



In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989

Gary Evans

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One of the cornerstones of Canadian culture, the National Film Board has throughout its history mirrored the social issues that preoccupy Canadians. Gary Evans traces the development of the postwar NFB, picking up the story where he left it at the end of his earlier work, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda*.

Evans points out that although Ottawa has not meddled in the operation of the NFB, outside stimuli have regularly forced the Film Board to reassess its mandate, a process which often has brought about as much confusion as light. For example, the unbridled optimism and expansion of the fifties and sixties led to English Production's desire for 'democratization' of programming, an end to the power of executive producers, and an expansion of the Film Board's core of permanent employees, all of which nearly caused the organization to founder. On the French side, despite the filmmakers' preference for the feature film rather than the cinema verite documentary, many in Ottawa regarded their 'political' films as both unfair attacks on the federal system and anachronisms coming from a federal institution. Throughout, the English-French tug of war so integral to the Canadian identity is a recurring theme.

Sources include interviews with former ministers, government film commissioners, policy-makers, and filmmakers, as well as archival documents and films. From them Evans has produced the first study to document the key trends in postwar Canadian filmmaking and to examine the role of film in the evolution of federal cultural policy.

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