



ACTRA

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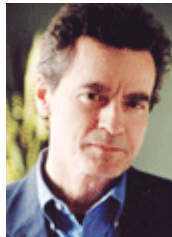
The
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What's Inside

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Building On Our Success



Dear Member:

June 2005 - This is my first opportunity to write a few words since the National Council of ACTRA elected me as President. I was elected by acclamation, and if that seems like a proud statement, I can assure you it is. I am full of pride, and humbled at the same time to have been chosen as national leader. I have been a member of ACTRA and CAEA since 1976 and know what it is to be a grassroots Canadian actor. And now, through most of a decade, I have been steadily involved with a growing cast of other elected leaders in making ACTRA the best performers union that it can be.

I think it's worth noting what ACTRA has been achieving lately. While ticking off our to-do list on the ACTRA Plan we have, not by accident, made some tremendous achievements in a very short time. At our national bargaining of successive IPA's and the Commercial Agreement, we made very respectable gains during a severe economic downturn at a time when other unions in our industry had to accept concessions or zero increases.

We've seen large numbers of our members, and many of our most high-profile performers, stepping up to become champions for our causes, especially on the campaign for Canadian programming and a healthy indigenous industry. We found they were ready and excited when we sent out the enlistment calls because ACTRA has been giving them a cause to believe in.

That cause, one of taking the vanguard on political action, combined with our efforts to build a broad coalition of film unions and our eagerness to articulate the issues to government, has led to a paradigm shift that all of us are creating together. We've redefined what a union can do and we've moved beyond our role as a first-rate bargaining agent for performers' rights. According to *Playback*, we have taken the lead role in just about every major cultural issue concerning performing artists in Canada.

This is bold and unifying national leadership. And it's up to us to build on these successes. During Thor's remarkable terms as President, his leadership has been unflagging, determined and - if you've had the experience of being in bargaining with him - inspirational.

So now what should we be doing with this level of initiative and all this credibility that we've built?

First, we can enlist more and more of our prominent members to our causes and, especially, more of our working members at large who are discovering now that ACTRA is pretty cool. This is a very satisfying task and it's not too difficult. Performers coast-to-coast must be allowed to feel included, embraced and above all, necessary, to the work of the national union.

Second, in the next rounds of bargaining of the IPA and the BC Master Agreement, we can join together on strategy and set joint bargaining objectives for both ACTRA and our members of UBCP. By working together, we can make some substantial achievements in two of the big contracts under which performers work in this country.

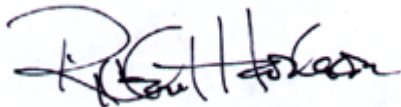
Now what is it that performers want? Well, we want challenging roles in stories that are significant to our spirit, and we want them in productions across this country. However, we have to create that chance in the face of a global economic giant that just wants us to be a branch plant. So, the third goal, and the one I see as absolutely vital, is to define a 'Cultural Policy'. We can take all the work we've been doing with political action to improve prospects for our production community and tune it into a deeper national consciousness. We can use our members' energies, our lead on national coalitions and all the momentum we've been building, to

inspire government to create something that Ministers of Heritage have only been mentioning: a solid cultural policy for English Canada, one in which performers and artists of all stripes are intrinsic to cultivating the nourishment of our country.

We need a guarantee that culture is not a commodity to be traded. We require our government to legislate that our culture is not to be mediated. This is a very important matter, and it's a very big goal. To achieve it, we'll have to put a lot of energy and focus on that priority. But I see no other choice.

Many of us have worked in small theatres across Canada. If you've worked on the plays of great Canadian writers like David French, Judith Thompson, Carol Bolt, Michel Tremblay, Margaret Laurence, David Fennario or George F. Walker on wooden stages that smelled of dust, or of the cornfields just outside the walls, or of the beds of kelp like outside the Rising Tide theatre in Old Trinity, Newfoundland, then you have been very fortunate indeed. And you know it. You've held the nerve bundle that is the Canadian spirit and you have helped weave the fabric of our culture.

ACTRA can keep up this work for our union and for our culture. Our great company of performers in solidarity can do this and much more. It's up to us all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hardacre', written in a cursive style.

Richard Hardacre
ACTRA National President