

# OPINION

Kirwan Cox

## Sitting on the foggy edge waiting for Godot

Sitting on the foggy edge of the Atlantic a hundred miles closer to Ireland than Toronto in a Newfoundland outpost makes it difficult to write for a film magazine. The world doesn't have the same perspective watching the horses gazing freely or the icebergs sitting like white mountains in the mist outside Folly Point (which is above the town of Port Kirwan or Admirals Cove — depending on whether you read the No Dumping signs or the tombstones).

Newfoundland has been attracting many newcomers over the past few years who obviously prefer the view from Folly Point. Down the road is an English literature teacher from Toronto. The house I'm sitting in belongs to an artist who was born in Timmins, Ont. and some of the most outspoken Newfies — like Michael Cook — are from England. There is no patriot like a transplanted patriot.

From this place the law of the sea conference in Caracas seems infinitely more important to the survival of Canadian life than the Gaspé conference on the provinces and film. Of course, both these things are part of the same question — one from the economic direction and the other from the cultural and much to the chagrin of companies like Paramount these things constantly overlap.

One thing in common between outpost fishermen and urban filmmakers would seem to be a cynicism about the decisions and the decision-makers affecting their lives and livelihood. Will Canadian leaders ever make policies for the avowed benefit of the locals over the others? Or will Canada remain everyone else's door rest forever?

Sometimes policies — any policies — seem hopeless unless administered by the right people. Only men and women can breathe life into an idea and the best ideas often languish because the dynamic leaders weren't there. We need only look at the result John Grierson achieved at the National Film Board or Pierre Juneau at the CRTC to see inspired leadership.

Of course, these civil servants not only exceeded their authority — they created it. They seized a moment and

applied a vision they brought to their job. Rare men and women are hard to find — but too often a bureaucracy throws up the mediocre and keeps the able from positions of influence. Call it the peter principle or maybe the duchambon principle.

Gen. Duchambon was the French commander of Fort Beauséjour on the Chignecto Isthmus where Nova Scotia and Acadia once met. The fort fell to the British in 1755 and Duchambon's conduct was so questionable that he was almost court martialled.

History next finds him in charge of the defences of the Plains of Abraham when Wolfe decided to walk up them in 1759. There is no telling where Duchambon was sent next, but the French Empire lost India about this time and I have no doubt Duchambon was there.

Duchambon must have been polite and gracious. The perfect gentleman who mixed well in the salon and the mess. He was always the right man for the job.

As the last election campaign proved, leadership is the issue in a world full of Duchambons. The various cultural policies (existent and non-existent) in Canada have suffered disastrously these last two years because of a greater-than-usual absence of leadership.

For example, the Secretary of State's film officer, Robert Desjardins, spent nearly two years trying to devise a film policy with the help of a high powered advisory committee. Incredibly, he didn't do it. Two years of equivocation and smiles and failure. Some pious odds and ends (including a needed increase in the capital cost allowance) were announced by the Secretary of State four days before the election. This stop gap film policy was written by a Liberal party worker at the eleventh hour without any background except the files left behind by the film officer.

There has been a crisis of leadership in the cultural field by the present government in Ottawa which now has a majority. This government must admit (to itself if no one else) that the Duchambons have failed it and replace them with the adrenalin visionaries. Imagine a Harry Boyle running the CBC, or a Patrick Watson the NFB, or a Peter Pearson the CFDC. Of course quite impossible for many reasons, but just imagine. . . ●

# cinema canada

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