

For a marriage of culture and industry

As the year draws to a close, Cinema Canada publishes its 80th issue, making it Canada's most prolific English-language film publication to date. Unfortunately, the mood surrounding the event is one of sadness, one of things gone wrong in that small world of Canadian cinema.

With one sweep of the budget, the Minister of Finance dealt a serious — perhaps mortal — blow to the film industry which had been building over the last years. Some applaud the move, suggesting that the industry had done little to earn special support from the public purse. "They brought it on themselves," comment those for whom only "culture" should be fostered. The sum of films exhibited to date did not reassure these critics that the industry was about to contribute importantly to the cultural welfare of the country.

Yet there are many concerned people who feel that the economics of the film industry require the regular production of exploitation films so that the infrastructure can eventually support the more serious, artistic endeavors which involve greater risk. They point to recent films by Carle, Shebib and Thomas, suggesting that the industry was just turning that corner, producing finer films. To them, the financial factors are of the utmost importance.

Unfortunately, those in government who control the public purse reflect these same dichotomies.

The minister brought down his budget for obvious economic reasons; wanting to bring tax shelters under control and move to direct-cost expenditures, film production got the same treatment as apartment building and drilling for oil. No notice was taken of the cultural dimension of cinema.

Far removed from industrial concerns are the arts councils which persist in encouraging filmmaking at the grass-roots level, knowing that the presence of co-ops and experimental filmmakers are a necessary part of film culture in Canada.

Caught between the arts bureaucrats and the economic counsellors are those whose job is to worry about "cultural industries." Neither fish nor fowl, having limited access to those who control public monies, they sit worriedly, trying to imagine a policy which would allow the inevitable marriage of culture and industry, yielding a vital and still artistically important film industry.

Only a firm understanding of the political nature of the dilemma will bring about a resolution of the competing tensions of culture and industry. A decision which is politic is, by definition, "sagacious in promoting a policy." If there was little wisdom in film policy past, which consisted of a fiscal measure with no philosophical context, there is less wisdom today. Political acumen is needed on the part of those who make decisions concerning disbursements for arts, culture and industry.

The bureaucrats need, too, to act in consort. The idea of the Minister of Finance doing away with the tax incentive just as the CRTC has completed hearings on pay-TV boggles the mind. All of the pay-TV applications were predicated on the 100% capital cost allowance, necessary to generate the funds to allow them to fulfill their performance promises. Does the new budget mean that those applications are now invalid, and that we're back to square one?

The government's handling of the film industry over the last few years raises serious questions. Foremost among them is whether it has lost the ability to govern, to make decisions which are politic.

Earlier this year, the federal government began holding public hearings on its Cultural Policy Review Committee. In March, the Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation submitted its brief to that Committee, underlining those aspects of cultural politics which it felt were critical to understanding the situation of the magazine.

Many of the comments made about the magazine are also applicable to the situation surrounding filmmaking in Canada. At the heart of both issues is the will of the government to set aside monies for cultural promotion, and to fix political objectives for that promotion.

It has been several years since Cinema Canada used its own pages to share with its readers comments on publishing on film in Canada. We hope its position paper, submitted in March and reprinted on pages 24-25 of this issue, will further the understanding of those who are interested in that marriage of art and industry in Canada today.

The editors

Prepare to engage the enemy

Film censorship in Canada will be abolished sooner than you think. Believe it.

During two years of exhaustive research into its history, I rarely came across anyone who spoke as if something could actually be done about this plague upon our national spirit. At some point, it seems that each filmmaker and film-goer had unwittingly accepted the mutilation of the medium as one of the prices one pays for living in this frustrated and frustrating land.

But sooner or later, one way or another, after a fashion (i.e. the *Canadian* fashion), Canadians may have a Charter of Rights (if their political beaux-peres should permit it). It is this aspect of the current constitutional crusades which has been challenged in Parliament and reported in the press least of all, even to the point that few Canadians have heard about it.

Is it not curious that in a country erected as such a fawning monument to middle-class mediocrity, there still exist no real civil rights? Where does the British North-America Act mention freedom of speech or assembly? No, the lofty concerns occupying the minds of our founding fathers were more pedestrian matters, such as pacifying the French, keeping the Protestants and Catholics from each others' throats, and ensuring that the British Empire would retain by legislation what little was left of its North American kingdom, what it could not maintain through genuine community.

But if our amazing new Charter survive the slings and arrows of Canada's outrageous political haberdashery, we may not only have civil rights in Canada, but an end to film censorship as well. For the new Charter does not mention the same freedom of the press for which a rabid minority of our southerly neighbours allegedly rebelled against Britain. No, it goes even further and speaks of a freedom of expression. This is indeed an important point, for so convinced have American courts been of the im-

portance of civil liberties that in a few cases they have refrained from interpreting film as a modern form of the press... i.e. you can say what you like in print (as long as Washington approves), but carrying this freedom into the cinema is carrying things too far.

Now along comes Pierre, our blessed political saviour, who tolerated so little during his earthly stay among us, but offers to dispense so much as he ascends to more abstract realms. In celebration of his transfiguration into a Founding Father, we are to be granted the right to express ourselves. And for the first time, we will have a legal mechanism by which we can take the censors and their political padrones to defeat in the courts.

Remember, when Gerry McNeil decided to fight for his right to see *Last Tango in Paris*, the only battle he won was to establish the right of Canadians to take censors to court in such cases. Until McNeil established this, the provinces were still able to argue that film was their concern only, since it is "a business pure and simple," and trade in business property is a provincial concern.

The Canadian Bill of Rights and various similar provincial acts have been largely ignored by the courts, and are no longer worth the paper upon which they were once so liberally printed. As a result, since McNeil, Canadian film censors have tottered on, willy-nilly, hoping to avoid forever their inevitable doom.

Once we have our new Charter, we will have an opportunity to ask the courts if it really means what it says. But there is a bottom line to the courts' response, this editorial and your civil rights.

It cost McNeil tens of thousands of dollars to fight on your behalf. Who is going to fund the next round?

Malcolm Dean ●

Malcolm Dean is the author of the first fully-documented history of Canadian film censorship, *CENSORED! Only in Canada*.

LETTERS

Two cheers for the censor

Cinema Canada thought our readers would be interested be interested in this exchange of correspondence between our ever-vigilant censors in Nova Scotia and filmmaker Marty Gross.

Re: *Lovers' Exile*

It is the function of the Amusements Regulation Board to give every film that is to be exhibited in Nova Scotia a rating indicating the Board's opinion as to the suitability of the film for viewing for different age groups.

The Board recommends that this film entitled *Lovers' Exile* has a RESTRICTED classification to limit its exhibition to persons who are eighteen years of age or over.

Where there is only one theatre in town, Nova Scotia regulations require that this film be shown on Saturday evenings and the restricted category be maintained. Should there be a Matinee for children on Saturday morning or afternoon, other more appropriate films must be shown.

D.F.L. Trivett,
Chairman

Dear Mr Trivett,

Recently I received a copy of your letter to New Cinema dated October 6 regarding *The Lovers' Exile* in which you refer to the "Restricted" classification your board has given that film for exhibition in Nova Scotia.

As producer and director of *The Lovers' Exile* I am writing to enquire as to what aspects of the film were deemed offensive. Complete classification of your procedures and objectives will be greatly appreciated. What precisely are the criteria for "Restricted Films"? Would any cuts in this film make it more acceptable for presentation to young audiences in your province?

Over these last few days I have been pondering this mysterious ruling. I have asked myself what objections the members of your Board might have raised towards this film. Do the various references to unsavoury activities at the Tea House seem unsuitable? Or perhaps the incidents relating to theft of bonded funds or broken contracts cause offense?

Please consider the following. Ume-gawa, the young entertainer whose life is portrayed in the film, wears numerous layers of kimono (as was the correct custom of the time) throughout the

(cont. on p. 46)