

Perspectives on Challenge for Change / Société nouvelle

Edited by
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Dans nos forêts (dir. Maurice Bulbulian, 1971)
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Introduction

2007 will mark the forty-year anniversary of the most significant contribution to contemporary documentary film made by the National Film Board of Canada / l'Office national du film du Canada. Designed "to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change," Challenge for Change / Société nouvelle innovated forms of socially

engaged and activist documentary that continue to influence, impact, and evolve today.

What follows are excerpts from a new (as yet untitled) collection of interviews with filmmakers, producers and others directly involved in this revolutionary program of documentary films produced from 1967 to the early 1980s. It is a key episode in Canadian film history that remains on the periphery of Canadian cultural history though it has its place in standard Canadian film histories. It reflects the social and political turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, ignites the activist-documentary practice now commercialized by the likes of Michael Moore (*Fahrenheit 9/11*; *Bowling for Columbine*) and re-imagined by independent media tacticians, and remains a model for using film and video as tool for grassroots community organization.

The collection as a whole features first-person remembrances of a wide-cross section of NFB / ONF insiders dealing with topics ranging from production histories to candid evaluations of the usefulness of the films. The influence of new technologies is considered and debated, just as the complex question of form versus function is tackled. Obviously enough, the issue of state-sponsored film production and the question of censorship is central to several stories. Some argue for the uniquely “Canadian” character of the program, while others judge the success of their films in terms of global reach. In the end, few aspects of Challenge for Change / Société nouvelle remain unaddressed or unevaluated.

Presented here are two interviews with key figures from both the English and French sectors of the programmes - George Stoney and Maurice Bulbulian. Their comments reflect the scope and depth of the perspectives shared by the project's many participants. We

would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their commitment and their films.

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Diane Cantin completed a Master's degree in Film Studies at Concordia University.

Isabelle Lavoie also holds a Master's degree in Film Studies at Concordia University. She is now working as a massage therapist, while still being passionately engaged with local and foreign cinemas.

The Challenge for Change interview project began while the authors were completing their degrees at Concordia University.