

ACTRA forum on arts and culture

TORONTO—The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists recently held a five-city forum which addressed the issues of arts, communications and culture. "We expected that there would be very little discussion about arts and culture in this election campaign," ACTRA general secretary Garry Neil told *Cinema Canada*, "and, indeed, we have been proven correct. There's been virtually nothing apart from the NDP policy announcement.

"The forums were set up to try and inject into the campaign some discussions about these matters, and also from our perspective, to seek from the parties some commitment on the issues. We intend to follow through after the election to summarize the positions of all three parties and to immediately move forward and start talking to whoever is in power about some of the things they have committed themselves to."

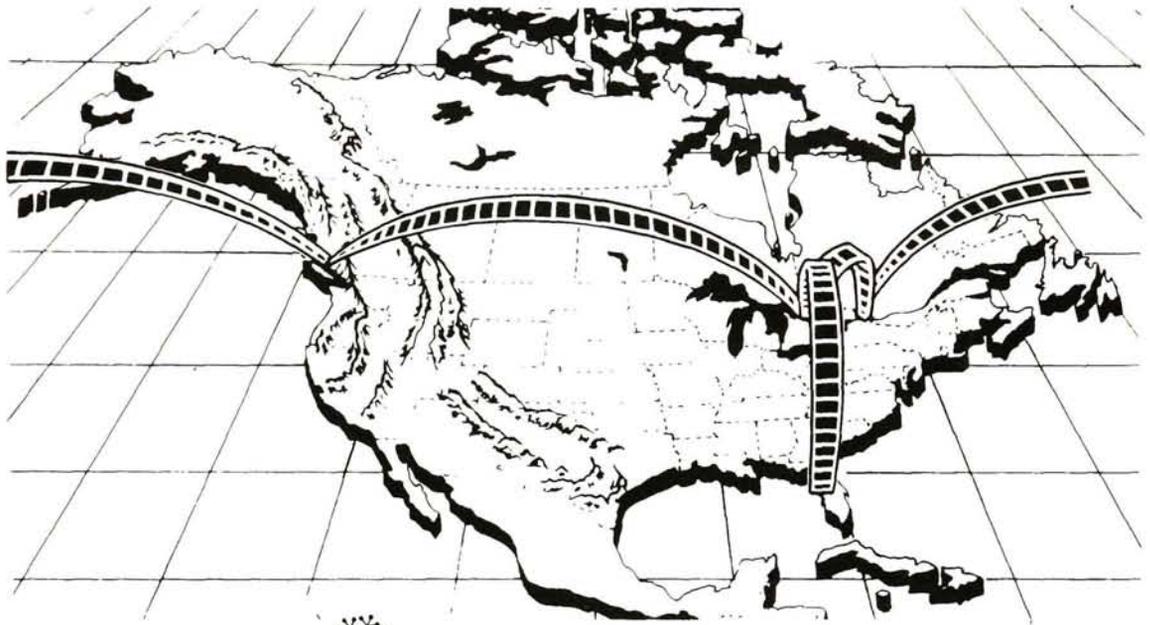
ACTRA sent the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP detailed questionnaires about the status of the artist, Free Trade, copyright, government funding for the arts and the future. "We are taking no partisan position in this election", said Neil. "We are not urging anybody to vote for or against any party. What we're trying to do is raise issues."

One of the most important issues, according to Neil, is the proposed Status of the Artist legislation which has been developed by the National Advisory Committee on the Status of the Artist. He points out that now there is an assumption in Quebec law that artists are self-employed, instead of the federal definition which considers the artist to be employed. He says that the proposed federal legislation, if accepted by the new government in power, would go well beyond the Quebec law.

"It not only talks about the artist and the Income Tax Act, and regulating that relationship, but a whole lot of other things, including providing unemployment insurance, freelance performers, other categories of freelancers, about the social rights of the artist, and the need for freedom of expression. It touches on a wide range of issues from income tax to censorship."

Meanwhile, ACTRA is "in a state of financial crisis," in the words of its finance committee, and is facing a severe cash-flow shortage. It is estimated that the deficit for the past fiscal year will be approximately \$400,000, on a total budget of \$4.8 million. The cause of this deficit has been linked to the defeat last spring of a referendum proposing a dues increase, and an unexpected income decrease because of a slowdown in the production industry and the resulting decline in permit fees.

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"I don't really see it as a downturn in the industry but rather a leveling off," said Neil. "Even though we budgeted conservatively, we didn't expect the leveling off that we have seen. It's certainly very serious, there's no question about that, but it's not a crisis in the sense that it does not effect our ability to do our primary job, which is to negotiate our collective agreements. Maybe we are going to have to cut back here and there, but it is not a matter which will fundamentally affect our ability to continue to operate."

"In Nov. '80 our member earnings were \$52 million. In '81, they were \$53 million, in 1982,

\$55 million, and in 1963, \$59 million. In 1984 we went to \$69.4 million, in 1985 to \$84 million, in '86 to \$94.3, and in 1987, \$107.3 million. We knew this growth was unusual and would have to end, so we are not totally surprised about what has happened."

Plans are now being considered to ask the 9,000 members in good standing for permission to increase dues once again and lay off some of the 75 staff members. In addition, a motion has been adopted to spend \$75,000 on a restructuring study by a management consulting firm.

Dent leaves ACTRA

VANCOUVER—ACTRA's branch representative Peter Dent is leaving the organization in mid-December to go into private practice. Actually, he has two new jobs, one with the payroll company Televector Disc, the other working for himself.

Dent will be developing a television and radio commercial payment service for Televector which will be marketed to western Canadian advertising agencies and production houses.