

the first canadian film awards



Waiting for the announcements of their First Prizes were Bob Anderson (third from left-non theatrical category) and Budge Crawley (third from right-First Film of the Year) at the 1st Canadian Film Awards

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Canadian Film Awards which were first presented in 1949 for films produced in 1948. The following is a report of the First Awards ceremony, originally published in Canadian Film News. Judges were Dorothy Burritt, Moira Armour, Robert Eves, Ian MacNeill and Gerald Pratley. The organizing committee included Don Buchanan, Jim Beveridge, Budge Crawley, Graham McInnes and Walter Herbert.

Four hundred people — filmmakers, distributors and users — gathered by invitation to the Elgin Theatre in Ottawa last month, saw the presentation of the first Canadian Film Awards.

Few have referred to the Canadian Awards as a cousin of the Hollywood Oscar, nor was there any touch of Hollywood about the presentation ceremo-

ny. Enthusiasm was well contained. No red carpet stretched from curb to lobby, no crowd surged forward in search of a star, and among dawdlers outside the theatre doors no constellation of cigars advertised a conclave of press and publicity agents. Dress was ordinary ("optional" — said the invitation), voices were controlled and there was no bank of flowers.

For the casual passerby the event which for the first time recognized Canadian talent in filmmaking was as decorous as prize day at Sunday school. But for the participants this was it — Canadian Films had arrived.

In the theatre lobby, 34 year old Roby J. Kidd, pilot of the event, (and assistant director of the Canadian Association of Adult Education which launched the award) welcomed guests,

introduced out-of-town guests and presented programs. Programs were mimeographed — 8 pages of text with no ads and no encomiums.

Producers, directors, script writers, sound-men, music composers and animation artists passed through the lobby in small groups. Sponsors, distributors, advertising agency representatives and trade-paper reporters dallied in the lighted mezzanine passing the good word, swapping congratulations, ringing up an occasional good-natured quip.

Now the lobby cleared. Those still arriving made no pause but hastened into the theatre. Up front the award winners settled down for the speeches.

In his opening remarks, the chairman Dr. H.L. Keenleyside, deputy minister of Mines and Resources, described the event as an important con-

tribution to "the cultural side of our civilization". The Reconstruction and Supply Minister, Robert Winters acting on behalf of the Prime Minister presented the awards. Youth predominated – one or two animation artists might have been high school boys. Here was Stanley Jackson, former school teacher, winner of the award in the theatrical class of short subjects. Still surprised that his somewhat tentative probing of a touchy subject – teaching – had been accepted theatrically, Jackson read what his program had to say about **Who Will Teach Your Child?**... "The significance of good teaching, more than ever needed in our modern complex society, is developed in a challenging fashion."

There were other challengers. A few seats away Robert Anderson who had made several film essays from the problems of twisted personalities. His **Drug Addict** with his **The Feeling of Hostility**, divided the judges and was awarded a joint "first" in the non-theatrical class. The first of these two was the film criticized by some United States authorities who disagreed with the principle that drug addicts are sick people needing sympathy and treatment rather than ostracism and jail.

Jackson and Anderson are both NFB producer-director-scripters of films on the more involved social-problems category. Both are in mid-thirties, both graduates of prairie universities. Nearby is Leon Shelly, **Beans of Bounty** producer, whose film on soybean propagation placed him with Anderson as a winner in the non-theatrical class. The judges deemed the Shelley film an excellent example of fine quality and good taste in a commercially sponsored documentary film.

French language production was represented by Jean-Paul Ladouceur, a National Film Board director-animator and Paul L'Anglais, Quebec Productions producer. Ladouceur's **Chantons Noël**, award winner in the animated film group, is largely paper sculpture (puppets) illustrating several French-Canadian carols. Ladouceur is 27, a graduate of Beaux-Arts, Montreal. This is his first puppet film. Paul L'Anglais – **Un Homme et son Péché** (A Man and His Sin) – said the program "is different, exciting, and Canadian." It is L'Anglais' first major success and has already recovered production costs from box-office receipts in Quebec province.

Of all the award winners waiting for the presentations, the Crawleys of Ottawa were best prepared with F.R. Crawley's **Loon's Necklace**, the film singled out for honours at the Second International Festival of Documentary Films in Edinburgh. The Imperial Oil Company of Canada had purchased Canadian distribution rights and placed the film at the disposal of the Canadian Education Association. Encyclopedia Britannica had contracted for world rights outside Canada. Now it was to be awarded first of the year for Canada. For the Crawleys, a filmmaking family, the moment was in the nature of a hometown reception following on foreign conquest.

There were others there. Gordon Sparling, producer of the Associated Screen News Cameo series of theatrical news-shorts, awarded honorable mention for good editing, wise selection of items, and general skill in technique. Louis Shore and Mrs. Dorothy Burritt, clever amateurs, given honourable mention for their entries **Making A Life Mask** and **Suite Two**, respectively. Of all in the theatre's front row, perhaps, the NFB's experimenter Norman McLaren

was most intent. His work which avoids the customary content of films – people, things, places – and the normal mechanics of filmmaking – the camera, klieg lights, sound track and direction, has gone unhonoured in Canada, although in Lócarno, Cannes, Edinburgh and New York it had captured the imagination of the initiated. McLaren makes the pictures directly on film with pen or brush. Lately he had even drawn sound producing a weird "music" reminiscent of bronchial bullfrogs. **Dots and Loops** (special award winner with **Un Homme et son Péché**) is noted for "humour and charm", and represents a method of filmmaking, personal and independent in the extreme. No camera made the pictures, no microphone recorded the sound – all came from the pens or brushes of the artist.

These were the people who faced the platform, who tonight were being honored, who were representative of the best in the Canadian film industry. Young pioneers each in his own field. Canadian-born and taught, these were the people whose work perhaps more than any other native art creation was best known at home and abroad. □



Dress was "optional" at the 1948 Canadian Film Awards when Dr. H.L. Keenleyside, Robert Winters and 34-year-old Roby J. Kidd, pilot of the event, gathered in Ottawa's Elgin Theatre lobby to welcome guests