

Peter Pearson to top Telefilm position

MONTREAL – The official news of Peter Pearson's appointment as executive director of Telefilm Canada came on July 8 as minister of Communications Marcel Masse confirmed the order-in-council appointment. The announcement follows weeks of persistent rumor, and was generally well-received in the film and television industry.

Until last May, Pearson had headed up the Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund, the number-two post at Telefilm. He resigned that position suddenly and unexpectedly, following the an-

nouncement that Masse had requested André Lamy, the Telefilm executive director, to step down by August 1. Pearson then became an active candidate for the top job, finally beating out others (Ron Cohen, Frank Jacobs, Bill Marshall) rumored to be under consideration.

Pearson has fought in the trenches for Canadian film policy, and was a major voice during the early '70s when he served as president of the Directors Guild of Canada and then as the chairman of the Council of Canadian Filmmakers. On April 25, 1974, he

appeared before the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts and made this statement about filmmaking in Canada:

"We commend the government for its bold concept in taking Canada into the feature film industry.

"The taxpayers have committed \$20 million in expectation of seeing Canadian films for the first time in their neighbourhood theatres. These films have seldom appeared.

"In six years we have learned that the system does not work for Canadians.

cont. on p. 49

Masse in L.A. sends message to Majors

TORONTO – Federal Communications Minister Marcel Masse put the major American studios on notice that they must do better for Canada in a speech aimed at studio heads in Los Angeles on June 17. But the studio heads weren't there to listen. Millard Roth, executive secretary of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association, the Canadian lobby group for the majors, told Cinema Canada that studio executives invited to a private luncheon were not informed that the minister would be present. Roth said that "there was not a large representation of our member companies there."

David Silcox, assistant deputy minister in the department of Communications, told Cinema Canada that Hollywood had ample warning. "His trip was confirmed two weeks before," Silcox said. He added that nonetheless "attendance was disappointing." He agreed that none of the studio heads had attended. He named the president of distribution for Universal and the heads of distribution and production for Disney as among the most senior guests at the luncheon.

Martin Bockner, general manager of New World/Mutual Pictures, told Cinema Canada that it didn't matter who was present as long as the message was delivered and got through which he believed it had.

In his speech Masse expressed concern over the inadequate commercial distribution of Canadian films "even in our own country because historically Canada has been treated as part of a single North American market." He added that "for their part Canadian film distributors have not had the opportunity to distribute films produced in other countries or even the most commercially

attractive Canadian films. This situation is of increasing concern to the Canadian people."

In his speech Masse took pains to note that the Canadian government was responding positively to American representations about copyright. He made it clear that he expected a reciprocal response to Canadian concerns. (The Majors have been lobbying for royalty rights on cable retransmission of their product. The issue was raised in discussions between President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney at the Shamrock Conference last March.)

Masse went on to express his frustration that negotiations had been ongoing with the Majors since January with "no practical results whatsoever." He added that "all negotiations must someday come to an end. I am obliged to report back to my cabinet colleagues early in the fall on the results of our discussions. We will at that point have to consider our options."

Masse made it clear that the stakes were rather high. In a brief historical review he noted that since the 1920s "American film and television productions have pervaded Canadian screens. There have been no levies, as have existed for example in Britain and France; there have been no screen quotas, discriminatory taxes or local work requirements. Between the United States and Canada there has flourished a virtual free trade in theatrical films." The result has been that in 1984 "productions distributed by the Majors earned over 80% of the theatrical box office receipts in Canada, about \$400 million. But the screentime devoted to Canadian films held steady at less than 2%" at a time when Cana-

dians were producing "from 30 to 80 feature films a year. But how many Canadians and Americans have seen them? For example, in 1984 only one Canadian film was released by a Major."

Masse pointed out to his audience that American films cannot supply a Canadian identity. "Only Canadians can do that." He told an anecdote of Cecil B. De Mille's "Canadian" film with its American cast, American writer, American assistants, American technicians and American crew. "Then they prepared to embark for Canada. That kind of film is, of course, not recognizable as Canadian."

Masse said the days of the open market are now passed. "Canadians believe that we must support our own domestic production and distribution industries."

Masse threatened the Majors with options which included legislated limits to the cultural activities of foreigners in Canada: quotas, levies or taxes; or legislation, similar to Quebec's Bill 109 to regulate distribution.

Masse noted that while the Canadian government has been generally supportive of open trade with the States, cultural industries were specifically exempted from the liberalization of the foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) in its transformation to Investment Canada.

Whether government action will support cultural protection remains to be seen as decisions are awaited on Gulf & Western's takeover of Prentice-Hall and Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of 20th Century-Fox. In both cases the government must decide whether the takeovers will include the Canadian subsidiaries.

Reactions to appointment

TORONTO – The Ontario production industry has reacted positively to the announcement that Peter Pearson, former director of the Broadcast Fund, has been named executive director of Telefilm Canada, the federal government's film agency. Victor Solnicki, chairman of the Canadian Film and Television Association's Telefilm committee, said "it's wonderful news. Peter has had the support of a great many of us in the industry. I'm extremely pleased. He did a wonderful job as head of the Broadcast Fund. We'll have the continuity we've been seeking."

Michael MacMillan of Atlantis Films said he was "very pleased" He added that Pearson will be faced with tough decisions as a result of the rapid deletion of Telefilm's 1985-86 production allocation.

Stephen Ellis, immediate past-president of the CFTA, felt "that Peter is best qualified for the job." Pat Ferns of Primedia, was "delighted at the appointment." He said that Pearson will provide the leadership Telefilm needs.

Iain Patterson, president of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, said he was very pleased because "Peter knows the ropes and won't require a six-month breaking in period."

Peter Mortimer, executive vice president of the ACFTP, released the following statement to Cinema Canada.

"Peter Pearson has always been very committed to the development of the Canadian production industry. This commitment has taken a variety of incarnations, president of the Directors Guild of Canada, spokesman for the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, a principle in the Per-

formance pay-TV application, and, most recently, as director of the Broadcast Fund. In addition he has had a distinguished career as a director both inside and outside the CBC. He has now been appointed to possibly the most influential position in the country to shape and build the future of our industry.

"Peter has always been energetic and outspoken as well as being possessed of the courage of his own convictions. This was evident in his recent abrupt resignation from Telefilm to identify his candidacy for the executive director's position. That energy and commitment are important assets in what has to be one of the most difficult and often thankless jobs in the industry.

"I have great confidence that Peter will now bring his considerable energies and experience to bear on the job at hand – no one is more familiar with the critical 2 1/2-year timetable which presently faces our industry. I also believe that Peter recognizes fully the vital importance of full consultation with independent producers, the entrepreneurs who drive the industry, in developing new policies and strategies for Telefilm. In a true climate of consultation before the fact the ACFTP, and its Quebec affiliate, the AFPQ, will be ready and willing to work enthusiastically with Peter in building better prospects and opportunities for our industry. He's to be congratulated on his appointment."

MONTREAL – The reaction of those Quebec producers reached by Cinema Canada towards the appointment of Peter Pearson as head of Tele-

cont. on p. 51

Reactions to Minister's speech

TORONTO – Response to Communications Minister Marcel Masse's Hollywood speech has been mixed. Peter Mortimer, executive secretary of the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, is cautious about a protectionist speech in a government which has a predominantly open-door policy.

Millard Roth, executive secretary of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association, the Majors' lobby group, objected to Masse's veiled threat to withhold copyright revisions. He said that "Canada has a responsibility to itself as a country that wants to stand tall in the community of nations." He also disagreed with Masse's analysis of the situation.

"In terms of distribution of films in the U.S. our performance," said Roth, "can stand on its own. It exceeds our undertakings and the ambitions of previous ministers." He quoted figures indicating that in 1976 the Majors released four out of nine Canadian films distributed in the U.S., 1/9 in 1977, 2/8 in 1978, 7/14 in 1979, 18/22 in 1980, 9/25 in 1981, 5/13 in 1982, 3/6 in 1983, 4/5 in 1984. In his speech Masse said that the Majors distributed only one Canadian film in 1984.

Roth added that contrary to what Masse was saying there was not an adequate flow of Canadian theatrical productions. "Production activity goes

cont. on p. 53