

## Production

Micawber-like all my contacts sing the same plaintive key: "I'm expecting something to turn up." Well, one producer has almost decided to turn up — this time back at the old stand in London. A London which Trevor Wallace six years ago vowed he would never make another film in.

Why? Because of the 'greedy unions'. Meanwhile Trevor made a \$1,250,000 feature film which filled the definition that a film should entertain, and it did: **Christina**, all done in Vancouver. Last year he came up with an international cast, augmented by approximately 60 local supports. The cost: \$2,500,000 all locally subscribed, put **Journey Into Fear** in the can, and at the moment it might best be termed, **Journey Into Limbo**. With \$6,000,000 in his kitty, and at last a hungry and tractable union standing submissively hat in hand, waiting for any favours, the possibility of Wallace making his **Ultra Secret** in the great Metropolis seems probable.

Where lies the difficulty with British Columbia? First we have a government which typifies the amateur stance, piddling around with community crafts, and ignoring the potential coin; willing, with a little persuasion, to dump it all into our fair province.

Professional film makers have been urging a film commissioner with know-how to persuade foreign independents to keep coming to B.C. instead of falling for the blandishments of 'on the ball' Charles 'Chuck' Ross, filmmaker for the Alberta government. Bob Altman, who captured Vancouver in a love affair, then after producing two features here, exchanged flying crockery, and departed; came back to Vancouver recently, looked around and left. His next is a Western apparently, but who knows if the visit was a reprise with his old love, and if finding no inducements governmentally, or civically, he retreated to Los Angeles? Anyway Mr. Ross flew to L.A., and offered Frank Arrega, the production manager of Altman's company, assurance that the government of the Oil Barons would give carte blanche to the production. Result is \$10,000,000 worth of feature work for Alberta. The People's Government in B.C., mean-

while sits on its public derriere, ignoring a ready-made secondary industry that at the very least would keep ACTRA and IATSE taxpayers happy.

There are varying opinions for the present 'slump'. One from Jim Westwell suggests IATSE and ACTRA will have to take another look at their demands and stand cap in hand also. If feature making has reached the stage where its ingredients are to be picked up in the economy basement, the future looks bleak.

Also on the foreign independent scene is Panorama Studios of West Vancouver. The tenacity, persistence, and drive behind this studio is still Muriel May. In 1961, Mrs. May started the subsequent feature making flurry by investing her hard earned money and time into the complex, and into Panorama's first Canadian-made feature, which shall be nameless. Currently she is stirring up a new flurry with Michael Relph, Chairman of the British Film Producers Association.

Michael Relph came to Canada this year to discuss a treaty with Canada for British-Canadian co-productions. The treaty apparently is five years old. During this time the CFDC did not see fit to acquaint any of the Western film makers with what was afoot. Relph arrived, assumed a British 'fairplay' stance when he recognized the absence of Western participation, and flew west to find out why. At least Mr. Relph discovered a subtle rift between Eastern Bureaucracy and Western Laxity. He was not amused. The off shot was that Keith Cutler, representing the Western block of the Directors Guild of Canada will attend the final draft of the treaty, and with this new awareness it is hoped "big brother" will pay more attention to the small kid.

On the purely Canadian scene also there is gloom and a sense of doom. Ray Brickell the prospective producer of **Temple on Wednesday** seems at this point to be treading mud in his pursuit of investments. Jack Darcus, whose **Wolfpen Principle** created a flurry among the critics, is busy writing scripts. One is under consideration by the CFDC. The other two are reserves to create a 'double whammy.' Darcus described his pursuit of the local investment dollar as "wading through mud." Here again is the waiting period, which the prospect of the government 100% tax write off may alleviate. Darcus also blames lack of a quota system, and distribution.

The one ingredient no one has mentioned so far is a scenario that relates to its audience. Ambidextrous genius clutters the forest, the cameraman-producer-director-writer; still the

forest tangle is there, and the output is weedy. If there isn't a Canadian writer who can turn out such a script, what are all those bodies doing sitting around waiting?

Werner Aellen, who produced **The Wolfpen Principle** and then laid his hand to an impossible turkey, is in Europe interesting German and other distributors in his stock. A man cannot be faulted for making a mistake, but one can forgive if it happens farther along the road of a career. Werner is not alone in his quest for exposure, after watching the American turkeys running in first class houses, there is surely room for unexposed Canadian features on screens outside of Canada?

Don Wilson, who has produced a couple of underground films, is reported near production of a CFDC low budgeter. Can Canada afford another underground effort? Isn't it time the audience had a chance to see real human beings reacting to real everyday problems? David Curnick, and Wilson a few years ago turned out a shoestring comedy that in spots had some of the funniest sequences so far created by Canadian low budgeters.

Guy Bergeron, Resident in Film, at Simon Fraser University is holding a script workshop this summer. It will include exclusive script writing, developing it in terms of drama into a workable shooting script. The hope being that one or two scripts resulting will be put into production during the Fall workshop. A display of students' film making is to be repeated at Images Theatre, SFU. Out of it, let us hope, will arise the David Lean of Western Canada.

Peter Jones' regional staff of the National Film Board are in the between stage also. The budget has just been announced and Peter and Jack Long are heading together to decide what will be produced, and who will produce what. Shelah Reljic, is now a producer.

A respite for IATSE was the February filming of Lawrence Schiller's story of the Ralph Forbes, Helen Kellen trauma at Watson Lake. This was the incident of a light plane crash in which the pilot was killed and the passengers were given up for lost for 43 days, which made international headlines. Edward Asner, (The Mary Tyler Moore Show), and Sally Struthers, (All In The Family), provided the pizzaz. Schiller produced and directed the ABC Movie of the Week. Local stuntman John Thomas worked on the crew and did a little neck-breaking potential.

But all this seems like diving for pebbles. And it is. It appears B.C. is in for a long, cold summer.

—Jack Ammon