

From Community to Commodity

*Tracing the path
of the industry between 150 covers*

BY CONNIE TADROS

Aniversaries sneak up on you, their round numbers a bold and rude reminder of the passage of time. Cinema Canada's 150th issue is no different. A cause for celebration? Certainly. But also a time to take stock.

When I went back to old issues of the magazine to check a few details, I was struck by the volume and variety of coverage. Cinema Canada has been judge, plaintiff and defendant of - as well as witness to - the growth of an industry. The magazine has been part of that growth, but also its reflection.

As I tried to draw together the various threads which made up that coverage, I found myself writing a short history, trying to make sense of the changes in the film industry over the last 16 years.

The following article is a reflection on those changes, where they've brought us and where they are leading. The quotes which accompany it are all taken from Cinema Canada during the '70s, a patchwork, anecdotal history of that formative period to which we owe, and which we blame for, much.

Let's make a movie

When I first visited the Cinema Canada offices in Rochedale College in the early '70s, I was seduced by the energy I saw. The graffiti on the walls of the building led to a joyous room, overflowing with the clutter of publishing. Pictures, texts, a typewriter were scattered about while financial records were housed in shoeboxes and no one much worried about balancing the bank books.

Down the hall, the Canadian Film Makers Distribution Centre was bustling, and the

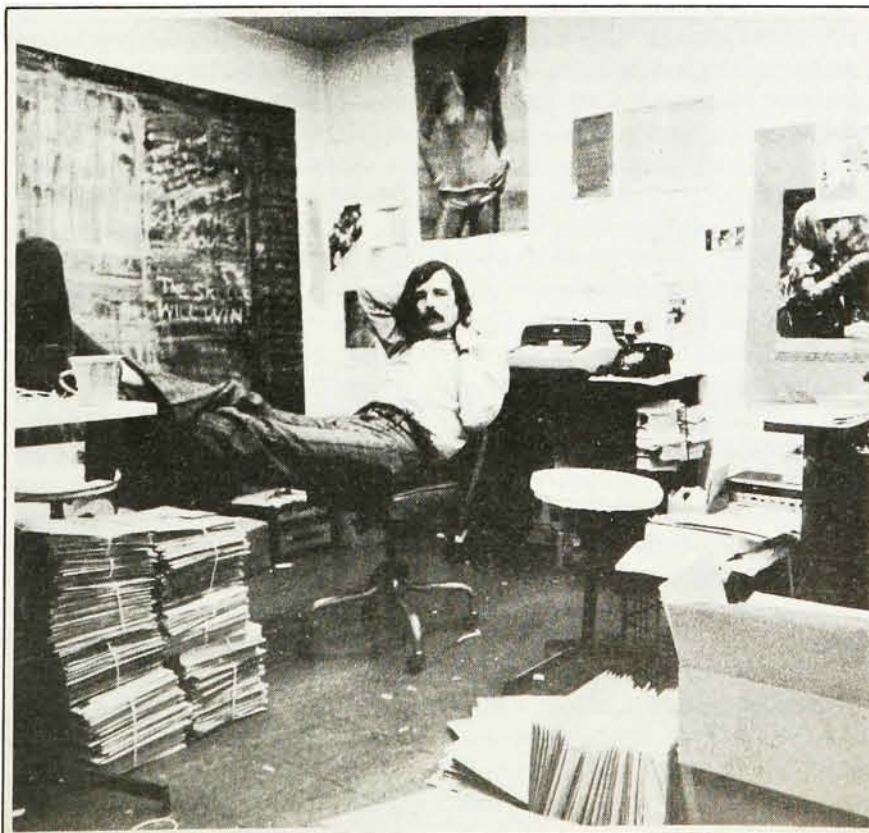
Toronto Film Makers Co-op was being organized. A lobbying group, the Council of Canadian Film Makers, was already working to attract the government's attention to the needs of the production community.

The community had behind it those first important films, Shebib's *Goin' Down the Road*, King's *A Married Couple*, Owen's *Nobody Waved Goodbye*. In Quebec, Jutra, Carle, and Lefebvre were hard at work, and Denis Héroux had seduced the public with *Valerie*.

Rochedale was a hippie haven, and if the organization of the magazine seemed dubious at best, they nevertheless had it together.

It is offensive, now, to be reassured that our cultural sovereignty will be untouched by Free Trade when the Canadian distribution industry has always been wide-open and is sorely in need of protection. And it would seem a bit of sophistry for the government to maintain publicly that it is willing to move on distribution when the Meech Lake accord diminishes its clout over the provinces, and when culture is a provincial concern at any rate.

What we have lost in the time Cinema Canada has published 150 issues is the sense of connectedness, the sense that our vision mattered and that we wanted to communicate it. Some of the young filmmakers still have it, and they are indeed our hope. But they are working in the margins, still mounting their films as guerrilla manoeuvres while those with easier access to public funds occupy the centre.



Frederik Manter at Cinema Canada '73

Production, distribution, information and promotion, supported by government policy would surely develop into a viable community.

It was a time when Kirwan Cox and Sandra Gathercole could write position papers to be signed by John F. Basset and submitted to the government of Ontario, proposing a strategy for feature films. "We accept without question that feature film is an integral part of Canada's cultural identity," they wrote boldly, outlining the quotas and levies necessary to create a viable industry.

There was, to be sure, another film community, centered around the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Laboratories of Canada (AMPLC). Here, the bread and butter producers of commercials, sponsored and educational films gathered with service companies - the labs, the rental and optical companies - to chart their own course in the business of filmmaking.

No one much argued about Canadian culture then; it was a simple given of the situation.

The Canadian Film Development Corporation, founded a few years before the magazine, was structured with a consultative committee on which sat representatives of the associations - producers, distributors, unions, the CCFM - and together, they hammered out an approach to allow Canadians to express themselves through film. The goal of it all was to create a Canadian film industry.

Meanwhile, 150 issues later

The task at hand is now to come to terms with what has become of those initial efforts to build an industry.

From the outset, the filmmakers knew they needed the government's help to create a space in North America for a Canadian vision to flourish. There was never any doubt that the talent, energy and will to produce was there.

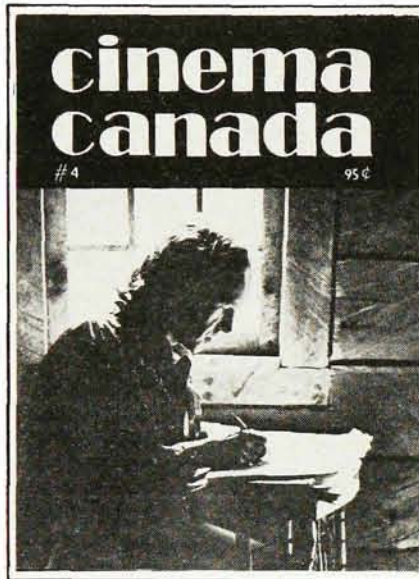
There was also a feeling of connectedness. The early issues of *Cinema Canada* are filled with news from Quebec and the west coast, and features ranged over all aspects of filmmaking. Debates were popular, and presidents of theatre chains met with members of production co-ops to debate Great Issues.

Some simple verities

It has always been true that a healthy, independent Canadian industry must have production, distribution and exhibition components. There are different levels of production, and they require different levels of distribution and exhibition, but all must be present if any are to flourish.

It has also always been true that people in business have to make money if their businesses are to sustain themselves. If there is no anticipation of profit-making, then enterprises can opt for nonprofit status, a legal definition

A glance at **Cinema Canada's '70s**



At the start

A group of films produced in Quebec has drawn praise from the *New York Times*, which says the filmmakers deserve wider recognition.

Reviewer Roger Greenspun uses such phrases as "fresh and unusual" and "evocative and skillfully beautiful" in describing the films shown in New York at the Museum of Modern Art... "Several of the films, expressing the concerns of French-Canadian nationalism, offer a revolutionary message," he adds. But the message is "generally a pragmatic plea for freedom or for a chance at a better life." March 1972

Behind the camera

I'd like to work with bigger dollies, I'd like to work with cranes. You know, stuff where you can get some of the shots that you now can't because the budget won't allow them. I'd love to have helicopter shots.

Richard Leiterman, March 1972

The aspirants

The Canadian Film Development Corp. has handed out the first \$10,000 of the proposed \$50,000 in grants to assist aspiring feature filmmakers in English-speaking Canada. Judith Steed, Gordon Nault and Peter Duffy each received \$2,000, David Troster \$1,750, Erwin Wiens \$1,250 and Michael Asti-Rose \$1,000. Sid Adilman, Morey Hamet, Don Shebib, Bob Huber and Lee Gordon formed the jury. May-June 1972

A rigged system

Foreign films long ago assumed squatter's rights to the captive Canadian audience. It is a control which they took by default and have come to take for granted. As long as Canada had no film industry of her own, the situation was tenable. But as more Canadian films are produced and arrive to be marketed, the problems of this *modus operandi* become more evident and more serious... This places an impossible handicap on the economic and artistic growth of the industry. It also reduces the Canadian filmmaker to the soul-destroying status of beggar in his own home, and prevents him from earning a living in a popular cinema which is generating over 100 million dollars a year. Sandra Gathercole, May-June 1972

At last

Today it is my pleasure to meet with you and outline the general terms of our film policy - a policy which has taken over two years to develop. I hope that we have not laboured and brought forth a mouse, and that the long period of reflection and consultation has not been spent in vain.

Gérard Pelletier, Secretary of State, July-Aug. 1972

The trigger

... I was thinking of quitting writing and I wasn't able to do films. But I saw one day *Le Chat dans le sac* by Gilles Groulx and it was wonderful. All my complexes disappeared. There was a film that caught me from beginning to the end and I had no more problems. There are very few films like that in your life, that give you energy to go on five or six years more, working. Jean Pierre Lefebvre, July-Aug. 1972

A closed door

IATSE Local 644-C raised some eyebrows in the film community last month when they rejected cameraman Richard Leiterman's application for membership. July-Aug. 1972

The publishing scene

On the question of *Cinema Canada* being only one of the trade magazines available to AMPLC members; sure, if you count the U.S., but if you look at the other Canadian film publications - *Take One*, *That's Show Business*, *Marketing*, *Canadian Film Digest* and *Impact* - you must realize that *Cinema Canada* is better suited to the

needs of the Canadian producer than any of the others.

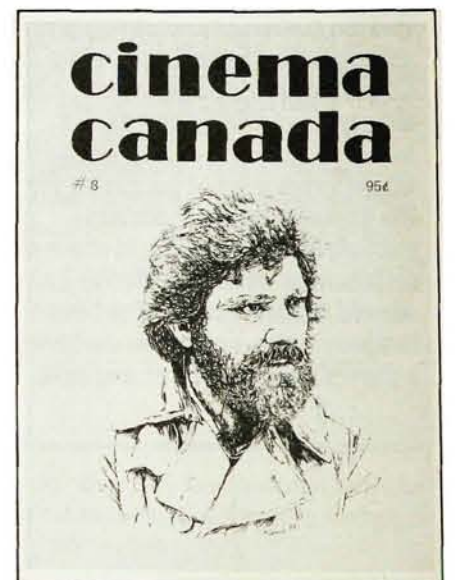
The editors, July-Aug. 1972

Private help

Harold Greenberg, president of Bellevue-Pathé, recently released the list of Canadian features which received financing through the multi-million dollar fund he set up earlier this year... *The Neptune Factor*, *The Merry Wives of Tobias Rouke*, *Quelques arpents de neige*, *Mother's Day*, *Simard*, *Slipstream*, *Eliza's Horoscope*... Oct.-Nov. 1972

Foreign experience

Don't forget 10 years ago in this country... nobody knew what making feature films was all about... I was able, fortunately, to be with Geneviève (Bujold) and watch her make films with Resnais and with Louis Malle and with de Broca. Before I made *Isabel* at least I had an inkling of what filmmaking was... Paul Almond, Oct.-Nov. 1972



The great debate

My personal opinion, in case somebody is scared to ask the question, and not representing the opinion of the industry or my corporation, in that I favour quotas! George Destounis, *Famous Players*, Feb.-March 1973

A province-by-province breakdown

B. C. saw 105 Chinese films last year, but only 12 Canadian films; Albertans, 57 from Italy, seven made in Canada; in Saskatchewan 59 British

pictures were shown, against 6 from home; New Brunswick saw 202 American movies, 6 Canadian ones; Manitobans, 19 from Germany, 9 from here; Nova Scotians, 12 from Sweden, 8 from Canada; Ontario 16 from France, and a pitiful 11 from this country; while Quebec had the opportunity to see 69 from Greece but only 26 from its own soil.
April-May 1973.

The lobby

At the past two meetings of the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, there was quite a bit of excitement, and many in the industry feel that this newly formed group may be English-Canada's last hope in unifying filmworkers on all levels of cinema into a cohesive and powerful voice. (The meetings were chaired by Peter Pearson and Richard Leiterman.)
June-July 1973

From one who knew

With a film quota, the exhibitor would have to show the films. It's like with the minimum Canadian content quota in radio. Every theatre would have to play them. I agree it's tough for the theatres, but, I mean, this is the price we must pay if we want an industry. If we don't want an industry, then let's forget it.
Pierre David, June-July 1973

Modest beginnings

You see, when the CFDC gave me the money, they didn't give it to me, they said they would accept bills up to \$9,000. So I had to find a company to lend or give me the cash. Guy Dufaux of Les Productions Prisma agreed without any papers from the CFDC. It was just a gentleman's agreement. He gave me the \$9,000 to produce the second part of the film and got the production ready in three days.
Roger Frappier on *L'Infonie inachevée*, Aug. -Sept. 1973

At Cannes

Canadians were out in force, and for the first time, it wasn't only the Québécois, as hardy souls from Toronto and elsewhere made the anglophone presence felt... Canada eschewed last year's razzle-dazzle heavy-sell approach, replacing it with what was probably the best run, most courteous and most efficient organization in Cannes.
Marc Gervais, Aug. -Sept. 1973

The promo at home

The villain in the case of *Nobody Waved Goodbye* was the Film Board's promotion department, which did everything but actually bar the public at the door of the theatre. I remember meeting Don (Owen) and Suzanne on the street the day the film opened and remarking that Don must be busy - I imagined him doing interviews for print, TV, radio, etc. No, it turned out, nothing

had been arranged. So, except for the reviews and a few other brief mentions, the film was received in silence. (Robert Fulford, Aug. -Sept. 1973)



The movers and shakers

When I got to Spain I wrote Bassett a letter and said if anything should happen that he needed me again to do that movie (*Paperback Hero*), I'd be delighted to do it because, "that movie is really about you and me Bassett. It's really about guys that were brought up to believe that they were stars." ... Bassett had. I was second cousin to Lester Pearson and all that kind of bullshit. I went to U. D. S., an exclusive private school. Both Bassett and I had a bit of that tin god mentality and we're also a couple of guys who aren't above going into confrontation scenes, even when we're wrong. Rather than back down we'll try to shoot it out.
Peter Pearson, Oct. -Jan. 1973-74

Winnipeg Manifesto

We, the undersigned filmmakers and filmworkers wish to voice our belief that the present system of film production/distribution/exhibition works to the extreme disadvantage of the Canadian filmmaker and film audience. We wish to state unequivocally that film is an expression and affirmation of the cultural reality of this country first, and a business second.
April-May 1974

Enter, the investor

Potential investors don't read scripts. Their 12-year-old daughters do... It is a very real problem in Canadian feature filmmaking that so much time and energy is required to raise the money and set up a film, that those involved are ... flirting with exhaustion before the shooting even begins.
Douglas Bowie, June-July 1974

Cutting teeth on shorts

Another favourite is Leon Marr's *Fountain*...

The subject of the film is simply one of those antiseptically repulsive, commonplace water fountains, stuck on an equally antiseptic, concrete-block wall, in the sterile hallway of one of those architectural disasters we call schools. That's the subject. But the content of the film is so much more!

Rick Hancox, June-July 1974



A producer of shorts

Deepa Saltzman is the prettier half of a husband and wife filmmaking team. With her husband, Paul, they together comprise Sunrise Productions, a company dedicated to make movies with a positive, optimistic outlook. The company is run from their elegantly furnished Walmer Road apartment near Toronto's Casa Loma.
Sept. 1975

The horror of it all

"The true subject of horror films," says David Cronenberg, "is death and anticipation of death, and that leads to the question of man as body as opposed to man as spirit." That's one of the most important aspects underlying Cronenberg's *The Parasite Murders*, and listening to him discuss the ideas behind the film makes it very difficult to place the movie in the context that *Saturday Night* critic Marshall Delaney and *Globe and Mail* critic Martin Knelman have: a cheapie exploitation feature. Delaney went farther; he implied that Canadians should not desire a film industry that would produce such a film, and suggested rather strongly that the Canadian Film Development Corp. should be ashamed of putting money in *The Parasite Murders*.
Stephen Chesley, Oct. 1975

National s & m

Why do I spend so much time flagellating my friend John Hofsess? First, because he has repeatedly asked me to express in print my dissatisfaction with his book; and secondly, because he exemplifies to a startling degree what he himself describes as the "cultural schizop-

spelling out the limits of a given undertaking.

A third truth is that the political entity called "Canada" is a vulnerable one. The part of the country which stretches three thousand miles from east to west and stands two hundred miles high from the U.S. border north is particularly troubled by incursions from the south.

The federal government has long known that the articulation of Canadian culture and its reinforcement among its citizens is the only sure defense against American aggressions, both political and cultural. It has known that once Canadians feel like Americans and can see no difference in the two countries, then union must follow for the economic promise inherent in the size of the United States would be the determinant. This union may not be a formal, total integration, but as the free trade discussions amply show, many Canadians are already seduced by the promise of the "free" market and don't consider important the cultural price we will surely pay.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board were founded to draw the modern lines of defense against certain incursions. Creating and disseminating messages of unity, examining and reflecting those images which make Canada unique, they have been of overriding importance in maintaining a Canadian identity.

Some interesting hypotheses

Pressured into sharing responsibility for production, especially for the production of dramatic material, the government established the Canadian Film Development Corporation, hoping that the private sector might prove a vigorous and innovative alternative to the government-run organizations which were bogged-down bureaucratically and becoming intellectually and spiritually stale.

Feeling financially strained, the government also hoped that incentives for private investment might create a money pool which would allow it to diminish its support to the production of cultural material, all the while maintaining production at levels which would ensure Canadian content. To this end, The Capital Cost Allowance was established in 1974.

Some misguided notions

As the government tried to sort out how it might create room for the private sector, it established a point system, postulating that numbers of Canadian participants added up to Canadian culture. By monitoring quantity, quality would somehow evolve.

The Canadian Certification Office was created, and although it initially had no mechanism to police its regulations, it was thought adequate to facilitate the creation of valid Canadian films.

As energy built up, resulting from the tax

shelter initiatives, Michael McCabe as head of the CFDC decided that what was lacking in the equation was American know-how, and he encouraged Canadian producers to find American executive producers to shepherd certain projects along. American stars were introduced to insure box-office success, and American world-sales agents picked up our features to enhance foreign sales.

It followed that entrepreneurship among Canadians was to be discovered and developed, and the entrepreneurs arrived: John Turner imported Harry Alan Towers; the Ph. Ds Julian Melzack, Bruce Mallen and Jon Slan got involved; distributors Pierre David and Robert Lantos turned their hands to production while lawyers Garth Drabinsky, Ron Cohen and Robert Cooper joined the swollen ranks of producers.

Quantity, by some mysterious mechanism, was to convert itself to quality, enticing the public by displays of Canadian production. The alchemists were to be Americans and as yet untried others, new to production in Canada. Money through the shelter was the grease for the new machine.

There was little concern about the weakness of the Canadian distributor; indeed, they became all but invisible during this period.

World sales agents from California played an important role, made money and became strong - the name of Carolco with its Panamanian bank account comes to mind. Canadian titles abounded, slick press kits were made and Canadians beat the drums internationally, apeing American promotions. No one who was at Cannes in 1979 can forget the embarrassment of the "Canada Can and Does" campaign with all its flashy hype and mediocre films.

The fact was that producers were not concerned with distribution. The government, in what proved to be a totally misguided reading of the industry workings, discounted pre-sales to distributors from the monies which were considered "at risk" for tax purposes, removing any incentive on the producers' part to deal with the marketplace. The money needed for production was all to come from the shelter and was all in place before principal photography began.

The only incentive to make money with a film was to pay back the investors, and this proved meager incentive indeed.

Let's make a deal

With the arrival of the tax shelter and the new deals, the ability of the milieu to deceive itself became truly phenomenal.

What no one said but everyone knew was that Canadian films were now being made almost exclusively because of the highly artificial financial situation created by the 100 per cent Capital Cost Allowance in the federal budget. Though the industry took on the trappings of a market-oriented industry, with its agents and

promotions, the only place money was changing hands was between the producers and their investors, and this turned out to be a one-way exchange.

Structural change was everywhere, a new reflection of a new time. Backed by the American majors, the Motion Picture Institute of Canada was founded to out-lobby the CCFM which it did in short order. Representing no groups, responsible to no one but a few hand-picked members, the MPIC held elite conferences, explaining the intricacies of tax shelter financing, offering the podium to American experts and brokers, sapping the will of Canadians to be responsible to a unique vision.

Again, no one insisted that Canada should have distributors, capable of taking films to market. No one dared remind the community that the films had to be seen and that money should flow from the box-office if any continuing synergy was to develop.

The new producers saw things differently, and broke up the old organizations. Refusing to participate in the Canadian Film Awards which they did not dominate, they created the Academy of Canadian Cinema, inviting the chief lobbyist of the Majors to serve as treasurer. Unhappy with the rowdy discussions at the CFDC, the consultative committees were abandoned, ending any creative input from directors, actors or technicians.

The producers themselves fell at odds, and splinter groups formed. First, the Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers (CAMPP) broke from the AMPPLC which reorganized into the Canadian Film and Television Association (CFTA), and then CAMPP itself splintered as the Association of Canadian Motion Picture Production Companies a. k. a. the Gang of Nine - the big money, big-profile producers of supposedly comical features - formed its own private club.

The revolution produced by the tax shelter days was to center the Canadian industry firmly on the producers. Gone was the community of voices which had been present at the outset. Once, names like Ambassador, Mutuel, Danton, Cinepix came to mind. Directors Pearson, Shebib, Carle, Lefebvre, Brault were concerned. One could imagine a meeting in which these men, for they were all men, could sit in the same room with producers, unions and the CFDC to talk about the future. Now, the creative tension of the art and the business was dissipated. There was no direction which was thought to be beneficial to all. Arrogance, fueled by the large sums of money which had been made, was the order of the day.

No one was concerned that obligations were not being met. When, within a year of the bust of the tax shelter the Ontario Securities Commission published lists of producers who were in default of reporting to their investors, it hardly made a ripple.

hrena" and "cultural ambiguities" of English Canada. The only way to develop an unambiguous sense of how and why a Canadian cinema is important is by considering the contribution of artistic culture to the political and economic independence of a country. And in turn we must ask: What collective ideal is furthered by the continuing independence of Canada from the U. S. ? Hofsess has no answer to this question. Through the talk of irrational loyalties to crazy prejudices, of being "Canadian in a profound psychological sense" not a hint emerges that unless Canada can take hold of its political independence from the U. S. to develop a socially progressive, non-exploitative society, the survival of the maple-leaf film industry is a matter of no importance at all.
Robert Fothergill, Oct. 1975

And other perversions

Here in New Brunswick, making a film can be like establishing a bordello; first, no one really believes such things can exist here, secondly, seems no one wants to take part in it because it's immoral, and thirdly, it can never be as good as the ones that exist in Toronto anyway.
Arthus Makosinski, Oct. 1975

Back to business

Later, asked by Robin Spry why Odeon had chosen the year when the least films were being made to try out the quota, (Charles) Mason said: "We're sure we can meet the quota, but if we can't that's going to mean that you haven't made enough films." He couldn't name five feature films likely to be made in 1976... "If film is entertainment," commented Mason, "then it's business. And if it's business, then it's intended to make money. If films are art, then they should be subsidized like theatre and opera which have never been financially profitable." As for Odeon chipping in... "That would be like asking Ford to finance Bricklin." Spry's conclusion was that the big distributors were just trying to "compound the disaster." Faced with Mason's comments, those concerned with the fate of Canadian film could only insist on the urgency of legislated levies, as well as quotas.
Nov. 1975

Seen from Quebec

At the moment, it's awful. Nothing's happening. No films are being made in most of Canada including Quebec. Actually, it's worse in Quebec because of that damn law (the first Law Concerning Cinema). The sad thing is that we were the ones who asked for it, were violent about it. We occupied the censor board last year in order to get it. But the situation is going to be worse with the law than without. The Institute responsible for film in Quebec has a better representation from the commercial and industrial sectors than from the film directors, technicians and actors. As usual, the creative

aspect of film is pushed aside by the business people.

Claude Jutra, Nov. 1975

All that glitters...

Who needs "Hollywood's Canada" to depict us as rustic nincompoops when we so often play the role in real life? Serving a dress-up meal with hard liquor may seem like a small gaffe in the pantheon of human error, but it proved a depressingly appropriate and revealing detail of the Canadian Film Awards generally. That is scarcely surprising. Taste is indivisible. It's highly unlikely for someone to have good taste and a lively sense of style in one area of life and bad taste and absolutely no style in everything else. So, as went dinner, so went the Awards.
John Hofsess, nov. 1975



A question of courage?

One of the negatives I've experienced at first hand is in my efforts to package programmes. There's a reluctance, a lack of courage, or fear of making decisions that is rampant among the TV executive group... I can't understand why, because it is impossible to get TV off the ground in Canada without making it some kind of co-production deal with the U. S. ... People up here are too slow to move.
Joe Scanlon, Dec. -Jan. 1976-77

A question of catharsis

I had been struck by the similarity between the political process and that of filmmaking. Both are blood sports: combative, dangerous, invigorating, frustrating and, I suppose, cathartic. The immense effort to realize even the most picayune result seemed so closely alike in the two fields of endeavour that at the end (of his term as president of the Directors Guild of Canada and as chairman of the CCFM) I could no longer tell whether I had spent two years and 10 days in politics in order to make films, or 10 years and two days in filmmaking in order to practice politics.
Peter Pearson, Feb. 1976

A political question

An application for an inquiry into the market practices of the foreign-controlled theatrical film distribution and exhibition system in Canada was filed today with the Combines Investigation Branch of the department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in Ottawa. (Applicants were Pierre Berton, Michel Brault, Kirwan Cox, Robert Fulford, Sandra Gathercole, Allan King, Peter Pearson, Budge Crawley and Gordon Pinsent.) March 1976

Cry from the colonies

Film is more than a business. It remains one of the most powerful expressions of mass culture in the world. That is just as true in Canada as anywhere else. Will we ever know how much of our so-called identity crisis grew out of evenings at the movies? Because what we see on the screen is somebody else - familiar and heroic - but not ourselves. We're comfortable with it and this is the trademark of a colonial culture... We now need a further commitment - to put Canadian films into the national distribution system where they belong. If we don't see today as the time to build on the momentum, then we may lose it all, and that, to put it simply, would be a tragedy. (Gordon Pinsent, April 1976)

Look to the future

It was useful to consider quotas, levies and government aid but to be frank, I was bothered by its (the CBC program *Home Movies*) approach of personifying the McLuhanism: that is, we often try to go forward by looking through our rearview mirrors. By this, I'm referring to Gordon Pinsent's closing lines most passionately spoken, "Our lives are shaped by the movies." They certainly were in Gordon's generation and mine, but I'm not too sure that it's true today. While it is true that big sums of money are made by one out of 10 features, the hard facts are that cinema attendance in all western countries has declined disastrously and, in many countries, the decline continues. It would appear to me that it is television that has supplanted the big screen in shaping our lives. (God help us!) (Sydney Newman, April 1976)

Talk about competition!

The fact is that Canadian films are being made and getting international distribution. It is strange that people like Harold Greenberg and David Perlmutter weren't even mentioned in this program. Was it because they are doers not talkers; and it would have ruined the program to show successful Canadian feature film producers? ... Canadians willingly spend \$200,000,000 annually to see movies; and \$400,000,000 unwillingly to support the CBC. Untrue? Then look at the television ratings in those areas where the CBC has commercial competition. Private enterprise will beat government-legislated entertainment every

time; and that's where Canadian culture sits. Is it any wonder that the CBC program preceding *Home Movies* was titled *Dam, the Beaver?* Charles Mason, April 1976

The end of expectations

Don Shebib says it isn't worth the fight anymore. People are grumbling about the demise of Time Canada and threats to their cable links with Byzantium. Any attempt to Canadianize things is regarded in some weird way as a threat to our hard-won freedoms... These thoughts were flashing through my mind as I stood up in front of a class of junior college students and tried to explain why a course in the cinema of Canada should be of concern to them... I quoted both Atwood and Grierson in connection with the whole idea of culture being a mirror. In order to identify ourselves, to recognize ourselves, we need to get an image back and no other country cares enough about us to do this. It's something we have to do for ourselves. As I talked, I found myself facing a sea of scepticism. The years of Can. lit. courses, of boring poetry and history lessons, the thousands of hours of American television, movies and music had taken their toll. I quickly realized that most students regarded any discussion about Canada as a colossal pain in the ass. Partly out of curiosity, partly out of masochism, I asked them to write down their feelings about Canadian culture. What I received surpassed my bleakest expectations. Ron Blumer, April 1976

View from the top

I think Canadians have been profoundly influenced by the American film industry and so they tend to look for something comparable. Their tastes have been influenced and their television viewing has been influenced. That to me is not a particularly healthy situation. But I'm not sure it can be turned around. Hugh Faulkner, Secretary of State, May 1976

View from the migrants

My impression is that animators are like migrant fruit pickers. They go where the action is. I was always amazed when I would go to New York and meet people, and find out where they worked and for what studios they worked, and then I'd go back a year or two later to find out half the studios didn't exist anymore. But the people were still there, working under different names and in different combinations. It all sounds like animation is insecure, but then I'm suspicious of security as an end. Jim McKay, Aug. 1976

From the Tompkins Report

Film, like broadcasting, is an important element in the preservation and development of social and cultural values, The market for Canadian films is restricted by the distribution system,

For a moment, the focus became clear. One either participated in a communal adventure towards the creation of a national cinema, or one was reduced to a commodity in the American marketplace.

A loud, sane voice

In the midst of those heady, chaotic times, as the global production budget for features rose yearly from \$5 million to \$60 million, and then to \$145 million and finally to something around \$200 million, there was a sense that the direction the industry was taking would lead to disaster. Not only were those who could not keep pace complaining, so were many participants. There was something profoundly unreal, disconnected, absurd about those films, and cynicism was rampant among those who worked on the big-budget films, and bought new homes and flashy cars.

When the magnitude of the wrong-headedness became undeniable, CAMPP, now reduced to a handful of producer/filmmakers of the original guard, reacted with a weekend conference on National Cinema. Suddenly, that same scruffy group which had gathered at Rochedale was back. Individuals had gained experience, many had new wealth, some had made interesting films. But, in the main, the feeling was that the reality of a Canadian cinema was draining away. Big money had become an impediment and not a facilitator and finally the producer/filmmakers of CAMPP dared ask, What was to be done?

In asking the question, it gathered a larger community of filmmakers around it: Australians who felt strongly about their national cinema, and David Puttnam of the U.K., not yet the head of Columbia nor the producer of *Chariots of Fire*.

For a moment, the focus became clear. One either participated in a communal adventure toward the creation of a national cinema, or one was reduced to a commodity in the American marketplace. And while it might happen that the product of a national cinema could indeed make its way in the American marketplace, as *Chariots* was soon to do, it was not true - never true - that a film tailored to the American market could contribute in an important way to the national culture of another country.

Soon afterward, the house of cards came tumbling down. The public investors turned their backs on the industry, deeply disturbed by the lack of responsibility producers felt toward their investments. The tax shelter days ended with a shortfall of something like \$48 million between projected production and monies available. Some lawsuits were filed, some

bankruptcies declared or narrowly averted. Julian Melzack returned to Europe and reportedly wrote a book about French wines. Bruce Mallen went to Hollywood to develop real estate and continue in finance. Today, Pierre David, Bob Cooper and Jon Slan are also in Hollywood. Drabinsky abandoned production and Cohen returned to the law. Of those mentioned above, only Lantos has successfully made the jump from a start in tax shelter days to a career in Canada.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch

During this entire period, the federal government remained committed to making this industry work. As if fascinated by the magic of the image, its power and the power of the people it attracted, minister followed minister, promising measures, adjusting old ones, trying to get it right.

Yet early on, Secretary of State John Roberts had got it right. He knew that if anything were to work, the verities applied. An industry without a strong distribution sector would be no industry. There could be no compromise with the American distributors. There must be levies and quotas. The government must have the will to act.

His position was submitted to Cabinet. He proposed distribution legislation of sweeping importance. He was soundly rebuffed by his comrades in Cabinet. That was the end of distribution legislation in Canada. It was 1977.

The great lie

All the rest has been posturing. Every secretary of State, every minister of Communications, every single study ever commissioned by the department on distribution or the film industry has come to the same conclusion. One must control distribution if one is to create the marketplace for interesting Canadian productions which might eventually liberate the government from its role as primary banker to the industry.

Yet each minister has eventually come up against the Americans. Many have made the pilgrimage to Hollywood; all have met with the master lobbyist of the American Motion Picture Association, Jack "Boom Boom" Valenti, as Robin Williams so aptly named him. Charming, single-minded, and iron-willed, Valenti has threatened and cajoled, explaining patiently the absurdity of Canadians getting into a business which the Americans do so much better, film distribution. And each minister has capitulated, not really to the Americans but to the Canadian lack of will to seize our independence.

Were the ultimate pressures to come from without, we might better deal with them. But the final arbitrators are Canadians, those who left for Hollywood long ago and those who depend on Hollywood today; they convince our

government that economic independence for the Canadian film/television industry is unnecessary and unrealistic. And this, despite the many proofs that a film, properly structured, can make it at home on its own terms.

So much for the verities

It follows, as day does night, that if there is to be a healthy, independent Canadian film industry, and if businesspersons are still to make a profit, then they must deal with the market at hand.

The market, a place at which money changes hands to allow production and distribution to transpire, eventually moving a product to a consumer, had failed to develop in Canada. Yet the government remained committed to the fabrication of Canadian images: films and programs.

Ignoring the reality so amply documented in its various studies, the federal government has repeatedly tried to overcome its lack of will in distribution by throwing yet more money into production. It postulated that if distribution were the problem, production might profitably be geared toward television. At least there, Canadians controlled the outlets called CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, Télé-métropole, not to

mention Global, City and the other regional stations across the country.

The Canadian Film Development Corporation was rebaptised Telefilm Canada, as innocuous a name as could be found, and the Broadcast Program Development Fund came into a lot of money, to be distributed to producers who could weedle a broadcast license from a television station, interested in programming their productions. Given television's voracious appetite, obtaining a license has never proved a particular problem.

The result was curious. Suddenly, there was a place where big money changed hands: Telefilm Canada. There was also, seemingly, a distribution outlet: television. Superficially, it looked like a marketplace had been created through which artists could reach a public.

The tube

The nature of a tube is narrow, constraining, and hollow. Webster's Dictionary reminds us that it also refers to an underground railway.

Moving production from the domain of the theatrical feature, where we had no control over distribution, to television where, ostensibly, we exercised control, was simply a diversionary

with the result that output and work opportunities are lower than they should be... Film directors in general are less concerned about the money they make than about the establishment of a distribution system that will permit their films to reach wider audiences both in Canada and abroad.

Oct. 1976

From a banned filmmaker

To the CFDC, film means "culture"... and preferably "high culture"; but failing that, the cinematic equivalent of Norman Rockwell kitsch will do. But what we must never, never have are films like *Last Tango in Paris*, *Dog Day Afternoon* or (heavens!) *Emmanuelle*, films with bite and verve which, whatever their artistic merit, strike a nerve among filmgoers and prompt lineups around the block. A Canadian film should be "worthy" rather than "exciting" - the kind of film that gets polite applause. No lightning and thunder please. No passion or shock. No stretching of sensibilities, no violation of genteel taboos.

John Hofsess, Oct. 1976

From a draft of a film policy

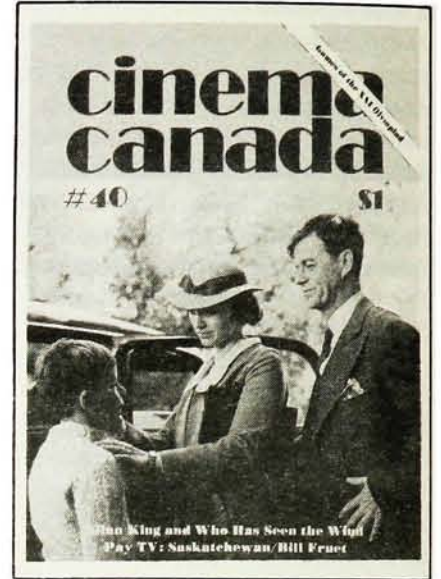
There can be no certainty at the outset, in the event of the transfer to the private sector of a substantial portion of the non-theatrical film production now carried on 'in-house' by the NFB and the CBC, that the private sector will be capable of delivering a viable film industry in this country, even with the appropriate kind and measure of government support; that it will become competitive with foreign film producers and, at the same time, that it will serve the nation's interest in respect of film as a medium of cultural expression. The most one can say at this time is that conditions ought to be such as to permit it to show what it can achieve...

Nov. 1976

Making one's way

Fournier knows from experience that it takes at least six months to properly develop a film script that has any value. So it's no way to earn a living, given that "the more ambitious a script, the less its chances of being made," added to the fact that nobody is willing (or able) to invest more than \$10,000 in its development. So if you do two in a year and a half, allowing for a short period of incubation, you're living off a very small salary. The only way to make it worthwhile is to also collect the director's cut - and the editor's and the cameraman's and the producer's... Partly because of this, Claude Fournier is convinced Quebec's industry is doomed. He's grateful for the role he's been privileged to play - that of a skilful artisan with a good sense of humor.

Nov. 1976



Scripts thin, scripts fat

I am sure producers and directors will scream at the suggestion they are not available and do not read scripts, and I am sure they will all protest vehemently and say they do not now, nor have they ever, thrown scripts into File 13. Similarly writers are protesting the statement there are no decent scripts in Canada. We have scripts. We just don't have any way of getting them to the people who might be able to do something with them.

Cam Hubert a. k. a. Anne Cameron, Feb. 1977

A broadcast strategy?

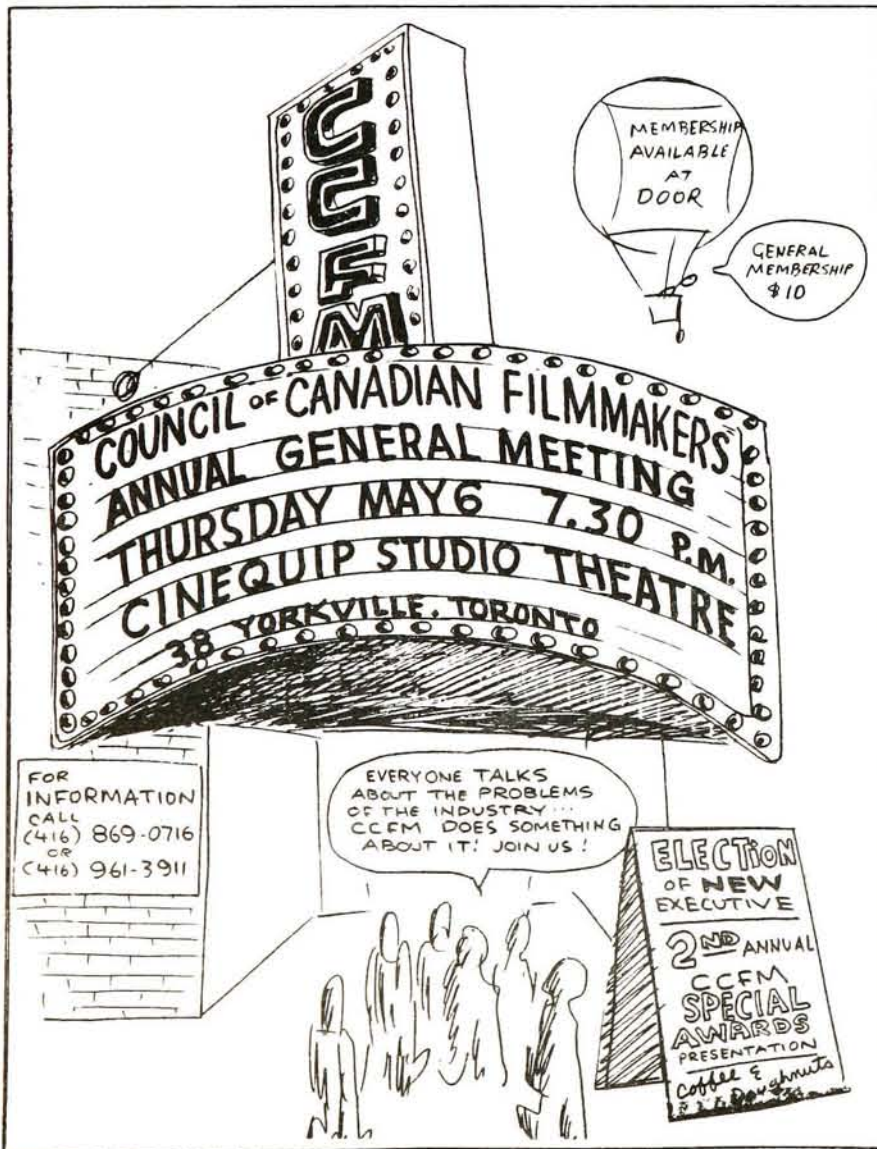
We need an entirely new CBC which, together with a properly organized pay-TV agency, would herald a new era in Canadian broadcasting, one in which all Canadian artists would have a fuller and more complete part in the creation of our arts and entertainment. It will take an earthquake to bring about this happy situation, of course, and as we all know that earthquakes don't happen in Canada, we don't expect anything to change. Our screens, like our lives, will simply become more and more American, and pay-TV will probably be run by Famous Players in association with Odeon Theatres who will dutifully inform Madame Sauvé (minister of Communications) that yes, they will enact a voluntary quota for Canadian films.

Gerald Pratley, Feb. 1977

The global view

I'm not a fence-sitter. I have very definite ideas. I think that competition has got to be good for the industry. I think a maturity for our screenwriters, producers, directors will only come about if they are forced into competition with their counterparts around the world. It's the only way. Otherwise, we'll never be accepted as an industry around the world.

Len Herberman, Feb. 1977



The Quebec cinema law

Instead of heralding a fresh start for the industry, the law signaled the beginning of the end. Scandals in the government and internecine battles in the industry were the only sign of life over the last year. It took (Denis) Hardy 18 months to name five of the seven members of the Institute which the law had created. It took more than 20 months before the DGCA had a permanent director. One wondered whether there was not a conscious desire to let the situation worsen in order to exercise fuller control over it later. Looking around us today, one sees that the covert forces which have long affected Canadian cinema, and especially commercial filming in Quebec, may be close to this goal.
March 1977

Harcourt asks the ultimate question

In this vast country of ours, plugged in by cable to all that is most attractive in the United States; in this Canadian nation that has been nurtured on the passive virtues of respect for history and for law; in such a country, regional though our culture may be, it will never be allowed to express itself in the sphere of film and television without some federal determination to utilize the popularity of the American product to help finance our own... Do enough Canadians care about this matter to make it appear to Ottawa an important national issue?
April 1977

Ambient schizophrenia

No, for me, one of our greatest problems has been the government's schizophrenia over whether they should be creating art and culture, or entertainment and commodity. So, as with much else in this country, we emerge with a compromise which suits none of us because it's not decisive enough. It's not so much a question of commercialism vs. art as getting behind whatever we're doing 100 per cent to support it, be it quotas, levies, free enterprise or a nationalized industry.
Piers Handling, April 1977

Do it yourself at Cannes

With every other country relatively well behaved - sticking to the officially approved methods of publicity... nasty little stickers began defacing sidewalks and public monuments. *Rabid* kept sticking to your shoes as you crossed the street and *Cathy's Curse* glared at you with her electric eyes from every second lamp post. It was a wonderful testament to the Duddy Kravitz spirit of our country that even in the midst of the most elegant cocktail party we couldn't behave ourselves. Perhaps the David and Goliath award should go to the producers of *The Rubber Gun*... Armed with nothing more than a stencil and a can of spray paint, bands of

renegades would steal out in the middle of the night, and while the Nat Cohens and Rossis were obliviously sleeping off their wine and quail dinners, sidewalks, walls and streets would become living billboards for *The Rubber Gun*. For one member of the spray team, the big fear was not whether he was going to be caught by the police, but whether he was going to have the humiliating experience of being seen by some starlet on his hands and knees painting the curb. On the second night, the worst happened; as he was defacing a fashionable crosswalk, he looked up to find himself at the feet of the original Ilsa of porno film fame - boots and all - looking down at him with a mixture of amazement and contempt.
June 1977

Slow, slow...

Some years ago I expressed optimism that the Federal government was moving toward the enunciation of a film policy, even though that movement seemed to most of us to be glacial. I am a little alarmed tonight... We must focus our energies and talents on the basic questions. The proper way to do this, in my opinion, is to identify what will best serve the public interest, and then work to ensure that this public interest is properly and effectively served.
Jack Gray, June 1977

A case of the giggles

I'm beginning to give up hope on Canadian films. I really am. I go, I'm very responsible, I sit through garbage that I'd ordinarily not endure for 15 minutes. And all because it's Canadian... Sometimes, when I'm really bored, or my intelligence is really being insulted, I giggle. And that was what I did in *The Far Shore*. I giggled because I couldn't believe in the people. I giggled because they talked like no one I had ever heard in my life, like slogans out of a badly written political pamphlet. But mostly I giggled because if I hadn't, I'd have been very angry that Joyce Wieland had taken someone like Tom Thomson and made him into a sponge for all of her fantasies about Art, and for all of her neuroses about men, and for that sappy complacent kind of Canadian nationalism that has made just about every feature film made in English Canada appear ridiculous.
Douglas Ord, June 1977

The other cheek

What Canada needs, and needs to value, are filmmakers with independent views. This can't be legislated and if the filmmakers don't cherish their unique perceptions, the government certainly won't... "Art feeds on margins" wrote Jonas Mekas in 1960. The independent filmmakers in Canada should begin immediately to take a hard look at their culture, and the films they are making from it and bringing to it. They should take their art and think it through. If they

tactic. Not that this new production didn't have many happy consequences - one need only think of the high quality of children's programming produced privately - but it obscured the principal problem, the lack of government will to expropriate the American theatrical distributors and take hold of our own business.

In the years following the establishment of the broadcast fund, producers had to sell their ideas to Telefilm Canada. That was where money changed hands. There was never, however, any philosophy at Telefilm concerning Canadian production; if the broadcasters wanted it, it must be good.

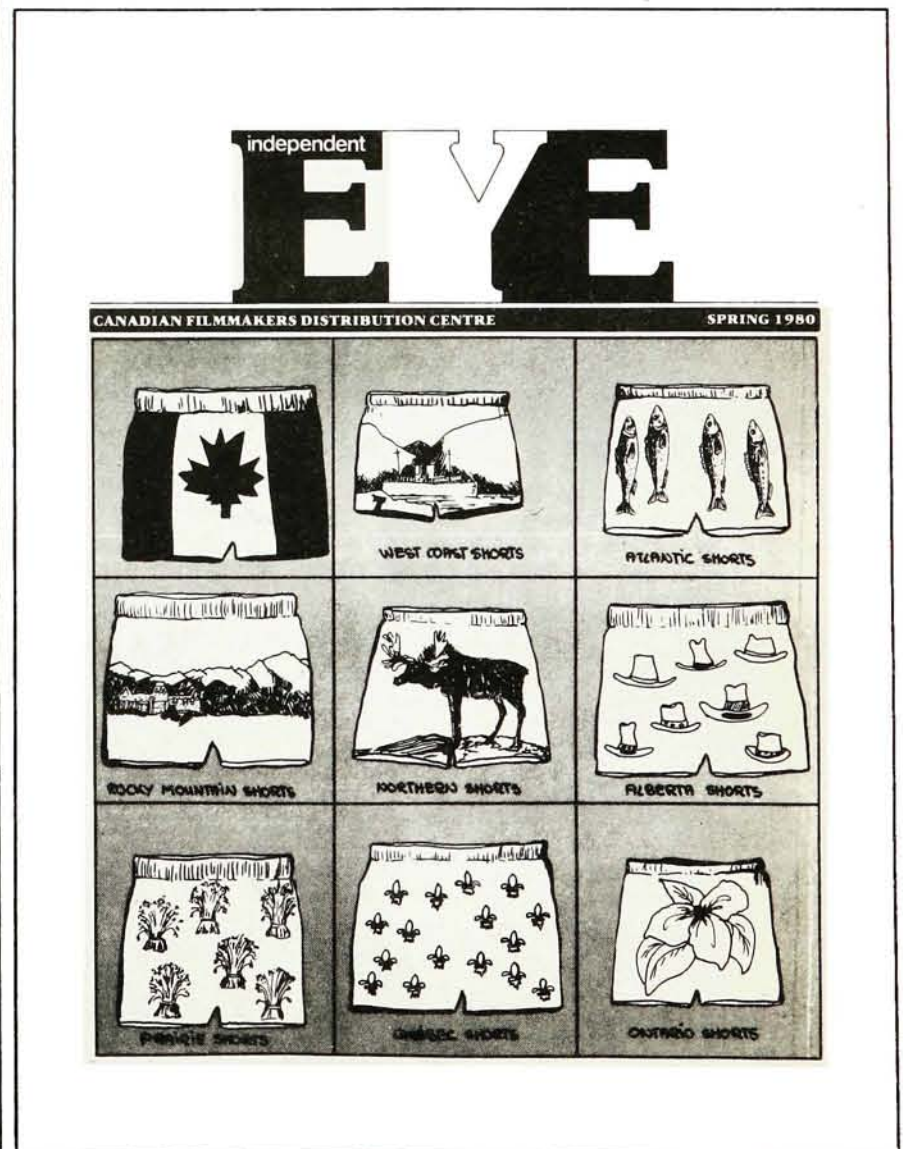
The Québécois, being better at subversion than others, managed to work genuine film projects through the system. Knowing that the market rhetoric so acceptable at Telefilm was totally inappropriate, public bodies - the National Film Board, Radio-Canada, the Société Générale du Cinéma, Radio-Québec - combined their forces to allow theatrical filmmakers to continue. Ironically, having no anticipation of profitability, the films reached their publics as Léa Pool, Denys Arcand, Yves Simoneau, Jean-Claude Lauzon made their mark. Some actually made money, big money.

The *téléromans*, always a popular form in Quebec, also flourished, capturing a national flavour which transcended other considerations. *Lance et compte* became a phenomenon, discussed in every office as the province tracked the adventures of Pierre Lambert. But there was little illusion about the marketplace. The series failed in English Canada and made no dent in the United States. Foreign sales will probably not make the series a financial success.

In English Canada, businesspersons took their jobs seriously and went aggressively after the market. If television was to be the site of the action, the distributor of last resort, then productions would be tailored to work on TV. While one underground railway had brought American slaves to freedom in Canada, the new tube would deliver Canadian entrepreneurs to the South.

The real world

Here, there was a real market: North American television, with all the possibilities of network sales, pay-TV sales, co-productions with PBS and the fascinating possibility that if a series could just reach 60 episodes, syndication might double the profit. Not to mention the budding



video market.

Backing this move to produce for the tube, the government facilitated production by drawing up new rules, condoning the idea that North America and not simply Canada was the appropriate site of the marketplace. A mechanism called a "co-venture" was defined since the Americans refused to sign co-production treaties to protect their partners. The Canadian government aggressively encouraged working with Americans. Telefilm sponsored meetings in California and, most recently, at the Houston convention of NATPE, extolling the virtues of working with Canadians. The Marketing Assistance Program at Telefilm created a group of Canadian sales agents who bought subsidized ads in foreign trade papers and went to MIP-TV, MIPCOM, Monte Carlo and NATPE to sell their wares.

And the Canadians found partners with whom to share Telefilm funds. Disney, Columbia Home Video, MCA and Coca Cola all became partners as the U.S. market appropriated our industry for its purposes.

Others were able to produce directly with Americans. Mattel became a sponsor, CBS and NBC commissioned work directly.

We are not able to see very far these days. Just as the marketplace has grown to encompass all of North America and production has expanded to fill the spaces available on television, our vision has collapsed, reduced by the medium on the one hand, and corrupted by the lack of government will on the other.

Inadvertently, misguidedly, or simply cynically, the federal government had so orchestrated its policies and agencies that it had delivered the Canadian industry into the hands of the American marketplace. The ultimate irony was clear when, at the close of the recent Gemini awards, the prize for the best television program went to *Night Heat* and its two producers, Jacobson and Grosso - Americans both - got up to thank Canada for all it had done for them.

Let's hear it for the domestic market

From the beginning of the '70s, the cry has been "domestic market." It was simply offensive in the '70s at the Cannes festival to be considered

an integral part of the United States. It is still offensive to have branch offices of the Major American distributors working in Canada while the foreign offices are, by definition, offshore. It is unacceptable to have both the major movie chains in Canada responsible to American interests.

There is only one marketplace in which Canadians can sell domestic production, and that is in the United States. There is nothing to suggest that the U.S. market is at all interested in Canadian national cinema. It wants product. It is ready to package: it packages deals, and people and ideas. And it offers great financial rewards.

Our government, despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, has accepted this situation. It has promoted it. Through a lack of toughness about the Federal Investment Review Agency (remember the Orion adventure?) it opened our doors. It has failed repeatedly to take necessary steps. The classic example will always be Francis Fox's "film policy" in which, after articulating the extent of the American hold over our industry, he, as a minister of the Crown, meekly asked the Majors to help us right the situation.

It is offensive, now, to be reassured that our cultural sovereignty will be untouched by free-trade when the Canadian distribution industry has always been wide-open and is sorely in need of protection. And it would seem a bit of sophistry for the government to maintain publicly that it is willing to move on distribution when the Meech Lake accord diminishes its clout over the provinces, and when culture is a provincial concern at any rate.

What bright lights?

In some sectors, there is considerable enthusiasm about the productions of last year. *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, *Family Viewing*, *Life Classes*, and *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got* from English Canada (to which I might add *Dancing in the Dark* of the previous year) are the films which, along with Quebec's *Un Zoo, la nuit*, *Anne Trister* and *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* are one indication of the extent of our film talent. They are also the films the government, through Telefilm Canada, takes on the festival circuit to impress the world with our ability.

The fact is, these films come from the margins. The English films are independent: independent of the producers who dominate the scene, independent of the packagers and promoters who tap into the big money in the real world. The French films are the product of public support through government agencies; they are not industrial products of a healthy, private industry.

Ironically, they are all author's films, the result of one person's vision, brought to fruition, often through sheer will.

Meanwhile, there were others. What has become of the George Mihalkas, the Rafal

don't, their independent views won't be worth the film they're printed on.

Ian Burnie, June 1977

On Grierson from the seminar

Ingenuous? Whoever manages to speak of evil and decadent forces or even of healthy elements with so little attempt at definition... is guilty of the wildest naïveté, however well-intended his humanist concern. And so he did and so he was. But with this saving grace, Grierson enunciated the primary principles of the documentary idea for good and all when, late in life, he reaffirmed that with which he began: today, he said, the materials of citizenship are different and the perspectives wider and more difficult, but we have, as ever, "the duty of exploring them and of waking the heart and will in regard to them." Sept. 1977

Innocents abroad

Michael Spencer of the CFDC, writer Ted Allen and producer John Kemeny are off to China in early October to try and persuade the Chinese to allow shooting on location for Kemeny's \$10 million feature on Bethune... Kemeny wants the government to invest \$3 million in the film as a special project, and so will probably need Cabinet approval. Oct. 1977

Low budgets

Outrageous is a low-budget feature shot in 16mm which succeeds because of the quality of its conception and execution, not because of international stars and big bucks... Filmmakers cannot seem to understand that an audience of non-filmmakers just does not notice the grain or the background noise of camera. I think that it is essential for Canadian filmmakers to begin to understand that technical perfection is not nearly as crucial as the quality of their ideas. John W. Locke, Oct. 1977

Wanna have a revolution?

Courage - a holding on to the importance of ourselves as individuals - becomes the key to it all. If we all give in to the financial blackmail that we're subjected to, then those that have the power and the money automatically have all the power and dictate what happens in the world. If the world is to have any freedom at all, there has to be a limit to that in everyone's life. If the situation becomes bad enough and people respond enough, you get a situation where you have revolution. That's what revolutions are... people eventually saying "we've had enough." Because we live in a stable country, in a rich country, most of us can spend most of our lives avoiding the question. Robin Spry, Oct. 1977

On the front lines, in p. r.

We are now starting *Angela*. *The Uncanny* I did

simultaneously. Then there was *The Disappearance*. Then there was a lull... So I came down actually for a holiday, but which coincided with the last four days of Sophia Loren, to wrap it up. And Denis Héroux said, "Prudence, we want to work with Claude Chabrol." I said, "Denis, I have committed myself to *Coup d'Etat*." He said, "Well, I don't mind. You at least launch it, and I have Robert Lussier who is very good, who can take over from you when you go." So I said, "O.K." And Denis, I adore anyway. He's a lovely person to work for. So I did that, then I went back to Toronto and did *Coup d'Etat* and then came back here to do *Tomorrow Never Comes*. Prudence Emery, Nov. 1977

Just paradise

That is a totally unexpected and delightful surprise. The first time I realized children were enjoying the film (*Growing Up at Paradise*) was during the final editing. I expected to have to entertain this little girl while her mother watched the film. But she was mesmerized. She was giggling and laughing. And when I showed it at the Pacific Cinematheque, a couple of seven-year-olds howled with laughter throughout. Sandy Wilson, Nov. 1977



But not in the theatres

Everybody is outbidding everybody else. It's got so that one guy who wanted a picture, he even offered to give them a percentage on the candy bar. On the candy bar! The only things that's kept the theatres going. It's a heyday for the film companies... They can get anything they want now for a picture. There's a shortage of pictures. Curly Posen, Dec. 1977-Jan. 1978

A not so silent partner

(Garth) Drabinsky, who describes himself as "an entertainment entrepreneur with a backing in law" is unfailing in his enthusiasm for film... Drabinsky sees himself playing a major role in the development of the film industry in this

country. Though claiming not to seek the limelight like some other producers, he feels that he possesses both the credibility and the financial clout to produce top-notch movies of international stature here in Canada... Wunderkind - right?
Dec. 1977-Jan. 1978

A sham

As everyone present at this year's Canadian Film Awards knows, the event was an embarrassing exercise akin to a high-school prom. As a producer with a film in nomination, my instinctive reaction was outrage. On the spur of the moment, I promised myself never to allow another one of my films to be a part of such an amateurish sham.

I quit (almost)

I was both a jurist and a distributor of many films entered this year... From the point of view of being a part of the jury, I am really distressed that the Awards came out the way they did... but the organizing committee should have realized that the bastard child of the academy system and the jury system had to be either a jury without a voice (and hence no real control), or a wildly unrepresentative democratic blunder.

Linda Beath, Dec. 1977-Jan. 1978

A sober thought

Over the past three years, the Canada Council has been extremely supportive of my cinematic endeavors, and I had thought that I would make that public in the event of our winning at the 1977 CFA. My reason was that the council offers a much needed and little praised "assistance to artists plan" and I had hoped to support them the way they did me. Unfortunately, not being completely sober, and forgetful at the best of times, I completely neglected to voice my appreciation publicly. I would therefore like to thank the council for their support, in this letter, and state that I wouldn't have made many films without them.

Philip Borsos, Feb. 1978

That was then

Linda Beath has not always been the most popular distributor in town. Back in 1974, when she took over the management of New Cinema in Toronto, the company had just produced *Cannibal Girls*, gone through bankruptcy and been sold to a group of neophyte investors, none of whom planned to work in the company. Linda was young, smoked cigars and said what was on her mind.
Feb. 1978

The Cabbagetown Kid

See, I don't think there's anybody who's made movies about his family as much as I have, and have made them really successfully. People

really like them... Young filmmakers practically never think of making films about the things they know. But to each his own, you know. It's a competitive business. We do it our way. They do it their way. Films get done every day. Hundreds of them. Somebody's doin' something right, right?
Clay Borris, Feb. 1978

And the script?

TV writers aspire unashamedly to Honor, Riches, Fame and the Love of Women. Real Writers aspire secretly to all of these, except the last, for which they substitute the Love of a Good Old Lady. This does not, except in odd cases, refer to their mother. When a Real Writer has the Love of both a Good Old lady and a Big Old Dog, truly great art almost invariably results. If he has also spent time in jail, a Real Writer is occasionally able to transcend himself and become a country and western singer. There is no known instance of a TV writer becoming a country and western singer. A Real Writer has a Swiss Army Knife and knows the value of a Good Sharp Stick. A TV writer wishes he had a Swiss Bank Account and knows the value of a Good Sharp Accountant.

Douglas Bowie, Feb. 1978

Producing for Harlequin

As for the production process itself, I found it both frustrating and yet very similar to what I had been doing before. Prior to my experience with *Leopard in the Snow*, I had been in the investment banking business, specializing in mergers, acquisitions, corporate financing and, from the structuring standpoint - the legal, and financial dealings - a lot of it just came very naturally.

Chris Harrop, Feb. 1978

Oh, say! Can you see?

For one reason or another, Canadians have been pushed, or pushed themselves, out of their own country. Nearly every report from the Aird Commission in 1929 on down to today have decried the Americanization of Canada. This process has been abetted by governments too fearful to interfere with American control of our cultural markets, and businessmen who see greater profits and fewer risks acting as branch plant agents for foreign companies instead of taking their own initiative.

April-May 1978

The making of a star

That same strange thing happened when *L'Ange et la femme* (a wonderfully prurient film by Gilles Carle, starring Carole Laure and Lewis Furey who scored both that film and *The Rubber Gun*) had its premiere. It was by invitation only, which meant that the bulk of the audience was French, and (Steven) Lack, who had five minutes in the film, and the only English lines,

Zeilinskis, the Clay Borris'? Why are Paul Lynch, Bill Fruet, Don Shebib and Don Owen not able to make those films many of us thought they would? There is a sense of waste, of opportunities passed by.

The size of the horizon

We are not able to see very far these days. Just as the marketplace has grown to encompass all of North America and production has expanded to fill the spaces available on television, our vision has collapsed, reduced by the medium on the one hand, and corrupted by the lack of government will on the other.

The disarray at Telefilm Canada is more symptom than cause of the actual malaise. If there were any feeling of connectedness, any sense of a common project around a common will, the industry would not have allowed things to deteriorate as they have.

The fact is that producers have accepted the reduction. Many feel relieved to be able to work in television, relieved of the burden of film and its fastidiousness.

Never has there been so much money circulating, nor so many people at work. Never have there been so many foreign sales of Canadian programs, nor so many companies which seemed solidly structured to persevere.

Today, the provincial governments have joined the federal to second the industry. Alberta and Quebec have signed a co-production treaty while Ontario and Quebec consider the same. B. C. finally has a film fund to create space for indigenous filmmakers.

A Canadian firm has become the largest exhibitor in North America while pay-television and specialty networks multiply the outlets for distribution of our production. Provincial educational networks can now license programs which qualify for Telefilm funding, bringing in another partner.

For all the industrial progress, for all the increased numbers of partners, the promise of a truly national Canadian film industry has never seemed so distant. The horizon stretches south.

That's entertainment

How do you add up quantity and quality? How do you measure the effectiveness of the policies which have pertained?

What does seem clear is that the Canadian film and television industry is working and identifying with the American entertainment industry, making economic strides at the expense of a national, cultural vision. And from an economic point of view, there's nothing wrong with this.

The catalyst in all this activity, however, is the \$115 million available through Telefilm Canada, an agency with a cultural mandate. That mandate harks back to the early days when film was a first line of defense against American

incursions into our cultural space: defense of identity, of otherness, of sense of worth.

Over the years, Telefilm has come to accept the primary role of the producer, reversing its original impulses to back first-time directors, to hold juried competitions for development, and to consult all filmworkers through regular committee discussions. Those policies of the early '70s have yielded to market rhetoric, placing the merchants and packagers at the center and marginalizing the creative forces.

Today, the main energies follow the money into television production. Much of it, like much of all television production, is mediocre from a creative point of view: competent, to be sure, to fill the airwaves and attract a public, but unable to touch us deeply, to communicate ideas, visions and emotions which might help galvanize us into a passionate country.

Today, the industry is a subsidized industry. Granted, some producers work without government funds, but their work is too often commissioned by others like Mattel, Hal Roach, the American networks and pay stations. Without the financial backing of the government, the Canadian film and television industry would wither once again, having used all the funds available yet having failed to secure its own market to support its efforts. **So, to conclude**

The federal government is still aware of its responsibility toward the distributors even as it refuses to move on the issue. As if there were any question of the dynamics in force, the adventure of *Broadcast News* in Quebec (see news story) is there to remind us that the Americans control our market and mean to manipulate our legislators to ensure their privileged place.

In a final effort to deal with distribution, the department of Communications has encouraged Telefilm to multiply its financial aid to distributors through corporate loans, assistance to version films, aid for launches, etc., failing once again to confront the reality that no amount of money thrown at this particular problem will resolve it.

So that leaves us with a production industry, working in the American marketplace, or working within the confines of government subsidy in Canada. We still have no real way to launch a Canadian film on 100 screens across Canada on the same day, supported by the cover of Macleans and a \$500,000 launch budget. We still have no way of knowing what might happen if we could vigorously bring our films to our own market, though there's lots of evidence that the public is interested.

What we have lost in the time *Cinema Canada* has published 150 issues is the sense of connectedness, the sense that our vision mattered and that we wanted to communicate it. Some of the young filmmakers still have it, and they are indeed our hope. But they are working in the margins, still mounting their films as guerrilla manoeuvres while those with easier

access to public funds occupy the centre.

The Telefilm follies, which have so occupied us over the last year, should serve as a cautionary tale about the ethical attitude of those who now occupy the centre and have come to rely on funds the government has set aside to bolster Canadian talents and images.

The producers were aware early on of the ineptitudes at the executive level at Telefilm, and knew of the gross inadequacies of the board of directors. In other times, they would have reacted quickly and vigorously, both individually and through their associations, to call attention to the situation so as not to endanger the agency in public opinion; they would have felt responsible and acted as the check to reestablish balance and fairness, to right the equilibrium before the whole agency swung out of control.

Today, those producers are concentrated on the money available to them. Having no particular global vision, being unstimulated by either the government or its senior staff to create one, they are hiding out. Telefilm, rather than have created an independent industry, has given birth to one so dependent upon public funds and tax measures that divergent points of view find no expression. Recently, as Peter Pearson's letter of resignation became public, Ottawa Citizen reporter Robert Lee complained that producers would not speak on-the-record about the situation, though they thanked him for making it public. The current government, through lack of courage and mismanagement, compounded by poor examples of public behaviour, has contributed to the cynicism which is undermining the energies in the industry.

From here on, economic forces could predominate to win the day, in which case all the above will serve as a swan song to an industry which really never had the chance it needed to test itself in an indigenous marketplace.

Or, we can acknowledge the path taken since 1972, consolidate our real gains and find the courage to speak out once again.

In many ways, *Cinema Canada* has served over the years as the podium from which the voices were heard. Now, as the incidents at Telefilm have shown, the voices at the centre are silent. It is the filmmakers, the ones we are proud of at Cannes and at Berlin, who have something to say. We must give them room and support. They have earned them. We must reestablish the dialogue to move forward with purpose, justifying the enormous investment the public has made in the industry.

This is not simply nostalgia for earlier, simpler times. There is a community to be strengthened, one which can nurture and provide direction. We live in a fragile nation and the creative forces must be heard above the noise of the American market which would level our entire production. Surely, this was the intention of the government in creating its cultural agencies.

received unanimous and spontaneous applause after his lines. Stunned again, I looked at Lack who looked like a cynical five-year-old on Christmas morning who just got more than he had asked for.

P. M. Massé-Connolly, April-May 1978

An Oscar

My most important asset as a filmmaker is that I am a really good interviewer and am genuinely interested in people. I'm not that much of a talker myself, but I can get people talking about themselves. I ask very specific questions which a lot of people are dying to know but they're afraid to ask because they're too polite.

Beverly Shaffer, April-May 1978

As Spencer leaves the CFDC

To Michael Spencer, we all owe a significant vote of thanks. He stood and weathered the storms, kept the doors open and the dialogues possible, allowed the difficult films to be made and pushed that they be seen. Now, it's his turn to fess up. Ninety per cent of his life has been behind closed doors. He should let us in on his life as a magazine loader for Budge Crawley, as head of security at the Film Board, as ongoing dauphin to Secretaries of State. He's probably too discreet to tell what happened when Joh Roberts went into Cabinet with a lion of a film policy and emerged with kitty litter. But he has a yarn to tell. And we're all interested. A gracious man, he has served us all honorably.

Peter Pearson, April-May 1978

The elusive policy

When it came to the central problem of foreign control of the educational and theatrical markets, the policy was a dead loss. The core of fiscal measures had been stripped out and the problem had been thrown back on the provinces... Roberts repeated the diagnosis of the ailment offered in his November policy; it was the remedy which had changed: "It is not acceptable that the present system works so overwhelmingly to present foreign films and so little to develop a market for Canadian material... I expect them (distributors) to find methods... to provide a better distribution of Canadian films... I intend to renegotiate an improved voluntary quota to ensure that Canadian films have better access to our cinemas."

Sandra Gathercole, June 1978

Back to the barricades

Canadians are so themselves that they don't get overwhelmed by working with big people, and the wonderful thing is they're very friendly and very first-name basis - so you get these big stars coming to Canada - they're in your hands because without you they don't know where to go or what to do... you've got to make sure they're happy. Marilyn Keach wanted to go for

secondhand clothes, Marissa Pavan wanted a fur coat, Karen Black wanted 20 pillows for her baby, Jean-Pierre Aumont wanted interesting evenings.

Douglas Leopold, Oct. 1978

A shlock house?

"The CBC was licensed by the Canadian public to provide broadcasting services," but "it was never given a mandate to produce all the programs it does," and, "The CBC thinks it needs to supply its own facilities; it has no mandate for that either!" He (Richard Nielsen) cites the astounding figure of 140 producers on staff at CBC Toronto. "What publishing house would put novelists on staff? A shlock house!" He adds, "Such a sinecure is a bad environment for producers and expensive to the taxpayer because of the bureaucracy."

Oct. 1978

A tale of two cities

The Festival of Festivals knew how to sell its product. And the Ontario Censor Board gave it just the send-off every festival organizer dreams of by cutting the first film. The overflow audience for *In Praise of Older Women*, and the news which resulted from the near-riot scene, made participating in the festival a social must for many... In Montreal, the receptions were sumptuous. Iran, which didn't have a film in the festival, but which had many domestic problems, threw a feast at its Expo pavilion, and the French outdid themselves at a sit-down lunch high in the Chateau Champlain. In context, the Italians, whose reception would rate high above CFI Investments' cocktail in absolute terms, didn't come off so well in Montreal.

Nov.-Dec. 1978

Women working

More and more feminist filmmakers are exploring ways of distributing their low-budget films on alternative circuits. This is much easier in the U.S... or in Great Britain or France... than in Canada where a much more widely scattered population and a colonized distribution system are double handicaps for alternative filmmakers.

Nov.-Dec. 1978

Highballin' along

When asked how hard it was to put a feature together in Canada at this time, (Jon) Slan was straightforward in pinning down what he felt to be the weak spot in the industry. "It's no problem... that's the problem. The Security Commission is legitimizing business transactions that in other businesses would be called swindles. We need standards and guidelines. Right now anyone can take a script, engage a name actor - usually over the hill and usually overpaid to attract some sophisticated investor - then go to a law firm to put in a prospectus. They



don't go to a studio or a network for backing because the script and the budget would be scrutinized for their level of authenticity and professional standard.

Feb. 1979

The end of the Toronto Co-op

My feeling is that the Co-op ran on people. If they were there, the place worked. There were conflicts and friction, but things happened. When the Co-op became more commercial and professional, less "Mickey Mouse", when it became a bit like a small Film House, it lost the energy it used to have.

Patrick Lee, Feb. 1977

Closing the door

It embarked on an effort to establish revenue-generating programs. These new programs significantly changed its character. Equipment that could not be paid for from rentals at rates "experimental" filmmakers could afford was purchased. In order to meet the costs of this equipment, the Co-op had to make great efforts to attract commercial filmmakers. As a result, the nature of the Co-op changed. It became more a loose alliance of small businesses than a collective of filmmakers.

Bruce Elder, Feb. 1979

The making of Bear Island

It was the second time we did the avalanche and the sun was shining, but there was a pretty wicked wind. After checking another camera position... I pulled out my thermometer, held it away from the wind - 25 degrees below; turned it into the wind - 35 degrees below. Dale looked at me, "Cold, eh?" What else to say? Suddenly, he started to jump from one foot to the other, chanting "Ka-o-pec-tate" as he did so. So there was Sandy, Dale and myself, thumping our feet and arms yelling "Ka-o-pec-tate" in unison. Don Sharp, the director... calls over on his walkietalkie, "We're about ready, what's going on over there?" I replied, "Just keeping warm,