

Nielsen and Ferns go separate ways

TORONTO — Pat Ferns, and Richard Nielsen, long-time production partners first in Nielsen-Ferns International and then in Primedia Productions, announced their separation on Mar. 5. Ferns has acquired Nielsen's interests in Primedia. In a related move Ferns announced that Primedia was entering into a relationship with British company Primetime. Primetime has acquired a 25% interest in Primedia. Richard Price, chairman of Primetime, noted at a press reception that he has "worked with Primedia for many years in production. This closer and formal association is a logical step. All our distribution of non-Canadian product will continue to be handled through our sales representatives Ron Hastings Communications and Ralph Ellis Enterprises."

Recent Primedia-Primetime coproductions have included three thirteen-part series with British naturalist Gerald Durrell. A fourth Durrell series, *Ourselves and Other Animals*, on the subject of animal communication will begin produc-

tion shortly. Primedia and Primetime are also working on a number of drama projects together.

Excited about the new association, Ferns told Cinema Canada that it holds "enormous advantages for Primedia. We will now get instant market feedback. Our marketing clout is that much greater." He noted that Primetime is the largest independent distributor in Britain. They also package and syndicate in the States where they have offices in New York and Los Angeles.

Ferns noted that the relationship with Nielsen remains good. The two will continue to work together on a number of projects. Ferns said that projects already in development will go to Nielsen if he has written them. Nielsen, who is setting up a new company, Norflicks, is taking over production of *The Little Vampire*, a thirteen-part international coproduction with Polyphon of West Germany, TVS of Britain and Allarcocom of Edmonton. The \$2.5 million series is scripted by

Nielsen and is being made with Telefilm participation.

Nielsen told Cinema Canada that the separation was natural. "We were looking at two different lines of business. I was concentrating on the stuff I was writing. Pat was mainly involved in co-productions. As a company we were pursuing differing lines. Our interests diverged. We had different philosophies of how a company should operate."

Ferns said that the creative left by Nielsen's departure will be plugged by other writers. He said that "both Margaret Atwood and W.O. Mitchell have been signed to work on projects."

Ferns, who has been an active lobbyist for the private production sector as president of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, said he will have to cut back on his political activities. He will not be standing for reelection at the ACFTP, but will, however, remain involved with the Banff Television Foundation of which he is president.

CBC crucial partner in Telefilm productions

TORONTO — At a press conference Mar. 15 announcing changes to Telefilm's mandate, Marcel Masse, minister of Communications, predicted continuing strength in the independent production sector with at least \$125 million worth of production and the equivalent of 5,000 full-time jobs. Breaking down the \$125 million Masse said that \$75 million would come from co-production with CBC, the remaining \$50 million from co-productions with the private and provincially-owned broadcasters.

The new Telefilm guidelines greatly lever the broadcaster's investment in a project. Masse argued that CBC's \$15 million commitment (down from \$22 million last year) for 1985-86 will result in an equivalent level of production to last year.

To date CBC has borne the brunt of co-productions with Telefilm. Last year, all private broadcasters invested only about \$4 million in Telefilm projects. If private broadcasting funds are levered in the same proportion as CBC's, they will have to put up \$10 million to

reach the \$50 million production level. Admittedly, they will be helped by the entry of the provincial broadcasters. Last year TVOntario had a \$22 million production budget. Much of that, however, was devoted to strictly educational projects which are not eligible for CBC funding.

At the press conference, Masse's deputy minister, de Montigny Marchand, noted that at least 50% of the Fund must go to private broadcasters and the provincially-owned networks. The CBC can access up to 49% of the Fund. "There is no corresponding limit on the other side." He added that even without the CBC cutbacks the Fund would have been endangered. "We would have had to readjust the triggering mechanism."

Masse explained that the prediction of 5,000 full-time jobs derives from an econometric analysis of the impact of \$125 million worth of production. A sophisticated economic model developed by Statistics Canada indicates that, for each \$1 million in investment, 49 full-time jobs are created.

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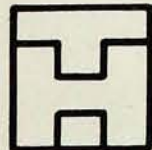
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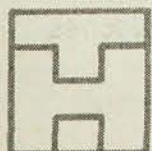
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