

Lobby groups spring to the rescue of CBC in light of budget cuts

TORONTO - Within the past month, two arts lobby groups have sprung up to protest the CBC cuts. The Alliance For Public Broadcasting was launched at a press conference in Ottawa on Jan. 29 and featured author Pierre Berton, former Ontario Lieutenant-Governor Pauline McGibbon, novelist Farley Mowat and columnist Doris Anderson. In its press conference, the Alliance warned that Canada was "in danger of losing its cultural sovereignty. The cuts to the arts community in general and to the CBC in particular threaten the existence of a Canadian national identity precisely at a time when that identity must be strengthened and reaffirmed. We are on the brink of losing our national dream."

The Alliance urged that the broadcasting issue not "become something determined in a back room or by a White Paper written by a few 'experts.' It must become a national public debate. Substantial

changes to the Broadcast Act and discussion of our future should begin with a Royal Commission on Broadcasting."

The Alliance was initially formed and is still run by the CBC producers' association to mobilize public opinion in support of the CBC and to lobby for the Canadianization of CBC programming.

Within two weeks of the launch of the Alliance, the Friends of Public Broadcasting presented an open letter to Brian Mulroney signed by 1,300 people coast-to-coast. The group called on the prime minister not to make any financial cuts "until a new mandate is spelled out and approved by Parliament."

Leading the Friends of Public Broadcasting are columnist and Tory insider Dalton Camp, historian Ramsay Cook, *Saturday Night* publisher John MacFarlane, athlete Bruce Kidd and Ian Morrison, executive director of the Canadian Association of Adult Education.

Morrison told the press that "the CBC is an essential instrument in keeping this country together. We share the view that the cuts will not enable the CBC to do what it is supposed to do."

The Alliance and Friends are acting independently but expect there will be extensive liaison between the two groups. The Alliance has prepared an extensive "awareness" kit entitled *The Airwaves Belong To The Canadian People*. The kit is being sent to MPs, the Standing Committee on Culture and Communications, and interested groups and organizations.

The kit consists of a series of papers exploring the crisis on Canadian airwaves and myths and facts about the CBC. One paper, "What Can You Do?", urges readers to take action by organizing local groups and writing to their MPs, the prime minister and the minister of Communications.

The kit states that Canadian

television has "disappeared in a flood from the United States. We have a system which is substantially American. Three quarters American."

Yet, the brief argues, "Canadians favour Canadian programs over American, if they are of equal production quality." It lists audience ratings for regular and special programs which run from one million to over two-and-a-half million. The list includes: *The National* (1.8 million), *The Journal* (1.6 million), *Fifth Estate* (1.5 million), *Fraggle Rock* (1.6 million), *Tommy Hunter* (1.5 million), *Beachcombers* (1.25 million), *Hockey Night* (2-3 million), *Nature of Things* (1.25 million), *Marketplace* (1.25 million), *Danger Bay* (1 million), *Man Alive* (1 million).

Specials that have proved enormously successful with audiences include: *Chautauqua Girl* (2.6 millions); *Grey Fox* (2.1 millions); and made-for-TV-movies *Hockey Night* (2.2 millions), *Gentle Sinners*, (2.3 millions) and *Charlie Grant's War*, the latter of which at 2 millions outdrew the heavily hyped Robert Kennedy mini-series on CTV.

In the kit the Alliance argued

that "we must create a balanced system of imported and national production" which could be achieved by increasing CBC funding and guaranteeing it over a five-year period to allow for planning. The Alliance also called for CBC TV-2.

Landmark leases

TORONTO - Garth Drabinsky, president and chief executive officer of Cineplex Corporation, announced Feb. 8 that Cineplex has acquired 10 theatres with 22 screens from Landmark Cinemas on a long-term lease arrangement. The theatres are located in key markets in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Included in the lease arrangement are five indoor theatres with a total of 15 screens and 5 drive-ins with a total of 7 screens. Cineplex, which acquired the Odeon theatre chain last summer, now owns and/or operates 180 theatres in North America with 474 screens.

Landmark Cinemas remains an active exhibitor retaining control of 24 theatres with 34 screens in the west and the Yukon.

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AATON CAMERAS



Jump on the bandwagon

What is the use of an instant-magazine film camera or an instant-cassette ENG video camera if it takes more than ten seconds to lace quarter-inch audio tape in an icy wind?

The answer many sound recordists have brought to this question has been to use audio cassette recorders: their quality is now very good for speech and ambience sound (the Sony WMD6 achieves 60 dB S/N with Dolby "C"). In tight situations, the ease of handling — no rewinding, instant loading, 45 minutes autonomy — makes cassette recorders a godsend. It is not surprising that sound recordists on feature films want to get in on the act too, and use cassette audio recorders for multi-track sound to be added to the principal 1/4" sound takes.

But for a cassette recorder to be used in a professional environment it needs the help of time code. Aaton provides this help in the form of a timecode unit built right onto the WMD6, which records the SMPTE code on the right track.

Then on any film — feature or documentary — the timecoded WMD6 becomes a powerful tool: the audio engineer monitors the sound on his timecoded Nagra or Stellovox; at the same time, several independent TC WMD6 units concealed here and there record ambience and proximity sound.

Also, in crowd situations or on a noisy stage, each actor with his own WMD6 can move around unhindered for 45 minutes. This is a great relief for sound engineers harried by radio-mike problems, fading and multi-channel allocation.

The autonomy of cassettes can be fully exploited only if they are timecoded: otherwise the cost of transferring complete 45 minute cassettes containing a low proportion of sync material would be prohibitive. With time coding, it is very easy for the script assistant to instruct the laboratory to transfer onto fullcoat only those takes between given time addresses.

All audio tapes being SMPTE coded, it's a simple matter to sync all the sound tracks. The system is even better if the camera was recording time also (be it clear time or SMPTE code).

The Aaton timecoded Sony WMD6 is a convincing argument; it proved its worth to Tian Li of Newsreel and Documentary Studios in Peking, who ordered 40 Aaton 16mm cameras in 1984, every one equipped with a timecoded Walkman. Tian Li asked for an adaptor allowing the WMD 6 to be plugged directly into the camera body alongside the magazine, and to be powered by the camera battery. The contours of the Aaton make it possible to nestle the WMD 6 on board discreetly: ideal for one-man band operation.



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