

CANADA'S GROWING FILM INDUSTRY

The Canadian feature film industry has experienced an impressive growth over the past ten years.

In the early Sixties, except for a few long documentaries produced by the National Film Board for public-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television, very few feature films were made in Canada.

This era has come to an end: in 1969, 33 feature films were produced in Canada, 22 in the private sector, ten by the National Film Board and one by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Of this number, 19 were in French and 14 in English; 21 were produced in Montreal.

Feature-film production continued to increase in 1970 and although the distribution of Canadian features (either French or English) can still cause serious problems, several of these new films have already met with commercial success in Canada. Indeed, in some regions of Quebec, the biggest box-office draws are now Canadian features and some have already been purchased by foreign distributors.

REASONS FOR INCREASE

Several factors account for the sudden growth of a Canadian feature-film industry. Film-makers wanted to express themselves in feature films; and the demand for television commercials has made Toronto one of the largest film-production centres in North America and enabled several companies to acquire the background necessary to undertake feature-film production. The development of audio-visual facili-



Genevieve Bujold and Donald Sutherland in a scene from The Act of the Heart, written, directed and produced by Paul Almond and distributed abroad by Universal Pictures, London. A devout young girl from rural Quebec finds work singing in a Montreal church choir. Her friendship with the priest gives rise to serious conflict.

ties in education has also played a part. Large government expenditures have been made in this field, which offers an excellent training school for Canadian film-makers. Finally, there was the creation by the Federal Government in 1967 of the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the first concrete step taken by any government in Canada to support a feature film industry in the private sector. This agency, within a very short time, has provided the impetus for the production of 20 feature films.

There are now about 60 production companies in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, with modern studios, up-to-date equipment and above all a pool of experienced technicians and film-makers.

The National Film Board too has already enabled several young film-makers to make their first feature films. In addition to its major short-film program, the National Film Board produced more than ten feature films in one year.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced short and long films in co-operation with the National Film Board and allocates many contracts to the private film industry. However, it has not undertaken a program of feature films that could also be shown in commercial theatres and abroad.

To meet the challenge of a film industry in the making, Canadian film-makers and producers have already begun to create a style of Canadian film-making to produce some films of high quality which should lead to a genuine contribution to world cinema.



Rachel Cailhier and Jacques Thisedale in Those Damned Savages, directed by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, distributed by Faroun Films (Canada) Ltd., Montreal. It is the story of Thomas Hébert, coureur-des-bois, fur-trader and hard-core individualist who lived in 1670. The setting is now but present-day figures appear both in 1670 and 1970.