

COUNCIL OF CANADIAN FILMMAKERS

Leonard Evans, Manitoba Minister of Industry & Commerce endorses the CCFM Proposal for government take-over of a major film exhibitor (such as Famous Players) to serve the needs of the Canadian film industry.

"Canada has become a dumping ground for the films of American distribution companies, which really consider the Canadian audience as little more than an extension of the American domestic market. That market, although not large in American terms, does constitute over 140 million dollars at the box office", said the Honourable Leonard S. Evans, Minister of Industry and Commerce for Manitoba.

Mr. Evans was speaking to a group of delegates at the National Convention of the Society of Cineamateurs, Saturday, August 17th, in Winnipeg.

"Unless Canadian filmmakers have access to the medium that shows their films, we might as well stop fooling ourselves into thinking we are going to produce feature films in this country."

He added that the problem of the film industry depicts the problem of the Canadian economy as a whole. Canada has been used mainly as a source of raw materials and not as a secondary manufacturing centre. "We have provided billions of dollars of raw materials to our neighbour to the south, with no expectation of developing our own production capacity. This is no more dramatically illustrated than in the feature film industry", concluded Mr. Evans.

In Canada at least two thirds of the cinemas, including almost all downtown houses in the major urban centres, are owned or controlled by either Famous Players of Canada Ltd., or Odeon Canada and its associated companies.

"The Council of Canadian Film Makers has a recommendation that deals with the problem in an even more direct way", said the Minister. "They recommend that the federal government purchase one of the film distribution systems in Canada, through the Canadian Development Corporation."

Mr. Evans supported this proposal, but said that it should be explored from the point of view as to whether or not this company should be run as a subsidiary of the Canadian Film Develop-

ment Corporation. Mr. Evans went on to say that one of the answers to the problem of Canada's film industry would be to also establish a quota system for Canadian exhibitors. This would necessitate that provincial governments, who have the authority in this area, pass legislation requiring the theatres to exhibit Canadian films for a minimum number of weeks per year.

"I am not making a plea to allow us to search for and express the Canadian identity, although that's important. I'm saying that we should more often be able to see in our movies our culture, expressed by Canadians, rather than be constantly bombarded by the cultural products of other nations", he added.

One of the reactions to Mr. Evans' speech came from Paul Morton, president of the Winnipeg-based Odeon-Morton theatre chain as well as president of both the Manitoba and Canadian theatre owners association. Morton said the idea was ill-conceived and would destroy Canada's film industry. According to CP, Mr. Morton said that a total of 40 Canadian films would have to be shown in Winnipeg in one year to meet a 10 per cent quota and only 12 Canadian films "of varying quality" were available this year. (Mr. Morton is remembered as having strongly supported this same stance during the Winnipeg Film Symposium earlier this year.)

Peter Pearson, Chairman of the CCFM, was furious when questioned about Paul Morton's reaction to Leonard Evans' proposition.

"For years, self-interested capitalists like Paul Morton have been lining their pockets while raping our culture", said Pearson. "For the first time, a province has taken a major step towards profitably bringing Canadian films into Canadian theatre. We know damned well that we can make films that will excite and capture audiences, but self-interested greed, like Morton's, has been bloating American producers' bank rolls for years. They own the trucks and they won't take our goods to the market!"

A letter to the independent members of the CCFM

What ever happened to that astounding, revolutionary, Council of Canadian Filmmakers? That group of angry radicals who were going to put the film

business back on its feet, make war with the government, sort out the unions, and throw out the Americans?

Well ... we're still here. At least your executive is, and we are very aware that, to our 300 independent members, the Council appears to be making small, if any, waves. So, first of all, let me try and correct that impression.

The Council has become a very vocal and powerful (not surprisingly, considering the wide variety of representatives on the executive) lobbying group, working hard for the interests of the Canadian film industry. A lot of waves have been made, including a long report to the CBC on the state of their art, as viewed by us. In that document were many recommendations that will affect the small filmmaker as well as the heavies.

The Council has been lobbying (and getting tickles) for the government purchase of a large exhibition outfit (i.e.: Famous Players). (Remember Texas Gulf??) That would mean for the first time we'd have our own truck in which to take the goods to town. Up until now you would find it mighty difficult to find any room aboard theirs. Maybe, if there was also a large Canadian government-owned distribution chain, we would get rid of those bloody sick 1954 tourist shorts, as well, and get some of our short films up there along with our features.

We're also constantly haranguing people like Michael Spencer with our views of how the CFDC can get its act together.

There's been a lot of paperwork flying around, heavily researched reports on who's getting what out of Canadian film, as if we didn't know already. To make logical and acceptable alternate recommendations to government bodies, you really have to be tight with your facts, and that soaks up a lot of our time. And time rips off the roll so fast that to keep you informed of all the alleys and roads we're attempting to build is a difficult job. So all I can say is please bear with us.

Our group is incredibly strong. We do have an intelligent and concerned executive and although we are hard and fast on the feature thing, there are too many of us in the executive with smaller interests and needs to let the feature industry be the Council's only concern.

Box 1003, Station A,
Toronto M5W 1G5

I would like to repeat the following points:

All the executive meetings of the Council are open to you as a member and we would welcome your participation. Information on the times of meetings can be obtained from our answering service at 869-0716.

You can also use the above number if you wish to contact any member of the executive. We want to hear your suggestions and problems.

If you contact one of us, we can tell you what the Council is doing in your personal area of interest.

Your executive is:

Chairman: Peter Pearson
Director's Guild Rep.
Vice-Chairman: Robin Spry
SGCT, NFB Montreal
Sec.-Treasurer: Jack Gray
ACTRA Rep.

Robert Linnel (Vancouver –
represented in Toronto by
John Board)

Richard Leiterman
Ken Post
Don Shebib
Ági Ibrányi-Kiss
Kirwan Cox
Pen Densham
George Csaba Koller

Representatives of:

CFE
CSC
IATSE 644
IATSE 873
NABET 700
Toronto Filmmakers Co-op

We are planning a big film conference to cover the whole patchwork of the industry. It is hoped that during the winter we'll meet you at the most invigorating powwow of filmmakers ever held on this continent.

Meanwhile, if you are reading this and are interested in joining the CCFM, please do contact us (c/o Box 1003, Station A, Toronto M5W 1G5, Ontario). Believe me, every individual member is a nail in the coffin of the lack-lustre government concern for our industry.

And please, when you have any problems related to film, try us. I am convinced this group has the ability to break new ground.

We are the first truly united voice of the Canadian Film Industry.

*Pen Densham,
Independent Representative.*



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