



exhibitionists

a d d e n d u m

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1925 *"You should have your own films and exchange them with those of other countries. You can make them just as well in Toronto as in New York."*

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1928 *"A tragedy has occurred...It is going to be a hard job of those of us who hope some day to see a good Canadian picture, to live down the memory of (this) blunder."*

1931 *"...that there existed any such combine, I am unable to find, and I am unable to find there was any price fixing."*

1945 *"Freedom of exchange of information is an integral part of our foreign policy."*

1946 *"...the cultural groups think that the British way of life is as good or better than the American way."*

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1977 *"The production of Canadian feature films will continue to be constrained until something is done to break the hold of the foreign-owned distribution chains that prevents Canadian film from being seen by larger audiences in Canada and abroad."*

1981 *"What the film industry has gone through in the last two years has been disastrous and the state of the industry now is unbelievable...I feel the producers brought it on themselves..."*

1987 *"No fewer than seven ministers since World War II have attempted, in the best Canadian tradition, to reach a negotiated agreement that would assure a Canadian presence on Canadian screens. None have succeeded."*

A BRIEF (AND INCOMPLETE) CHRONOLOGY OF CANADA-U.S. FILM RELATIONS

BY MIKE HOOLBOOM

EDITED BY WYNDHAM PAUL WISE

APRIL 14, 1894 Andrew and George Holland of Ottawa open the world's first Kinetoscope parlour in New York City. (The Kinetoscope [a peep show] is an Edison invention which the Holland's have the rights

to franchise across North America.)

DECEMBER 28, 1895 The Lumière Brothers of France screen the first projected film at the Grand Café in Paris.

JUNE 28, 1896 The first public screening of a projected film in Canada occurs in Montreal. One month later, July 21, the Holland Brothers introduce Edison's Vitascope to the Canadian public at Ottawa's West End Park.

The population of Canada is five million.

1897 First films shot in Canada. The subject of all three films (for Lumière, Biograph and Edison) is Niagara Falls. Meanwhile, films appear in vaudeville theatres as travelling showmen tour them from city to city.

1898 The Massey-Harris Co. of Toronto commissions the Edison Company to produce films to promote its products - one of the first uses of film for advertising purposes. In December, John Schuberg presents Vancouver's first film show.

1903 Canada's first dramatic film wasn't long in coming: "**Hiawatha**," **The Messiah Of The Ojibways** (10 minutes). Adolf Zukor, a Hungarian-born entrepreneur, opens his first penny arcades in New York and New Jersey.

1904 Zukor opens the first of his palatial movie theatres, the Crystal Hall, in New York City.

1905 American, and some British, producers begin shooting "interest" films in Canada. Examples include **Moose Hunt In New Brunswick**, **Salmon Fishing In Quebec**, and **Honeymoon In Niagara Falls** (1907).

1906 The American-born Allen Brothers (Jules and Jay) open their first store-front theatre in Brantford, Ontario. In ten years they will own the largest theatre chain in the country. They run mostly Hollywood films.

1907 Ernest Ouimet opens the Ouimetoscope in Montreal, Canada's first luxury movie theatre.

1910 The CPR commissions thirteen more films to sponsor immigration, made by the Edison company. From 1900-1914, the Canadian population grows from five to eight million.

1911 Film censor boards established in Ontario (the first in North America), Quebec and Manitoba. Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party are defeated by the Tories in a national election advocating trade reciprocity (essentially free trade) with the United States. The U.S. owns 25 per cent of Canadian manufacturing, a rapidly growing share which is aided by the federal government. Rudyard Kipling writes in **The Montreal Daily Star**: "Once the (national) soul is pawned...Canada must inevitably conform to the commercial, legal, financial, social and ethical standards which will be imposed upon

her by the sheer admitted weight of the U.S."

1913 Film censor boards are established in B.C. and Alberta. They begin to ban work showing "an unnecessary display of U.S. flags." Despite the domination of American films, an anti-American mood is strong. Two historical dramas are shot this year, **Battle Of The Long Sault** and **Evangeline**.

1914 The WW I begins with a pronounced anti-American mood as they didn't enter the war until 1917 and then flood the movie screens with American patriotism. Demand grows for films which show events from an English or Canadian perspective.

1916 American-born N.L. Nathanson buys his first theatre in Toronto with the backing of wealthy Canadian financiers. Soon he would build a national chain (Paramount Theatres) to rival the Allens. At the same time, Zukor, with a massive loan from the Morgan Bank, embarks on an ambitious plan to acquire motion picture theatres right across North America. With a production company (Famous Players-Lasky) and a distribution company (Paramount Pictures), he soon would become the most powerful man in the American film business.

1917 Ontario establishes a Motion Picture Bureau (OMPB), for the stated purposes of advertising the province and to "carry out educational work for farmers, school children, factory workers, and other classes."

1918 The federal government follows Ontario's lead and establishes the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (CGMPB).

1919 Nell Shipman writes and stars in what is usually considered Canada's first feature film, **Back To God's Country**. Zukor sets his sights on Canada and refuses to renegotiate his distribution agreement with the Allens unless they take him into partnership. They refuse.

1920 Zukor, instead, buys a substantial part of Nathanson's chain and incorporates Famous Players Canadian Corporation (FPCC). However, the Allens are still the largest theatre chain in Canada and expand into the United States.

1921 The Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association (CMPDA) is formed with Col. John Cooper as its chairman. Although Canadian in name, the Association is made up of the Canadian offices of the

American distribution majors and is in essence a branch of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association of America (MPPDAA).

1922 The Allen Brothers go bankrupt after an intense bidding war with FPCC.

1923 FPCC buys the Allen chain (53 theatres) at a bargain basement price. The company expands to 196 theatres with a seating capacity of 215,000 by 1930 from only 15 theatres with a capacity of 15,000 in 1920 under Nathanson's aggressive takeover tactics. In the U.S., Zukor is named in a complaint issued by the Federal Trade Commission. "Famous Players-Lasky Corp. now possess and exercises a dominating control over the Motion Picture Industry (and) is the largest theatre owner in the world." Hollywood producer Lewis Selznick writes: "If Canadian stories are worthwhile making into film, American companies will be sent into Canada to make them."

1924 The OMPB purchases the Trenton Studios in effort to produce Canadian films "of a historical and dramatic nature." Provincial Treasurer Col. Price gives the opening address: "Not one per of the pictures shown in Canada are made in Great Britain and not one per cent are Canadian made. Canadian traditions could be better guarded by the introduction of Canadian films and this the Ontario Government intends to."

1925 D.W. Griffith speaks in Toronto about Canadian film: "You in Canada should not be dependent on either the United States or Great Britain. You should have your own films and exchange them with those of other countries. You can make them just as well in Toronto as in New York."

1927 England passes a **Film Bill** which sets quotas for Commonwealth films in English theatres. For the first time a minimum amount of screen time has to be allotted to films made in England, Canada, Australia, or anywhere else in the Commonwealth. Raymond Peck, head of the CGMPB, opposes the introduction of the British film quota and instead is a staunch supporter of the American industry. He writes: "American motion picture producers should be encouraged to establish production branches in Canada to make films designed especially for British Empire consumption. We invite Americans to come over to Canada to make automobiles and a thousand and one other things, why not invite them to come over and make pictures, but make them the way the British markets

demand?" The British **Film Bill** leads to the production of a number of "quota quickies" - fast, cheaply made films which would fulfill British requirements.

1928 The most ambitious "quota quickie" is the production of *Carry On, Sergeant!* by British Empire Films. After many delays and constant bickering, wealthy Canadian investors lose all of their money on a disaster that eventually costs \$500,000. The film receives only limited distribution and soon disappears, as do the producers. Gordon Sparling, employed as an editor on the film, writes: "A tragedy has occurred...It is going to be a hard job of those of us who hope some day to see a good Canadian picture, to live down the memory of (this) blunder."

1929 In British Columbia, Attorney General Pooley is to introduce a Bill which demands that all theatres in the province show at least 20 per cent Canadian. What happens? He's met by the district manager of FPCC and convinced to drop the Canadian content quota. The Bill is never heard of again.

1930 Zukor, through a newly-created holding company, Paramount Publix, acquires direct control of FPCC, rather than merely being the majority shareholder. This leads to a revolt among a minority of Canadian shareholders. (Zukor offers four Paramount Publix shares for every five FPCC shares.) FPCC runs almost every first-run theatre in the country and independent theatres are dying out. They beg the federal government to change things; to break up the monopoly. The federal government decides to investigate. Peter White, a government lawyer, heads the inquiry under the **Federal Combines Investigation Act**, which runs seven months in Toronto. The inquiry concludes that an unfair monopoly exists and names FPCC, the CMPDA, and others as part of this monopoly.

1931 Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia take FPCC and the distributors to court in Ontario, chosen as the province most likely to obtain a conviction because of its history of an activist Board of Censors. However, after a lengthy trial all of the 109 defendants are found not guilty on three counts of conspiracy and combination. Presiding Justice Garrow of the Supreme Court of Ontario writes, in part: "Remembering that this is a criminal prosecution, and not a civil proceeding...that there existed any such combine, I am unable to find, and I am unable to find there was any price fixing." A decision against the U.S. cartel would have

been an historic turning point for the future of filmmaking in Canada, but it was not meant to be. Ontario passes a **British Film Quota Act** but never enforces its provisions.

1932 The Ontario Board of Censors imposes a newsreel quota and insists on the inclusion of a percentage of Canadian and British footage. This quota exists for as long as newsreels are shown in the province.

1934 The Liberals come to power in Ontario and in a cost-cutting move close down the OMPB.

1938 John Grierson is film advisor to the General Post Office which promotes British propaganda. War looms and Britain wants to make strong ties of support with the rest of the Commonwealth, and especially the United States. The Canadian government invites Grierson over to look into setting up a government film agency.

1939 The National Film Board of Canada is formed and Grierson is asked to run it. He hires four Englishmen to run the show - Raymond Spottiswoode, J.D. Davidson, Stanley Hawes and Stuart Legg. They decide to make compilation documentaries and instead of shooting footage themselves, they take footage from other films and re-edit them, adding their own (English) voice-over. Another typically colonial effort - importing Englishmen to run a Canadian film organization which produces no images of its own, but simply recycles others.

1941 The CGMPB is absorbed by the NFB and Grierson is named Canada's first Film Commissioner. While Grierson was in favour of the quota in Britain, he is against such a quota in Canada and argues for co-operation with the American monopolies. When he travels to Australia to help set up a Film Board for Australia he asks that Col. Cooper of the CMPDA be left in charge of the NFB. N.L. Nathanson resigns from FPCC and joins Odeon Theatres, a rival chain nominally operated by his son Paul.

1942 The NFB distributes its work not through the theatres, but by taking them around the country and showing in union halls, dance halls, outdoors, wherever. These screenings do not interfere with the American domination of Canadian theatres. Half of the NFB titles are from Great Britain or the United States. The National Council of Independent Exhibitors of Canada is formed in order to lobby the federal government for Canadian film quotas and greater access to

Hollywood films which typically go either to Famous Players or Odeon. The two national chains have favourable arrangements with the American distribution majors, insuring a constant supply of first-run films. A less radical group of independents form the Motion Picture Theatres Association of Ontario with Nat Taylor as chairman. This group is more willingly to work with the American majors and successfully co-opts the militant National Council, which is branded "unpatriotic."

1943 During the WW II Canadians flock to see movies. Distribution companies set new box office records. Co-operation with the Americans doesn't seem so bad for business. N.L. Nathanson dies.

1945 John Grierson resigns as head of the NFB. He has been so accommodating to the Americans that the CMPDA wants to hire him. Col. Cooper says he "was impressed by what Grierson had achieved in Canada" - presumably for American interests. WW II is the "coming of age" for American industry. The demands of the war quickly built factories at home and prepare them for an immense expansion overseas. The American media is a key to this global expansion. Here's an extract from U.S. State Department Bulletin No. 14: "The State Department plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures, and other media of communications throughout the world... Freedom of exchange of information is an integral part of our foreign policy."

1946 Paul Nathanson retires and sells Odeon to the J. Arthur Rank Organization of Great Britain. With a British company in control of the second largest theatre chain in Canada, an effort is made to have Ontario enforce its British film quotas laws. Head Ontario censor O.J. Silverthorne is also in favour of enforcing the British film quota, saying: "the cultural groups think that the British way of life is as good or better than the American way."

1947 Business booms as wartime industry converts to peace. But everything that's sold to Europe is sold on credit, while Canada is buying like crazy from the Americans with dollars. This leads to a serious cash shortage and federal Finance Minister Doug Abbott is about to impose sweeping quotas, taxes and import restrictions. People are waiting for the Canadian government to do something about

the \$17 million the U.S. take home every year from the movies. Abbott meets with representatives from FPCC and the CMPDA, asking that some of this \$17 million be spent on Canadian production facilities.

1948 Abbott also meets with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), formerly the MPPDAA, and agrees to the infamous Canadian Co-operation Project. FPCC's profits are not frozen and the idea of a quota is dropped. Hollywood promises to make films in Canada (which it doesn't), distribute some NFB work (which is already happening), distribute fewer "low-toned" gangster films in Canada, and to make references to Canada in feature films. Jimmy Stewart speaks of "orioles from Canada," and a film called **Three Secrets** has a line about a "mountaineer from Winnipeg."

1949 In Ontario, Silverthorne backs down from his call for quotas. "Quotas have not been fixed under our act because the fact that it has always been held that this is purely a federal matter. It would be inadvisable and improper for one Province to adopt a policy with regard to quotas which might bring us into conflict with Federal viewpoint and policy." "Budge" Crawley wins Film of the Year for **The Loon's Necklace** at the first annual Canadian Film Awards.

1953 The Federal Dominion Bureau of Statistics begins to collect comprehensive statistics on the film industry and finds that there are 32 commercial firms actively engaged in the production and printing of motion pictures in Canada, with a gross revenue of \$2.8 million. Nineteen theatrical features are produced in Quebec between 1944 and 1953; previously, only two commercial films had been produced in the province.

1957 Sidney J. Furie shoots his first film in Toronto, **A Dangerous Age**, and follows with **A Cool Sound From Hell** in 1958. He moves to England to get more work and tells the English press: "I wanted to start a Canadian film industry, but nobody cared. There's no pattern of distribution and nobody has any money to put up." The Canada Council begins operations.

1961 Nat Taylor produces Julian Roffman's 3-D **The Mask**, the first Canadian feature to be extensively marketed in the U.S.

1962 "Budge" Crawley produces his first feature, **Amanita Pestilens**. The film has a number of minor distinctions to its credits,

including the first screen appearance of Genevieve Bujold, the first Canadian feature filmed in colour, and the first to be shot simultaneously in English and French.

1963 Don Owen directs **Nobody Waved Goodbye** for the NFB, the first film to give Toronto a cinematic identity. Meanwhile, Claude Jutra is doing the same for Montreal with **A tout prendre**.

1964 The federal Cabinet approves in principle the establishment of a loan fund to foster and promote the development of a feature film industry.

1968 After three years of delay, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) goes in operation with \$10 million per year for feature films. However, no effort is made to effect the distribution or exhibition of these films - ensuring that many of them will never be seen. In the next six years, the CFDC helps to fund 120 features - 69 in English, 51 in French. Social themes predominate, followed by comedy.

1972 The Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism appoints producer John Bassett to head a task force to study the Canadian film industry. It concludes that "a basic film industry exists. It is (Canadian) audiences that need to be nurtured through theatrical exposure. The optimum method of accomplishing this is to establish a quota system for theatres."

1973 The Council of Canadian Filmmakers (CCFM) is formed as an ad hoc lobby group representing ACTRA, the Directors Guild, IATSE locals, NABET, and the Toronto Filmmakers Co-op. They issue their "Winnipeg Manifesto" and demand a quota on Canadian films in theatres. Their mandate, published in **Cinema Canada** magazine, calls for "radical and creative solutions." The CFDC is broke and Canadian feature production drops drastically. The films that are made are not being seen in theatres or on CBC-TV.

1974 Frustrated by rising unemployment in their ranks, a lack of \$\$\$, and the inability of Quebec films to play on Quebec screens, an organization of Quebec filmmakers stage a protest. Since all films have to pass through the censor board before being shown in the province, they occupy the Board's office a month before Christmas, stopping the flow of Xmas releases. They are there a week. Telegrams and editorials of support poured in. The Quebec culture minister orders them

removed by the police and does nothing to meet their demands. Nothing changes.

1975 The federal Secretary of State, Hugh Faulkner, is under increasing pressure to do something for Canada's faltering film industry. But the Hollywood majors are also meeting with the Secretary, to make sure that nothing will change. The result? Canada's two major theatre chains agree to a voluntary quota of four weeks per theatre per year screen time for Canadian films and invest a minimum of \$1.7 million in their production. At the same time the Minister of Finance, John Turner, announces new income tax regulations which allows investors to deduct, in one year, 100 per cent of their investment in certified Canadian feature films. It is a classic example of the federal government's compromise on arts policy. In response to such cultural nationalist as the CCFM, the Secretary of State introduces a watered-down system of voluntary quotas, which prove to be unenforceable, while the Minister of Finance increases tax subsidies which lead to the creation of an over-heated branch plant industry, producing films for the "international" (i.e. American) market.

1976 The new Secretary of State, John Roberts, says he's going to do something about Canadian films and Canadian culture. He proposes a 10 per cent tax on U.S. film revenues in Canada. This time the Hollywood lobby puts the screws on finance minister Jean Chretien. Threats are made about U.S. economic retaliation. The tax proposal is dropped. Everything remains the same.

1977 The federal government releases the **Tompkins Report**, which had been commissioned by the Arts and Cultural Branch of the Secretary of State to study the film industry in Canada. It concludes: "The production of Canadian feature films will continue to be constrained until something is done to break the hold of the foreign-owned distribution chains that prevents Canadian film from being seen by larger audiences in Canada and abroad." The Odeon Theatres chain is sold to a Canadian company. Odeon owns or operates 160 theatres.

1979 Nat Taylor and producer Garth Drabinsky form Cineplex, a chain of multi-screen theatres. Their theatres are small and play specialty films, "art" films, and Hollywood second-runs. Cineplex gobbles up theatres at a frantic pace and in three years own 146 theatres across North America. They are making a killing in the U.S. but not in Canada because they can't get first-run

American movies. These are reserved for the two big chains. This is the year in which tax shelter production peaks and more feature films are made in Canada than at any other time (or since). Second-rate American stars are often used to sell the film. American writers are brought in with a Canadian name attached to comply with regulations. Budgets soar and the films are generally awful. Dentists, lawyers, doctors and all sorts of professionals give money to fast-buck producers to reduce their tax rates. Many of these films are never released. This is a mixed blessing. The aim is to make films in the "international style" for mass markets abroad. There is very little that is Canadian about them. They could have been made anywhere, which leads some to argue that the Canadian government is subsidizing Hollywood films.

1981 The tax shelter "boom" is over. Ian MacLaren, Director of Cultural Industries for the federal Department of Communications, sums it up this way: "What the film industry has gone through in the last two years has been disastrous and the state of the industry now is unbelievable...I feel the producers brought it on themselves. I also think that the government did not have the capacity to administer the Capital Cost Allowance as tightly as it should have been administer."

1982 Cineplex decides to "go public" to pay for its expansion but raise only a few million bucks (\$3.8 m). It is way overextended. Drabinsky is pouring money into making and distributing films as well as running theatres. Cineplex is on the verge of bankruptcy.

1983 Drabinsky goes to the Canadian government and says that Hollywood owns and monopolizes film distribution in Canada. What he is asking for is the right to obtain first-run American films just like Odeon and Famous Players. He receives a hearing before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, but before a formal inquiry is called, the Hollywood distribution majors issue a joint statement saying that they will change their practices and "ensure significant competition in the distribution and exhibition of motion pictures in Canada." The tax shelter laws are changed to reflect a 100 per cent write-off over two years instead of one.

1984 Cineplex buys the Odeon chain and once again the competition is reduced to two major chains. Drabinsky, with the backing of Bronfman money, goes on a buying spree and Cineplex Odeon increases in size and

importance. Francis Fox, the federal Minister of Communications, issues his **National Film and Video Policy**. The CFDC becomes Telefilm Canada and a \$35 million Broadcast Fund is created which shifts the focus to made-for-TV-productions and away from feature films, a tacit acknowledgement of the theatrical distribution blockage.

1986 Cineplex Odeon sells half its stock to MCA, a huge U.S. entertainment conglomerate. Cineplex is now a major exhibition circuit for American films, the second largest in North America. Drabinsky speaks out against any attempts to control the American film industry in Canada. Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss.

1987 The Minister of Culture and Communications is Flora MacDonald who writes: "No fewer than seven ministers since World War II have attempted, in the best Canadian tradition, to reach a negotiated agreement that would assure a Canadian presence on Canadian screens. None have succeeded." But Flora is determined - those other lot were spineless Liberals after all; she is a "progressive" conservative. MacDonald tables her **Film Importation Act** which would give Canadian distributors some measure of access to films not produced by the Hollywood majors by introducing a licensing system for all film distributors operating in Canada. Jack Valenti, head of the MPAA and named by *Time* magazine as the most effective lobbyist in Washington, calls up old buddy Ronald Reagan about Flora's new bill and when Ron meets with Brian Mulroney, he badmouths the whole project. Ronnie always liked the pictures. Then Valenti goes into the U.S. Senate and gets 54 Senators to sign a letter stating their "strongest objections" to the bill. They say if they are going to get screwed by Canadians over film distribution, then Free Trade is out the window. They will kill the deal in the Senate. The result? Mulroney shuts down the **Film Importation Act** so Canada can have "free" trade with the U.S.

1991 What kind of an image do Canadians have of Canadians? What are we absorbing in our books, plays, television, films and magazines? Seventy-seven per cent of magazines bought in Canada are foreign; 95 per cent of the television drama aired in Canada is foreign; 85 per cent of the records and tapes sold is foreign; 80 per cent of the books bought are foreign; 97 per cent of the films and videos watched are foreign. Australians see 27 per cent Australian films in their theatres; the English see 26 per cent English films; the Italians 44 per cent of their own cinema; the

French 48 per cent; and Canadians 3 per cent. Ninety per cent of \$1 billion annual revenues from films distributed in this country is controlled by the Hollywood majors. Seventy-eight per cent of Canada's oil, gas, chemical, auto and electrical products, and industries are U.S. owned. Direct U.S. investment in Canada is \$40 billion.

FRANK STANTON IS THE FORMER HEAD OF CBS. HE TALKED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AMERICAN MEDIA THIS WAY:

"While the United States retains considerable, perhaps predominant power in international affairs, the capacity of America to dictate the course of international events has diminished. This means that the United States will have to count more than ever on explanation and persuasion. The new premium on persuasion makes cultural diplomacy essential to the achievement of foreign policy goals."

THE LATE NORTHROP FRYE WROTE ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF CANADIAN CULTURE:

"Cultural history has its own rhythms. It is possible that one of those rhythms is very like an organic rhythm: that there must be a period in which a social imagination can take root and establish a tradition. American literature had this period, in the north-eastern part of the country, between the Revolution and the Civil War. Canada has never had it. English Canada was first a part of the wilderness, then a part of North America and the British Empire, then a part of the United States."

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