

FRONTS WEST

by Kathryn Allison

On July 28, the provincial government issued the press release that B.C. producers have been waiting for for several years. The Cabinet has approved a B.C. film fund. Bill Reid, B.C.'s Minister of Tourism, will appoint an Executive Director and a Board to administer the fund, which will start its first year with a pot of \$2 million. While details concerning the application of the fund have not yet been released, it is hoped that the Cabinet's strong positive reaction to Paul Audley's report and recommendations (prepared a year ago) indicate that the fund will evolve along those lines. One of the major points of the Audley report was that the B.C. industry must build up its domestic productions to ensure stability and growth apart from the current boom in American production.

British Columbia Film Industry Association Board member Harry Cole was pleased with the announcement, but indicated that there was still work to be done, "We've got the fund - now we have to ensure that it goes to the right place. If it's our tax dollars, it should go to our local producers, not to American producers who are flooding in to take advantage of our 75¢ dollar." Cole was referring to a fringe lobbying effort aimed at dedicating the bulk of the fund to co-productions with L.A. producers. While the co-production idea seems insulting if not ludicrous, it has always been difficult to predict what ideas will win favour with provincial government insiders, who have harboured a stubborn distrust of local producers for years. The BCFIA has consistently maintained its lobbying efforts to convince the government that a local industry will generate jobs and revenue long after the Americans have moved on to another attractive location. However, how successful they will be in

taking provincial minds off the considerable influx of U.S. cash to the B.C. economy, for the purpose of discussing long term growth of the film industry, remains to be seen.

Telefilm's Wayne Sterloff was enthusiastic about the fund, but reiterated Cole's concern over what guidelines will be chosen to administer it. Sterloff commented that if the fund is functional in 4 to 6 weeks, there are several Vancouver producers whose projects are mature enough to take immediate advantage of it.

One of those producers, Raymond Massey (Lighthouse Films), who with Bruno Pacheco is co-producing *The Traveller*, an 85-minute drama for television, believes that the fund could be the answer to their private funding plans. The \$550,000 project, which has presales to the CBC and First Choice, was put together at last spring's Banff Television Festival, but a plan to raise \$150,000. in private capital to close the deal was thrown off course by the new capital cost rules in the federal White Paper on tax reform. Massey sees the new B.C. fund as a possible lifesaver on the project, which is slated to shoot in B.C. in mid-October.

Apparently, tax reform isn't the only wrench in the works for *The Traveller*. In spite of presales, which imply market interest in the drama, Telefilm decisionmakers had problems with the slow pace of the script, and have tried to push the story into a more commercial vein. The producers have been struggling to maintain the integrity of the project, with the help of Wayne Sterloff and Phil Keatley at the CBC, while trying not to jeopardize their chances to access federal funding. Massey describes the story as a character drama about a white anthropologist who is separated from his wife a Haida woman whose ancestral cere-

monial masks he sold years before, returns to the Coast from Montreal and tries to reconcile himself with the culture and individuals he exploited.

The film will star Tom Rack, who played Robert Oppenheimer in *Race for the Bomb*, Merrilyn Gann, and Marianne Jones. DOP will be Tom Turnbull, a partner in Lighthouse Films, with Frank Irvine editing.

Harry Cole (Erin Films) has signed a deal with Vestron (U.S. home video outlet) for his feature *Lighthouse*, which will shoot in October with Boone Collins directing. Cole is also developing a \$4 million feature about a reluctant rock 'n roll star called *Midnight Special*, and has already secured an internationally renowned Vancouver composer/musician to do the music. Cole's third project is a co-production with his New York partner Gila Zalon, called *Fire Princess* which will be shot in Canada and Italy. The \$6 million feature has private funding and backing by a U.S. distribution company. Alan Bridges (*The Shooting Party*)

will direct, and Eric Roberts (*Runaway Train*) leads the cast. It is based on the true story of J.P. Morgan's nephew, who in the late 1920's had a love affair with a socialite which ended in a murder/suicide.

Petra Films are in pre-production on *Spirit Sings*, a 90-minute dramatised documentary based on an exhibit which will be at the Calgary Olympics next spring. John Gray (*King of Friday Night, Don Messer's Jubilee*) in writing the script for the project which already has funding in place, and is aiming to shoot in B.C. and Alberta this winter.

Celebration of Canadian film

MONTREAL - A virtual who's who of the Canadian film industry gathered at the Ritz Carlton Hotel recently, strongly committed to promoting 1986 as Canada Film Year.

Only three members of the 24-member steering committee were unable to attend the afternoon-long meeting during

which subcommittees were formed and objectives agreed upon.

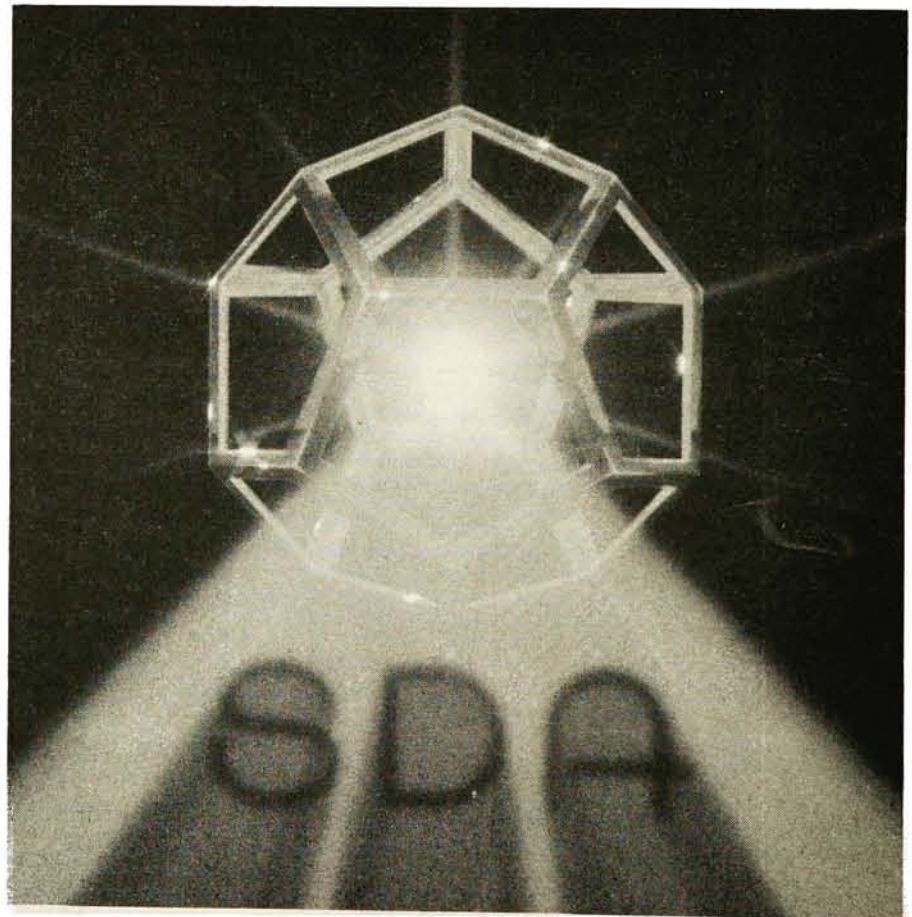
Telefilm chairman Jean Sirois is the chairman of the Canada Film Year steering committee. Five subcommittees will report to the chairman prior to the next meeting, Sept. 10, in Toronto on the eve of the Trade Forum at the Toronto Festival of Festivals.

Last year's Trade Forum was the platform used by Communications Minister Flora MacDonald to launch the Canada Film Year project which has since been placed in the administrative hands of Telefilm Canada.

"The objectives of the Canada Film Year," reads a Telefilm press release, "are to make Canadians aware of their own film heritage and film culture and to focus national and international attention on our past and present cinematic achievements."

In practical terms, promoting Canada Film Year in 1989 could mean emulating British Film Year 1985 (with a budget of

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