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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



What safety net? The insecurity of performer income

Dec. 5, 2002 – In addition to the traditional time with family and friends, holidays tend to be a time of generosity and goodwill to others. Artists, though often without means, are generous – giving to others of their time, talents and hard-earned money while having trouble making ends meet themselves. Performers face a particular hardship. Even those who achieve success and prosperity are at risk of destitution in later life. A strong income stream from one project does not guarantee financial security or future engagements.

At ACTRA's June policy conference, we resolved to act on two policy fronts: Canadian content, and income security for performers. Since June, we've launched our Campaign for Canadian Programming, to raise awareness about the decline in Canadian dramatic series production. We are pressuring the government and the CRTC to change regulations and get back on track with TV drama series that create meaningful jobs for performers and broadcast Canadian culture to Canadians.

We are also embarking on the serious issue of income security for performers – or insecurity. In the Holiday issue of InterACTRA, David Hope writes for us on the difficult and all-too-common situation of the artist in financial hardship. As Executive Director of the Actor's Fund, he has a unique knowledge of the performer struggle. Making the precarious financial life of performers more secure is a challenge. Where does one start?

One effort that has been forced upon us is to protect the independent contractor tax status of performers. With a rash of audits by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), particularly in B.C., ACTRA has been trying legal means and has had discussions with the CCRA to curb the audits of our members. While we value being independent contractors, this status also means performers can't claim 'employment insurance' when not working, adding to our financial instability. Shouldn't we get the best of both worlds?

In addition to battling the plight of the individual performer, ACTRA the organization is suffering financial hardship of late. Our June meeting saw the establishment of a Finance Committee to review our situation. Look for National Treasurer Jamie Bradley's brief report on this committee in the Holiday issue of InterACTRA. Also in the magazine, Dan MacDonald writes on Performing Arts Lodges – an inspiring organization that is making strides across the country.

ACTRA celebrates our 60th anniversary in 2003. Our members have a rich and accomplished history to be proud of, and a bright future to look forward to. We're thrilled that so many branches have embraced the idea of re-instituting branch ACTRA Awards, and we hope you will share in our celebrations. I wish you all happiness and health over the holidays, and work and fulfillment in the New Year.



Thor Bishopric