

The democratization of culture corresponds to a basic need, and one can observe, on a universal scale, a growing interest in arts. If, in a modern state, art must be the property of all citizens, it behooves the specialists, in the first place, to devise the most appropriate ways of reaching that goal. By sharing your experience on the various levels of film production, film acquisition and distribution, you are able to establish rational plans for the development of artistic resources. You are the advisers of the state, which relies on your valuable co-operation for a better development of culture and, in the particular field with which we are at present concerned, for a wider spreading of art knowledge through audio-visual methods.

Getting through to the Public

I shall not conceal the fact, however, that, in my humble opinion, this objective is of a colossal nature and unattainable on a short-term basis in spite of the considerable effort which is now being put forth. While it is conceivable, for instance, to increase significantly the number of "museophiles", a class of people among whom are recruited the most enthusiastic art-film lovers, and to widen the circulation of films in cultural or educational institutions, the day seems far off when one will truly be able to reach the man in the street, or in the country, that anonymous crowd which must be won over patiently. That is why I think that art films, which are just emerging from their "heroic period," should use not an elementary language but one that is characterized by the utmost simplicity. I know you are perfectly aware of the vast challenge to be taken up and are searching for the means best suited to convey your message. As an example, may I mention here an experiment made along that line? Very recently, the NFB undertook this painstaking approach to the public with a film on the painter Paul-Emile Borduas. In the hope of introducing the spectator into the confusing world of abstraction, the film proceeded from the known to the unknown and strictly followed a chronological sequence. The public will, in the last resort, decide if the experiment was successful and if the film transcended the "silverscreen." During its première in Montreal, I can assure you that it was warmly received by the public, perhaps precisely on account of that direct and simple approach.

But it is not my business to enter a debate outside the scope of my knowledge, which you can successfully solve. I wish only to point out the accessibility of art films to the general public, and I remain convinced that popularization and quality do not exclude one another. On the contrary.

Co-operative Planning

Now, I should like to assure you that your objectives are borne in mind by the Government. I shall dwell here on what some people call "perspective," which is nothing else but a rational anticipation and a wise utilization of years to come. It is undeniable that efficient action can only be ensured by a continuing co-operation of all intermediate bodies, the specialists and the state. And one cannot insist too much on the responsibility of the state, which is, in the last resort, the co-ordinator and the determining factor of social and cultural progress in modern society. In this spirit, the most practical instrument available to the state exists under the name of planning or, if one prefers a less radical term, orientation. To develop rational plans which