

National Film Act

Mr. Green: May I ask the minister why it is that the national film board must approve of all films made by the Department of National Defence before any such film can be shown to the troops? That is what the minister said a few moments ago.

Mr. Winters: No, I did not say we had to approve of all films. I simply said we had to approve of the channels through which films are produced.

Mr. Drew: This is more than just taking exception to the narrow meaning of the words, Mr. Chairman. This subsection says that no department shall initiate the production or processing of a motion picture. Now, the initiation of the production is the taking of the moving picture. This wording means that the Department of National Defence would have to obtain the consent of the film board before it had its photographers initiate the production of films. In other words, the national film board determines what is proper or not proper to be taken by the Department of National Defence. I do not believe it can be read in any other way.

Mr. Winters: I think it can. Section 11, subsection 1, says:

... no department shall initiate the production or processing of a motion picture film without the authority of the board, ...

If the Department of National Defence wants to shoot footage, there is no reason why they should not do it. But if they set out, having in mind the production of a film, this section says the approach is through the national film board.

Mr. Fulton: I do not want to interrupt the discussion on subsection 1, but I want to ask a question on subsection 2. It provides that where the film board undertakes a film for another department, then there may be transferred out of the moneys appropriated by parliament for expenditures by that department to the national film board, such sums to defray the cost incurred by the board as such minister or other persons and the board may agree upon. What I should like to know is why it is not provided that the sums to be transferred shall be the actual cost incurred by the board. I should like to see it provided that in every case the actual cost of producing the film shall be charged and paid by the department for whom it was produced. In that way we will be able to keep track easily of the film producing activity costs, instead of having to look in two departments to find the amount. Why is that not stated specifically, instead of being left to agreement between the ministers?

[Mr. Cote (Matapedia-Matane).]

Mr. Winters: It is put in for a specific reason. Heretofore the board gave an estimate to another department, and if the work overran the estimate the board, in almost all cases, absorbed the amount of the overrun. If the film cost less than was anticipated, the board collected only the lesser amount. It is felt that, in accordance with the Woods-Gordon recommendation, it should be done in a commercial way. The board should agree upon a realistic amount related to the work contemplated and that amount should then be turned over to the board for the production of the film.

Mr. Fulton: That would be regardless of the fact that the film may cost more than the estimate?

Mr. Winters: It would only be the amount that was agreed upon that would be turned over. That is what is contemplated now, but I suppose these agreements will be capable of being renegotiated.

Mr. Fulton: It seems to me that will produce a complicated system of accounting so far as accounting to parliament is concerned through the public accounts. We will have to look through several departments to find out what the actual cost was. Say the Department of National Defence has made a film, we shall not be able to find the cost in the part of the public accounts devoted to that department, but we shall have to turn to the national film board to find the extra cost, if any. I do not see why it is not possible to provide that the amount to be paid by the department for whom the film is produced shall in all cases shall be the actual cost to the board.

Mr. Winters: The actual cost of course can always be obtained from the national film board account. It seems to me it is a realistic arrangement. It is the arrangement that would prevail between a contractor and someone for whom he undertook to do a job. A price is agreed upon and that is the price that prevails; that seems to me to be the businesslike, normal arrangement.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, I believe that subsection 1 should be very carefully considered. I do urge the minister to think carefully about what these words mean. "No department shall initiate the production" of a motion picture film. The initiation of the production is the instruction to some cameraman to go out and take a picture.

That means that the Department of National Defence cannot even give instructions to a cameraman, let alone have him take a picture, without the authority of the board. I am not going to press this, because if the minister does not see the words in this