

Development of Film Industry

level of box office activity, awards for quality, guarantees and various kinds of help in financing of productions. One or another form of assistance is available to producers not only in countries of relatively small population but even in the larger countries as well such as Britain, France and Italy.

In recent years film activity in Canada has grown steadily, but motion picture companies are engaged almost entirely in making industrial and documentary films and television commercials. Films of that kind as well as feature films call for a wide range of skills and technical facilities of the first quality. With the kind of knowledge and experience gained in that way an increasing number of film-makers and technicians are seeking to move into the field of major productions.

The creation of a major feature film industry will offer to Canada a new dimension of opportunity for those who are engaged in all branches of the performing arts. There are in Canada many fine actors and actresses, dancers and singers, who appear on stage and on television, and behind them are many theatrical crafts, such as set and costume designing, lighting and sound technicians, whose prospects should be very materially enhanced by this program.

[Translation]

May I, Mr. Chairman, emphasize the major contribution my colleague, the hon. member for Outremont-Saint-Jean (Mr. Lamontagne), and the former Canadian film commissioner, Mr. Guy Roberge, now delegate general of Quebec in London, have made in the launching of this project.

My predecessor as Secretary of State initiated this plan to help the film industry. The Canadian film industry will owe him the financial machinery required for its establishment and development.

The Canadian people as a whole have him to thank for making available such an essential cultural medium.

Without the enthusiasm and the devotion of Mr. Guy Roberge, the seventh art might still be marking time.

Indeed, it was under his capable chairmanship that an interdepartmental committee set to work and, in August 1965, submitted a report that served as a basis for this bill.

I am confident the house will join me in expressing our thanks to these two promoters of Canadian culture.

[Miss LaMarsh.]

[English]

After close study of the existing situation and assessment of the potential of Canadian creativity, the government is introducing this new measure to promote and help the growth of the film industry. It is proposed to establish a \$10 million development fund and to set up a business corporation to administer it.

Because the production of a feature film is a high risk undertaking, Canadian film-makers encounter great difficulty in obtaining sufficient financing to enable them to undertake major projects. The new agency will be empowered to invest in film productions which, in the judgment of the corporation, show promise of being intrinsically worthy and likely to succeed in commercial distribution. By the terms of investment the corporation will share in the proceeds from the distribution of the films and will be entitled to reinvest this income in further productions. The corporation may also meet some part of film budgets by loans to producers. To encourage and maintain continuity of the industry, awards are to be available for outstanding achievement in feature film productions. Film-makers and technicians may receive grants as well to assist them in improving their skills through study, experiment and research.

• (5:30 p.m.)

We should, Mr. Chairman, be under no illusion about the difficulties which Canadian producers will face in building up a commercially viable industry in this country. They will have to make it commercially viable by exporting their work, which will have to be done by virtue of profitable distribution arrangements. Canadian films must prove good enough to win their own place on world screens.

Even in Canada home producers will continue to face stiff competition from imported films. Many countries, in order to encourage the distribution of their own films, have applied quotas. This has guaranteed to their own producers a certain share of the market. We have chosen, however, not to introduce this kind of restriction in the bill at this time. Canadian films must, therefore, make it on their own merits. But in rejecting quotas we are counting on film distributors and cinema chains to give more than ordinary support to the aims of this program. It is extremely rare for a feature film to begin its screen career in Canada. Every important film reaches our theatres on a wave of publicity