

CANADA'S FILM POLICY: THE FIRST PHASE

Notes for a speech

by the

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Secretary of State

outlining

The first phase of a federal film policy

Montreal,

Tuesday, 4 July, 1972

To-day it is my pleasure at last to meet with you and outline the general terms of our film policy — a policy which has taken over two years to develop. I hope that we have not laboured and brought forth a mouse, and that the long period of reflection and consultation has not been spent in vain.

The federal government is particularly interested in the development of the Canadian film industry for three reasons. The first is the fact that there are several federal cultural institutions already working in this field... The federal government thus has commitments in the area of film activities which we would be wrong to neglect or restrict.

The second reason for our interest is very simple: in the context of developing a policy of cultural democratization and decentralization, films, like television, are especially effective tools.

Similarly, from its first day in office the present federal government has unequivocally demonstrated the importance it attaches to Canadian control in the cultural field. In the autumn of 1968, the Cabinet sent the CRTC a directive whose effect was to restore to Canadian hands 80 per cent ownership and 100 per cent of the effective control of the radio and television stations and cablevision systems then under the control of foreign interests. By implementing this directive, the CRTC Canadianized instruments for cultural expression worth tens of millions of dollars, instruments whose influence on the thinking and culture of Canadians defies calculation. If films are also looked upon as cultural tools of the utmost importance, it is clear that Canadians must play the leading role at home in this medium, and that ways will soon have to be found and used to reach this essential goal. The free circulation of films and

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access for the Canadian public to films produced the world over are every bit as necessary as the free circulation of books and periodicals. At the same time, however, we must be able to ensure that Canadians may not only express themselves in films but may also expect their films to be given their rightful place in their own country. As things now stand, it does not appear that foreign interests can be counted on to achieve this dual objective.

I come now to the third reason why we consider it necessary to affirm our presence in the field of films. Canada has a private film industry which is becoming increasingly strong and active, both in production and in distribution. It is growing rapidly, and it employs hundreds, even thousands of people. Furthermore, very soon this section of the labour market will be called upon to absorb many students who have chosen cinematography over all other fields. It would be unthinkable for the government to refuse its assistance to the development of this industry, both for those already in it and for those yet to come.

It was with these three factors in mind that we attempted to work out a national film policy. Faced with the existence of federal agencies which had been set up and were developing independently of each other, and with the proliferation of private film production and distribution companies, we had to recognize the fact that despite the rising quantity and quality of films being produced, the situation

Equipment industry. The **Toronto, Ontario** our own house in order by better co-ordinating the activities of the federal institutions in this area in order to ensure more coherent development of the public sector of the

industry. The next priority was to fashion our policy so as to provide the widest possible public access to the production and consumption of our cultural wealth, in keeping with the objectives set long ago for our overall policy. In this connection, a film policy should facilitate access to professional training (schools, study grants, training courses, research), to creation (this applies to the entire team, from the script writer to the producer to the technician), to film culture (film libraries, archives, film clubs, cultural centres) and to the markets (distribution in Canada and abroad, co-production, promotion, festivals).

The measures I wish to announce to-day therefore do not constitute an overall policy; they are rather the first step in the process of reorganization and democratization. I hope that with your help we will soon be able to draw up a general bill which will meet the industry's needs and aspirations more fully.

In the meantime, here are some concrete proposals.

(1) **The creation of an Advisory Committee on Film**, consisting of representatives from the five federal cultural institutions (NFB, CBC, CFDC, Canada Council and Public Archives) and five representatives from the private sector. The task of this committee will be to initiate and supervise film studies and to advise the Secretary of State on all aspects of government action in this area. The Committee might review the present distribution system, customs regulations and tariffs, statutes governing immigration and taxation, and so on. You will understand the importance of such a committee in the development of a long-term cultural policy, and the valuable part its members will be able to play.

(2) **The opening of the National Film**

Board; here I am using the term "opening" because I think it best describes the spirit which will henceforth prevail at the NFB. For example, the Board will no longer be the exclusive recipient of government commissions; it will now have to compete with private producers for all film contracts awarded by a federal department or agency. Moreover, the NFB has begun decentralizing its production, and regional offices will be opened shortly in Vancouver, the Prairies and the Maritimes, as well as in Toronto. The Board is also becoming more involved in training producers and technicians, in order to share its experience and equipment with the greatest possible number of film specialists. Finally, the NFB will assume greater responsibilities in the production of educational and scientific films and related audiovisual material.

(3) **The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation** has agreed to increase its use of films made entirely in Canada, both NFB and private productions. It has also undertaken to co-operate with the NFB and independent companies to reach co-production and multilateral production agreements. The Advisory Committee on Film will be regularly informed of progress towards this end.

(4) Recognizing the essential part played by the **Canadian Film Development Corporation**, we have already increased its budget by ten million dollars. To ensure that this money will be used to the greatest possible advantage, the Corporation has begun reviewing its policies on distribution and on films produced for television. It will study the possibility of multilateral ventures involving the CFDC, the CBC and private distributors, the creation of consortiums for planning our presence abroad, and the establishment of

parallel distribution networks subsidized by the government.

(5) **The Canada Council** will from now on take over the present duties of the CFDC in the area of grants to technicians and producers; its budget will also be increased to enable it to award grants to professional producers and technicians for advanced research or experiments in Canada or abroad. The Council will, of course, continue to provide substantial amounts of aid to bodies concerned with the conservation and spread of films, and to those which encourage exchanges of information.

(6) **The Public Archives** is waiting for the results of a study of the possibility of setting up national film archives; in the meantime, it will continue to acquire and conserve films on a nation-wide basis.

(7) Finally, a **Film Festival Office** will be established under the Arts and Cultural Support Branch of the Secretary of State Department, to co-ordinate and administer showings of Canadian films in festivals in Canada and other countries. It is essential that we develop more effective methods of promoting, publicizing and disseminating Canadian films here and abroad, and this will be the task of the new Film Festival Office.

(8) I must not forget one last item: a **theatre for showing Canadian films** will be opened in the National Capital region. This is a pilot project, a first step in ensuring the dissemination of our films.

That was a brief summary of the main measures I wanted to describe to you to-day. I should add that the sum of \$1,423,500 has been allocated for carrying out these measures in 1972-73.

You will have noticed that very little is said about distribution in the policies I have outlined, but this certainly does not mean that we are unaware of the import-

ance and seriousness of the problem. On the contrary; as government institutions increase and direct their aid to film production, our need to know what becomes of the films so produced grows more urgent. A policy of cultural democratization would be pointless unless it guaranteed that the largest possible number of Canadians could see the films produced here. Obviously this is not the case at the moment. A report submitted to me recently by the **Toronto Filmmakers' Co-op** stresses the absurdity and the critical nature of the present situation.

We are aware of the problem, and we have begun studying closely the system of distribution in Canada and abroad. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you exactly what recommendations we will make on the basis of this study. I can only say that we are reviewing the methods of distribution used by the Film Board and the CBC; we are also looking into quota systems, federal-provincial aid formulas, parallel networks, various methods of helping distribution, and the problem of foreign ownership of our distribution companies and film theatres. Our final recommendations will be submitted to the Advisory Committee on Film, which will be free to evaluate and comment on them.

This is what I wanted to announce to you at to-day's meeting. I am aware that although this preliminary series of measures to some extent fills the gap and establishes some order, it still does not answer all your immediate needs. The machinery is now in place, however, and I hope that from now on progress will be more rapid. In concluding, I hardly need to point out that it is now your turn; your contribution will be vital in the development of any future policies.