair. If people want to shoot me down, and they have, I react graciously, with no rancor, no anger.

What is your precise point of view vis à vis the Film Board's role in the Canadian film community?

I think our role is to stay ahead and be the carrot that leads all on to bigger and better things. I think the country needs a Film Board for technical standards, for innovation work, for our concern for the totality of film in Canada. I think the country needs us for the kind of people we produce, whether it's a Claude Jutra, whether it's a Quinn in Toronto, who's got that beautiful lab, our job is to keep producing these marvellous people. We don't want them to leave the Film Board but they automatically will, and we accept this fact. We believe that this country needs a Film Board to invent a Challenge for Change. It was also the Film Board who invented cinéma vérité, it wasn't the French who did that. We need a place to develop standards for new stocks by Kodak.

We need a place that can represent the conscience of the people of Canada, without reference to the profit motive. That's not to deny the profit motive, but we need somebody to be independent of the profit motive.

We're the ones who made 16mm film into a professional medium! In the forties 16mm was an amateur thing. It's our technical work with it and the fact that beautiful filmmakers worked in 16mm that made that gauge legitimate. And who the hell developed half-inch magnetic tape animation? It's the Film Board! Thanks to our pioneering work, now everybody can do half-inch video animation. It's the kind of thing that has enriched the whole film experience of Canada.

Personally, what is your proudest achievement in the past four years that you've been Film Commissioner?

Nothing you can put your finger on, really. I just think the Film Board is a healthier place than it was four years ago. I'm terribly proud that the film *Mon Oncle Antoine* was regarded as one of the great hallmarks of Canadian features, and I'm proud that it was made and finished while I was here. I'm terribly pleased that *Cry of the Wild* is a great box-office and popular success. I guess I've given the Film Board a little bigger emphasis on the marketability aspects of filmmaking. I've emphasized audiences to make filmmakers a little more oriented towards people's needs. Not as customers paying money, you understand, that's not our primary concern. But that films be valuable to people and what we hope and guess what people

really want: to nurture themselves as being better and coping with life and its travails.

My relations with Ottawa I think are fairly good. You must remember, when I became Film Commissioner, the Film Board was not in entirely high esteem, it was at a low ebb in terms of public acceptance. I think that's quite radically changed. I think I've awakened the CBC and made possible the introduction on the national networks of a lot more Film Board work than it had seen before. It's helped filmmakers, their prestige and their sense of pride. But all these things really are interim, they're only one third toward a long term progression.

As Film Commissioner you sit on the Advisory Committee to the Secretary of State, as well as on the CBC and CFDC Boards of Directors. Being thus part of an inner circle that makes policy, would you care to give us an insight into what goes on at these meetings?

This ad hoc Advisory Committee to the Secretary of State sat for 15 or so meetings and it was such a polyglot group that it was very hard to arrive at any sort of consensus. The distributors were talking about more distribution, the production people were talking about more production, and the government agencies — we were concerned with our own particular role. All in all it adds up to a lot of very stimulating talk and we enjoyed each other's company and I don't know that any consensus arose in any clear cut way about any particular issue. The big obsession of everybody on the Committee was obviously distribution.

One thing that came out of these meetings was the offer by the commercial cinema chains to give major exposure in three key cities to all Canadian feature films to test them out for possible national distribution. I think that was a direct result of that Advisory Committee, and it was very positive. Of course a lot of people think it was only scratching the surface.

The slump in the present feature film production in the private sector is a very acute situation. There's an uproar in the ranks of filmmakers, the CCFM. . . .

You make the word "slump" sound as if there was a new Jerusalem five years ago. . . .

Well, there was a big production boom about two years ago.

And how did the boom come about? Artificially, because the money came from people who didn't give a damn whether the pictures were good or bad. Yes, the tax incentives. The point is that this so-called slump now has nothing to do with any new Jerusalem of three or four years ago, because then it was a farce situation.

What you're saying underscores the suspicions of some observers of Canadian film developments, who believe that Michael Spencer wants to abandon private feature films in favour of movies for television, and TV generally as a primary distribution outlet. . . .

Are you pulling my leg? Do people really believe that?

Yes, I'm talking about high level people within the Canadian film industry. . . .

Well, I think they're full of shit. If what you say is true . . . it's not true at all! The fact is that there are certain limits to what can be imposed upon a very well organized system traditionally brought about for the distribution of feature films. Suddenly, there is an infusion of a new kind of feature film that's being made in Canada. A traditional industry like the feature industry cannot absorb the kind of material which the average distributor doesn't know how to exploit. I don't believe Mike Spencer for saying let's keep pressing on and try to get stuff exhibited in ordinary cinemas which are geared to a mass audience and let's for God's sake recognize that the television organizations can also use feature films. And that's all, as I understand it, that Gélinas wants to do. He is not forsaking cinema exhibition. They are putting a few more arrows into their . . . wherever the hell you keep arrows.

In terms of Canada's national priorities vis à vis this country's feature production, what major developments do you see in the next five years?

You'll see no difference in the Film Board. We don't intend to make more than two or three features a year. We haven't got the money for it. Our priorities are absolutely elsewhere. We're more interested in education, documentary and information films. Features are simply something that certain members of our creative staff can aspire to and we've got to give them the opportunity or we'd lose a lot of our good people. That's our main interest. We recognize that there are certain aspects of Canadian life that could perhaps be better expressed or emotionally gotten across in fictional form than in documentary.

About the Canadian film industry in toto, unless they can develop new markets via television, I believe that they're going to work uphill all the time, vis à vis the commercial movie houses, who are stuck into a pattern of exhibition and distribution that is seventy, eighty years old. And it's very hard for the commercial exhibitor to cater to minority audiences on a mass enough scale to pay for the whole distribution of those films. Cinema exhibition is no longer the mass medium it used to be prior to television. Unless the film industry can organize itself financially and viably on the basis of more selected, smaller audiences, filmmakers will have to come around to the realization that they're going to have to find their audiences through another method. That means a film might make money, but it's going to take five years to make money, rather than one year. Consequently, television is a much readier source for the fictional creations of drama directors who choose the feature film as their form of expression.

In the film on Grierson, he scathingly denounces television at one point as a negative force in society which only pacifies and never rouses, it lulls you to sleep rather than spurring ideas and action. . . .

Whatever Grierson said is right. And certainly the generality of television is that it is a bloody wasteland. And it is an object of comfort and ease, a titty for the babies to suck at. It makes one curl up and forget about life and its rigours. Incidentally, that's a useful quality; when you've had a hell of a day, it's not bad to have your fifty minutes or your hour of escape.

But that quotation of Grierson isn't necessarily all that Grierson thought about television. I spent seventeen years in television, twelve of which were in England at the BBC, and I believe that television is a tremendous power for exhibition of the work of creative people. It's what you do with it, what you select to put on the air! I have seen television which is magnificent, I have created magnificent television. Stuff that isn't the titty in the mouth, no sir! I've been accused in the British House of Commons of being "a great purveyor of dirt, gout and disbelief," and you know why they said that? Because my stuff was disturbing, it was *not* the titty in the mouth: it was something that made people angry and made people want to get up and do something about their lives.

I agree with everything you say, but I still think that we should not gear the Canadian film industry 100 per cent to television, meaning we shouldn't use TV as the primary outlet for all the films produced in Canada, because that would be disastrous in terms of quality, content and the abandonment of our motion pictures theatres to foreign product and foreign profits. . . .

I never used the word "primary," I never used the word "geared to." I'm merely saying this: when you've got frustrated creative energy and they're nimble and quick minded, they're going to find audiences wherever they can. And that is the reality! You don't need a cinema hall to see a film! That is an archaic view. To quote Marshall McLuhan, that is "advancing forward using your rear view mirror." Everybody is sick with love of the motion picture feature film in traditional

cinema halls. In my estimation, that is an old fashioned view. *Aside from the box-office bonanza at box-offices throughout North America since Christmas, which has resulted in skyrocketing profits for exhibitors and distributors and a total yearly gross way in excess of \$150 million in Canada alone, there's nothing to replace the thrill of seeing a movie – especially if it's Canadian – on a wide screen, in colour. . . .*

Along-side 500 or so other people. I agree with you. Unfortunately, our world is moving in such a direction, where you have to discuss its financial viability and clearly it's very hard for new, bright, young, fresh, Canadian filmic voices to get seen through those old channels. Clearly, there's no use bitching about Famous or Odeon, or what. Those guys are running a business operation, like the steel companies and gas stations. They're running businesses. There's no use berating them for being no different than any other business. It's not incumbent upon them to lose money by running material for which they cannot draw audiences. At the same time those creative people that are making films have got to find an audience. And it's about time the CFDC recognized that those audiences can be secured through electronic means. God bless the CFDC! The important thing is the creative voice and that there are ears listening to the creative voice.

Let me be skeptical and say that this is another way of skirting the issue and refusing to come face to face with the problem, the very acute problem of foreign ownership of Canada's motion picture theatres by the Rank Organization of Great Britain and Paramount/Gulf and Western from the States, which own the Odeon and Famous Players chains here, respectively. And they only claim that Canadian features aren't good enough and they'll lose money on them, since they're committed to have as the bulk of their diet foreign pictures. They're foreign owned and consequently are subject to numerous under the table tie-in arrangements. . . .

Foreign owned has nothing to do with it. You're indulging in a red herring! Do you think it's the foreign money that's prohibiting Canadian films from being seen? Do you mean to tell me that they wouldn't be delighted to run a film, which will make them as much money as an American film?

"Paperback Hero," one of our more recent popular films, was launched with a promotion budget of \$10,000 as compared to as high as 25 times that figure for a big American picture that comes to Canada and rakes in the money here. Then, when Paperback surprises everyone and grosses nearly \$700,000 at one point, Famous Players decide to keep a full 90 per cent against their exhibitor's and investor's percentage, leaving very little for the distributor, producer and almost nothing for the director, Peter Pearson. Yet when the Godfather grosses over \$1 million at a Famous theatre in Toronto, a full 70 per cent of the take goes to the distributor, Paramount. And most of their professed and hidden profits are going to their mother corporations, as well.

That's not the point you're making, though. Of course it is. But I don't think that's what's prohibiting better films from being made in Canada. It's a loss of money, but all that money is not going to make better films. Do you mean to tell me that Canadian films would be better if they were an infusion of another \$100 million? All you're really saying is that they would make maybe ten times more films, and by the law of percentages there'll be more that will be better.

I'm not the most eloquent speaker in favour of this cause. I mean, God knows, there have been briefs aplenty written and submitted to various levels of government on this topic. But what I am saying is that if only some of that \$150 million per annum, maybe 15 per cent, would go into the pockets of

Canadian producers, that would mean a great upsurge of feature production (\$22.5 million worth every year), and a thriving film industry with full employment for close to 8,000 people. Meaning that some of us won't have to seek jobs elsewhere in the economy. . . .

I don't think it will be any more thriving. Even Hollywood only succeeds one out of every ten films they make. If now we make one excellent film a year out of twenty, if we make twice as much, then we make two good films a year. Well, that would be very good, I'd be very happy, but I don't know if that really is the proper basis for an industry. What is more fundamental than American ownership, than the cinemas being foreign owned and all that jazz – and I'm not depreciating that, that's a good argument, we need more money – is what we seem to lack in our country: an understanding – we want to run before we can walk.

We will not get a viable film industry in our country until we get a viable theatre, which uses a lot of actors and writers. We will not get a film industry, until we get a viable electronic drama experience on television. The actors from the theatre, the writers from the theatre will intermingle with the actors and writers for television. It will be the spinoff from the amalgam that will produce the feature film industry. We are trying to create a film industry without a viable theatre, a viable electronic TV drama. We're trying to run before we can walk. It won't work! That's the source of our naïve innocence in this country."

Sounds like John Hirsch of CBC Drama was very successful in getting his ideas accepted by the inner circle of policy people. When asked whether it was enough that directors like Don Shebib, Allan King, Don Owen and Peter Pearson do one or two shows for CBC per year, Newman voiced the belief that one had to go beyond those few. He discussed his interpretation of a financially viable industry and expressed the opinion that most Canadian directors just don't have the mass appeal necessary for it. Why do people invest in films? "They want to get their money back", said Newman. "Or is it all to be done based on a government handout. Nobody wants that. Who the hell wants to depend on a handout?" When it was pointed out that some of our leading filmmakers signed the Winnipeg manifesto earlier this year, asking for exactly that, he didn't seem to have read that particular document.

What about the 14,000 members of Britain's biggest motion picture union, whose recent brief called for the total nationalisation of the film industry in that country, including a take-over of the American majors? Yes, he's read it, some of his "best friends" are ACTT members, but he characterised it as a "fart in a hurricane". Who took it seriously? Nobody in England," according to Newman. Maybe in ten years? "Maybe, maybe. But the nationalisation of the film industry by itself will not guarantee better films." The Canadian Government Film Commissioner went on to say that during his travels in the Soviet Union he wasn't very impressed with the socialist product. What about East Europe? He said he was "too ignorant of what they've done. But the fact is when you talk about feature investment of half to a million, you need more magic than the sweet, sincere, blue eyes of the film director."

"The cost of art in our kind of society has to be in relation to the number of people whose imaginations it will excite," theorized Newman, and went on to say that of the best Canadian film directors, not even Claude Jutra "has proven himself to be able to captivate the imagination of a mass audience on a continuing basis." It certainly seems like the men at the top have given up on our short but noble fling with feature filmmaking, even before they allowed it to truly get off the ground.●

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