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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wanted! Good Dialogue and a Fair Deal...



Dear colleagues, fellow ACTRA members:

With my last message to you I spoke of the "strong cloth" of which we are made. As performers we come by that cloth honestly, by dint of our determination and our inventive skills in the face of the demands and the odds in our very competitive industry. But the cloth I meant is also one woven with the filaments of many individuals united for the good of all.

At this moment, I want you to know that you can be proud of the many of your fellow members who, united with your negotiating committee, faced down the appalling demands we heard from the associations representing producers on the first day of bargaining of the Independent Production Agreement -the biggest national contract under which we work. Our unity now is crucial, for this Agreement impacts on the health of our English Canadian film and television industry. We are the faces and voices of our culture's entertainment industry in traditional and digital production and we will continue to do what it takes to collectively fight for improved conditions and opportunities for our members.

In a strong show of solidarity, leading Canadian performers including the *Trailer Park Boys* Robb Wells, Mike Smith and John Paul Tremblay, *Corner Gas* lead Eric Peterson, *ReGenesis* star Wendy Crewson, Gordon Pinsent, Tonya Lee Williams, Kenneth Welsh, and many others attended the first day of IPA bargaining with representatives of the producers. They and your bargaining team were insulted by the rollbacks presented by the producers. Gordon Pinsent, after hearing that we all deserve a 25% pay cut, reduced residuals and eroded working conditions, walked out of the talks.

For more than a year, ACTRA has been preparing for the bargaining of our major collective agreement. Again and again, the Producers' associations have delayed bargaining, cancelling agreed upon dates, and pushing us closer and closer to the December 31, 2006 expiration of our agreement. As you may already know, listening to input from members' meetings and focus groups across the country, we pulled together a superb negotiating committee. Your team, led by ACTRA's National Executive Director and Chief Negotiator Stephen Waddell and myself, is comprised of members Heather Allin, Wendy Anderson, Tyrone Benskin, Thor Bishopric, Barry Blake, Aidan Devine, Cary Lawrence, Ron Lea, Karl Pruner, Alberta Watson, Ron White and Maurice Dean Wint.

Negotiations began with the producers' associations on October 23, 2006 and, much to our regret, went very badly. The CFTPA/APFTQ presented a package that essentially attacks every area of our current agreement - a systematic, point-by-point stripping of pay, residuals and working conditions for Canadian performers.

In addition to the wage proposals that would have the effect of cutting of our members pay by 25% on substantially every domestic production the producers associations tabled pay "discounts" that cover all film and television projects in Canada with budgets under \$12 million. Aside from rare mega-budget U.S. produced features, this constitutes almost all types of production that take place in this country! They also proposed a substantial cut to our insurance and retirement benefits and a wholesale diluting (or was it a looting?) of our residuals and use-fees structure.

ACTRA's proposals are designed to maintain stability and predictability in this industry while improving our working conditions. We propose incremental progress on the pay and working conditions of our members. In addition, we propose reasonable increases to narrow the pay gap between ACTRA and SAG members working in Canada on the same sets on high-budget U.S. feature films. ACTRA is aiming for numerical parity with SAG rates on big-budget U.S. features by the year 2011.

Your negotiating committee is determined to make fair gains for our members. They, and all the members

attending the opening days, made it clear that they will not engage over talks that determine how heavily our rights, our earnings and our conditions will be eroded.

Upon receiving the appalling terms offered to us, your ACTRA negotiators have taken the extraordinary step of filing for conciliation - asking for a neutral, government-appointed third party to bring some level-headedness to the process. We had hoped for measured talks with the associations, ones based on properly researched financial data and business cases. We were well prepared for a realistic dialogue. We have been prepared since March and had hoped to have this settled during the summer. But we were presented with shocking rollbacks, now having been pressured towards the expiration of the current agreement by a series of postponements not of our choosing. Again and again, they delayed bargaining with us while the associations and their colleagues representing the major U.S. companies tried to force other Canadian unions, including - and with no success - our brothers and sisters of UBCP/ACTRA, to accept major concessions. This timing, not of our choice, could not have been coincidental.

As a result, this unwelcome chain of events has brought us to seek the involvement of a conciliator.

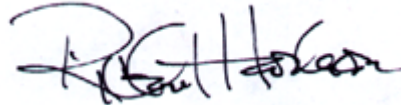
It is worth noting that, during this process, your elected leadership of ACTRA's National Council is strengthening the campaign to build a firmly grounded, Canadian television and film industry. With our coalition of all the creative unions and guilds we remain focused on this goal in Ottawa, to achieve minimum spending and content requirements at the private broadcasters for homegrown, high-quality productions. We will be making a solid, concerted intervention at the CRTC's renewal hearings in late November for the licenses of these same broadcasters. There, as everywhere, we will be firmly in support of the Canadian production industry. We work well with our producers. And we will continue working together with the many who are friends of ACTRA to build our nation's culture.

But let there be no doubt. We will continue looking forward to receiving the acknowledgment that our professional performers deserve - acknowledgement that we are second to none.

Our bargaining committee looks to find a reasonable settlement that works for both parties. We're hoping the CFTPA/APFTQ will do the same. Your messages and emails of support are much appreciated by your bargaining committee and your staff negotiators.

Visit www.actra.ca regularly for updates on how negotiations are proceeding. Your support and solidarity with your negotiating team will be crucial.

In solidarity,



Richard Hardacre
National President
ACTRA

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