

## TFC figures elude committee

TORONTO — Telefilm Canada officials have been asked to explain why, less than a week before the agency's \$48 million over-commitment was announced, a Parliamentary committee was told there was no such problem.

MP Jim Edwards said he discussed the issue with Telefilm Canada chairman Jean Sirois and asked that members of the federal film and television funding corporation appear before the committee to explain the situation. Telefilm was scheduled to appear on November 17.

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The issue stems from a question by MP Sheila Finestone at an Oct. 20, 1987 committee hearing in Montreal.

Finestone asked Judith McCann, the recently appointed interim executive director of Telefilm, if the agency was presently over-committed in any of its programs in its current fiscal year.

McCann replied that Telefilm was not over-committed, according to committee minutes.

But on Oct. 26, 1987 Telefilm officials held press conferences in Montreal and Toronto to explain that the agency had over-committed its support for film and television producers by \$48 million.

Edwards, chairman of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, told *Cinema Canada* that he wants to reserve judgement on precisely what the overall problems at Telefilm are until the agency appears before the committee.

Telefilm will be included as part of the committee's final report on broadcasting that is to be presented to the minister of Communications in 1988, Edwards said. The committee will be making recommendations about Telefilm, but, he added at that point, it was too early to tell whether they are for changes or not.

"My concern is based on belief that Telefilm is a very, very effective instrument and it gets Canadian programming on the air as far as the broadcast fund is concerned," he told *Cinema Canada*. Edwards added that any "grief" Telefilm comes to is a setback for the industry.

Representatives of indepen-

dent producers, television networks, and other groups appeared before the committee during three days of hearings in Toronto. Comments on Telefilm ranged from harsh criticism to confusion and concern.

CTV network representatives told the committee that Telefilm's management problems have created serious difficulties in underwriting future Canadian productions. In fact, they said the situation has undermined prospects for at least four major CTV projects.

Network president Murray Chervoer said he wasn't sure what Telefilm had committed to CTV and added that a recent Telefilm report attributed programs to CTV that aren't even licensed by the network.

Chervoer, in response to a question from the committee chairman, explained that overall there has been a practical shift at Telefilm from industry-based judgements about the use of its broadcast fund to more cultural judgements.

CBC English television vice-president Denis Harvey said it was difficult at the time to get accurate statistics on exactly

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## Dubbing raises hackles

MONTREAL — A warning shot has been fired. The federal department of Communications has asked the government of France not to renege on an agreement-in-principle to allow television programs dubbed in Quebec into the French marketplace.

Failure to meet this commitment, signed by both governments in Montreal, Nov. 5, could mean retaliatory measures by the federal government but this is unlikely to happen, say federal government officials.

Paul Racine, director-general of federal/provincial relations, department of Communications, told *Cinema Canada* that the French government has agreed that to jeopardize a Canada/France co-production treaty, worth close to \$250 million in productions since 1984, would be a high price to pay for protectionism where dubbing is concerned.

Further talks were scheduled for mid-November in France where representatives of Quebec's French-language actors union, Union des Artistes, and private television network executives meet their opposite numbers in the French industry.

This delegation will give further assurances, says Racine, that Canada's new (July 1986) annual \$3 million dubbing fund will be used for Canadian cultural product and will not be used to subsidize the Quebec dubbing industry which, in turn, would dump American programs in the French market.

This, he says, is the main concern of the private networks and actors' union in France who are in the middle of heated contract negotiations.

"We want to assure them that dubbing in Quebec is not a threat. This is a highly symbolic issue," says Racine, who headed the federal government delegation to Montreal on November 5.

"France should not provoke a war, because this is peanuts compared to the benefits of the co-production agreement."

Since the early 1960s, the domestic market in France has been closed to films dubbed outside of the country. In television, a weekly 42 hours of foreign dubbed programming is all that is permissible by decree. The French actors' union, whose members reap a healthy percentage of dubbing fees, are insisting on a strong measure of protectionism in their most recent contract, not yet officially settled, says Racine.

Under a tripartite agreement, signed in January 1987, France, Canada and Quebec agreed to find more equitable trade arrangements in film and television.

Racine admits that the federal government has recently been pressured by the Quebec dubbing industry to take retaliatory measures in response to the French union's protectionist position which flies in the face of the tripartite agreement. The government's position is that retaliation is unnecessary at this time with negotiations underway.

"We have been pressured to take retaliatory measures now, but," says Racine, "there may come a time when it will be difficult not to."

Racine denies reports that the department of Communications has claimed that Lise

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## B.C. Film tailored for B.C. needs

VANCOUVER — British Columbia's new funding agency, B.C. FILM, has "learned from Telefilm's mistakes" and has stolen the best ideas from Alberta and Manitoba according to the man in charge, Wayne Sterloff. He should know. As former head of Telefilm's Western Region he had ample opportunity to examine the successes and failures of every film-funding agency in the country.

B.C. FILM (which was launched as FILM BC but changed to "put BC first") has \$10.5 million to invest over the next three years. The money comes from the province's overflowing Lottery account. It's expected to stimulate about \$42 million worth of production creating up to 600 short-term jobs each year. Those are the claims made by the press kit; Sterloff filled in some of the blanks at the Vancouver Film Festival's Trade Forum in October.

He says the guidelines and procedures of B.C. FILM will work differently from those customary in Toronto or Montreal. For example he expects B.C.

FILM to support production of non-theatrical films.

"I don't think federal agencies have a grasp on the nature of our film community in B.C. The development of new talent works differently (in B.C.) from downtown Toronto. We need non-theatrical projects to develop skills."

Talent development seems to be a major item on the B.C. FILM agenda. With the bulk of Canadian productions happening in Ontario and Quebec, B.C. FILM is having to play something of a catch-up role.

"What the community should be striving for is to dig up our best storytellers," says Sterloff. The agency will select novelists, playwrights and others with stories to tell and match them with screenwriters who will teach them the mechanics of movie writing. This emphasis is especially popular with native organizations anxious to commit their legends and traditions to modern media forms.

Given that the British Columbia government is made up of ultra-free-enterprising So-Creds, filmmakers were con-

cerned about Sterloff's earlier statement that the agency "will be tough and businesslike in its approach to ensure the projects we assist are winners." How does that apply to non-theatrical (i.e., often unprofitable) productions?

"The distributors will tell us what we're going to invest in. When a project comes in (it will) be evaluated on how we're going to recover the money. Non-theatrical projects will depend on distributor reaction," Sterloff elaborated.

The government departments behind B.C. FILM (Tourism, Recreation and Culture & The Provincial Secretary) see job creation as an important goal, not surprising in a province experiencing the ill-health of a resource-based economy. Sterloff says there is more to their goal than a mathematical accounting of man-hours of work created.

"A portion of our industry thrives on credits. We want to see B.C. companies receiving substantial credit (when involved in co-productions) and a

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## Spring date for broadcasting

TORONTO — "We're pawing the ground" anxiously awaiting the new broadcasting act, says the chairman of the Parliamentary committee on Communications and Culture.

Tory MP Jim Edwards said the committee accelerated its agenda so its final report on broadcasting will be ready early in 1988.

As a result it looks like the long-awaited new broadcasting act will be completed, at the earliest, sometime in the spring of 1988.

Earlier, Minister of Communications Flora MacDonald said she would not release the new broadcasting act until she

has received the committee's final report.

The committee travelled to various cities in Ontario and Quebec this fall to get public comment on the key recommendations made in the massive Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force on Broadcasting.

During three days of hearings in Toronto the committee received information on a wide variety of subjects relating to Canadian broadcasting including the future of the CBC, the problems of Telefilm Canada, the role of the NFB and the status of independent producers.



ON (EXPERIMENTAL) FILM

by Barbara N. Sternberg

Richard Johnson's **Moving Images**, is a new series that will follow-up on **New Directions**, his successful special aired last fall. **Images** will feature video, film, performance, computer and holographic art. It will be presented without a host or explanatory voice-over; that is without the traditional television format. Works will be shown in their entirety or excerpted with only a guide text on the screen to introduce the work, the artist and to identify the medium. Richard is trying to be true to both the medium of television and the artworks being presented. He is aware that this format may not work out—he is experimenting—and will modify, if necessary, according to results. Programme No. 1 includes, **Oh Nothing**, a video by Dennis Day (Newfoundland); **The Tyranny of Architecture**, an experimental film by Annette Mangaard (Toronto); **Luminarie**, computer graphics and digital video effects by John Sanbour and Dean Winkler; **Resurrected Fields**, experimental film by Henry Hesionka (Toronto); and **Hell**, a video by Adele Lister (Calgary). Each show will take on a character of its own depending on the nature of the individual works in the particular programme. Other programmes will see films by Richard Kerr (Toronto), Richard Martin (Vancouver), Martha Davis (Toronto), Stephen Denure (Vancouver), Richard Raxlin (Montreal), Chuck Clark (Halifax), Chris Gallagher (Regina) Guy

B.C. Film

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degree of financial and creative control."

"There were also concerns that U.S. production companies could deficit finance... This is not the case. There is also the problem that U.S. networks are familiar with ways of cutting costs in Canada... (for example) CBS will knock off the difference in costs on a Canadian project. What we will be doing is allowing B.C. companies to work with producers from anywhere in the world. But never will the fund consider applications where the B.C. company owns less than 50 per cent of the voting equity."

Finding storytellers, developing talent, and providing a return on investment. It's an ambitious three-year plan for an agency-come-lately. On the whole B.C. filmmakers seem confident that Sterloff eventually would like to "change the way of thinking in some of the federal agencies." There are advantages to having learned from someone else's mistakes.

McLaren and others. Richard speaks of the programme as a "visual catalogue devoted to the exploration of the moving image", and of television as the appropriate vehicle since it is the "site of the most prolific use of moving images". He also speaks of the seductiveness of technology. Yet, he is using works that question or satirize the technology as well. **Moving Images** will premiere Monday, January 11 at 10:00 pm (prime time!) on TVOntario and will continue for 10 (possibly 13) weeks. Let TVO know you're watching.

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"Culture at the Crossroads", the first Wendy Mitchener symposium, was held at York University. Joyce Wieland, who showed a short clip from her new/old film-in-progress, **Wendy and Joyce**, was among the presenters. Like much of Joyce's work, the footage is quite unassuming—like home movies. I look forward to seeing how it will be shaped into a finished film. Peter Morris, of Queen's University and soon to be of York's film department, was also a presenter. He gave an analysis of the schism between film critics and filmmakers in English-Canada and the negative impact this had on the development of an English-Canadian art cinema. Morris set forth assumptions and standards of quality applied by critics (film is a composite art; 'universal' cinema versus cinema with an authorial or regional voice; credibility and narrative unity as essential; subject matter as more significant than voice or subject matter versus filmicness as content; no distinctions between commercial and art cinema—our films should do as well at the box-office as U.S. films and somehow be 'better'). According to Morris, these assumptions blind critics to the value of the films and prevent them from recognising the intent or structural and stylistic choices of the filmmakers. Though Morris did not refer to experimental film practice, these assumptions would similarly account for the total lack of critical attention given to experimental films. The three critic/journalists Morris pointed out as writing contrary to these dominant critical ideas were Wendy Mitchener, Joan Fox and Germaine Walkington—all women you might note (as Joyce Zemans, Dean of Fine Arts at York, did) and so perhaps not incidentally capable of recognizing and appreciating a different voice.

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I just saw Astid Klein's large black and white Photoworks at the Ydessa Gallery in Toronto. Photoworks are enlargements of photos made from negatives that have been doused with acid, burned, double-exposed or otherwise manipulated. They brought to mind some of the self-processed or optically printed films I have seen—these could be frame enlargements—and I thought of how much work goes into a film where every frame is just a manipulated image and 24 go by each second. Ah, there it is, they go by—and these three of Klein stay here, in a gallery room to themselves, to be looked at for weeks. John Bentley-Mays reviewed the show and was enthusiastic in his descriptions and interpretations of this materialist work. I invite John to look again, perhaps one frame at a time, at the experimental films of, for example, David Rimmer, Al Razutis, Bruce Elder, Carl Brown, and Mike Hoolboom.

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The following are new films in various stages of production:

— Michael Snow is working on a film he hopes to have completed for his Japan tour with CCMC in February.

— Richard Kerr's **The Last Days of Living** is an exploration of the Canadian and American landscapes and the relation between the two: "I documented American landscapes in the tradition of the early formalist photographers (Walker Evans, Paul Strand) allowing there to be content in form.

— **Svetlana** by Mike Hoolboom, 70 min. black & white, is comprised of dramatic and documentary elements. The film, which looks at a disintegrating relationship, is woven through with meditations on film form and the *film noir* genre (sort of).

— Al Razutis is distributing three bits of his recent performance work: **The Tilted X**, an essay on Postmodernism; **The Far Shore**, a multi-media performance piece featuring four voices (performers to be drawn from the audience), film loops and slides; and **Metalepsis**, a film on censorship

— **Illapse**, 4 min. Super 8, by Sharon Cook and Michael Wojewoda.

— **Moving Picture Trilogy**, Super 8, by Gary McLaren which includes **White Ants Ate My Brain**, **My Trip to New York** and **Wheel of Fortune**.

— Ian Cochrane's **Shadow Project** is about the anniversary of Nagasaki.

— David Rimmer's two new works, **Sisyphus** and **Roadshow**—are dance videos. David is teaching video art production at the Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver.

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