

CANADIAN FILM INDUSTRY

FINANCING, DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING—DEBATE
CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from Wednesday, April 7, the adjourned debate on the inquiry of Hon. Mr. Desruisseaux, calling the attention of the Senate to the Canadian film industry.

Hon. Muriel McO. Fergusson: Honourable senators, it is not because I have as much knowledge of the film industry as has Senator Desruisseaux, nor of the National Film Board as has Senator Cameron, that I am participating in the debate, but because Senator Desruisseaux, in his well-documented and thought-provoking speech on February 20 asked for the views of his colleagues on whether a committee of the Senate, either a special or standing committee, should inquire into the Canadian feature film industry and whether such a committee should study ways and means of helping to promote the rapid growth of this industry in Canada. In response to his request, and because I have for years been keenly interested in Canadian films, whether produced by the private sector or by the National Film Board, I wish to speak briefly on this subject.

I support Senator Desruisseaux's suggestion that such a Senate committee be appointed. With the resources of Canada, which were described by the late Lord Tweedsmuir, our former Governor General, as being unparalleled anywhere in the world, we should be able to find a way of promoting rapid growth of the Canadian feature film industry to enable it to compete successfully with such an industry anywhere in the world. I am hopeful that a Senate committee, with the expertise, business and finance experience of some of its members, may be able to suggest how this can be done.

Undoubtedly there are in Canada sufficient Canadians with the creative and technical skills necessary to produce the large number of Canadian films which a Canadian film industry, capable of existence and of extensive development, must require. The large number of Canadian actors, writers, producers and technicians who have made good in Hollywood gives credence to such a belief. Some of the delightful Canadian films which have been produced indicate that we have people other than actors who are talented in this field.

This was pointedly brought to my attention by an article in the *Toronto Star* of March 3, 1971, concerning a project of Henry Beckman, an actor, who appears regularly in American TV series such as *Peyton Place*, in which he did 50 episodes as George Anderson. He also appears in *Hogan's Heroes*, and earlier played the part of Big Mouth Mulligan in *I'm Dicks*, *He's Fenster*, Colonel Harrigan in *McHale's Navy* and Captain Clancy in *Here Come the Brides*. These series are familiar to anyone who follows TV programs. Despite appearing in these American TV series, Mr. Beckman has retained his Canadian citizenship. He considers himself a Canadian actor although he has lived and worked in the United States very successfully for the past 25 years.

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Henry Beckman's project is the promotion of a Canadian Film Stars' Hall of Fame to be established in Canada, preferably in his own home territory, the Maritimes. To justify such an undertaking, he mentions a few of the outstanding actors who might be included, such as Glen Ford, Gisèle Mackenzie, Melinda Montgomery, Arthur Hall and Raymond Burr—and if he had not been so modest he might have mentioned his own name.

Hon. Mr. Rattenbury: And Raymond Massey.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: I was about to mention him. I can think of many others, such as Walter Pidgeon and Raymond Massey. There are many more whom I will not name.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): What about the ladies?

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: Gisèle Mackenzie and Melinda Montgomery are ladies.

A Senate committee, studying how the Canadian feature film industry might be expanded as rapidly as possible, might not support the idea of setting up a Canadian Film Stars' Hall of Fame, but the fact that there are enough outstanding Canadian film stars to justify such a suggestion is proof that persons with great talent as actors have been available in Canada but because of the absence of a strong film industry here they have been forced to go elsewhere to develop their talents and to receive the recognition which is their due. We have an almost unlimited supply of talented people in Canada.

The film industry requires the talents of many other people. Many writers, technicians and others who have contributed to the success of Hollywood films have come from Canada. The flight abroad of such artists and technicians continues despite our efforts to halt this trend. Such a flight takes with it profits and employment that might accrue to many Canadians if attractive opportunities were open for such artists and technicians to employ their talents profitably in our own country.

In addition to our human resources, we have in Canada landscape that could provide film scenery unexcelled anywhere in the world.

Canadian feature films should not only offer an opportunity for talented Canadians to develop their talents in Canada, and so provide work for many thousands of their countrymen and women, but should portray Canadian life, aspirations and culture both to our own people and to those beyond our borders.

Of the 623 films distributed to movie theatres in Canada in 1967, why is it that only eight or 1.3 per cent were from Canada? Of 643 films shown in 1968, only eight were from Canada, and of 623 films shown in 1969, again only eight were from Canada.

In 1970, with the help of the Canadian Film Development Board, the number of films was increased to 14. However, in order to make a real impact in Canada and abroad we need to produce many more. Jacques Godbout,