INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING: THE DOUBLE COMMITMENT

by

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ii
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the process of pre-production of an independently produced half-hour documentary film. An independent film is defined as a film over which the maker retains complete editorial control and holds copyright to the completed production.

The methodology used in the thesis is participant observation. A field journal was kept for twelve months during the pre-production period of the documentary film, Little Mountain. The actions and events, and the interplay of individuals and institutions that are part of the pre-production stage of filmmaking were recorded and are related in a first-person descriptive narrative. This account is then analysed.

The pre-production period of an independently produced film is a complex activity, involving the organization of the necessary resources to allow the film to enter production. This activity includes the presentation of the film concept to the subjects of the film, the gathering of the necessary human and technical resources, the establishment of a network of support within the film community, and the raising of financial resources. The main source of financial support for independent short films comes from the National Film Board and the Canada Council. The difficulties that independent documentary filmmakers face with respect to these two government institutions are documented and analysed.
The thesis argues that the success of the independent filmmaker in pre-production is partly a matter of experience, but is largely a function of the filmmaker's commitment to two things: a commitment to the concept behind the particular film being made and a commitment to filmmaking as a profession. It is further argued that independent filmmakers who work on social or political documentaries experience continuing challenges to this double commitment throughout the filmmaking process.

Independent filmmaking permits a fuller examination of social and political subjects than is possible through films that are corporate or state sponsored, or that are designed mainly for the commercial marketplace. Thus, the thesis concludes with recommendations that independent filmmaking receive greater support in terms of both funding programs from the federal government and greater access to audiences through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval .......................................................... ii
Abstract ........................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ............................................... v

I. THE INDEPENDENT FILM COMMUNITY .......................... 1
   Introduction .................................................... 1
   The Study ....................................................... 2
   The Independent Film Community ............................ 3
   Methodology .................................................... 7

II. THE MAKING OF AN INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY .......... 14
   The Initial Concept ........................................... 14
   Beginning the Process ........................................ 16
   "The Struggle Continues" .................................... 70
   Reality Intervenes .......................................... 118

III. EPILOGUE ..................................................... 153

IV. FILMMAKING IN PERSPECTIVE ................................. 167
   The Presentation of the Idea ............................... 168
   Crew and Technical Resources .............................. 171
   Support in the Film Community ............................ 176
   Fundraising .................................................... 181
   Conclusion ..................................................... 191

V. THE FUTURE FOR INDEPENDENT FILM .......................... 197
   The National Film Board .................................... 197
   The Canada Council .......................................... 200
   The Capital Cost Allowance ................................ 201
   Telefilm Canada .............................................. 203

vii
The Broadcast Fund ........................................... 204
The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ...................... 206
Conclusion .................................................. 208

APPENDIX ONE .................................................. 211
The National Film Board of Canada .......................... 211

APPENDIX TWO ............................................... 220
The Canada Council ........................................... 220

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................ 231
I. THE INDEPENDENT FILM COMMUNITY

Introduction

Most aspects of Canadian film have been well-examined by Canadian academics and policy makers. Ranging from studies on the Capital Cost Allowance for feature film production,¹ to the remarks of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee,² there is a wealth of material documenting the state of the Canadian film industry.

One section of the Canadian film community which has received short shrift from policy-makers and film academics alike is the section comprised of independent filmmakers. Independent film, as defined by this thesis, refers to films over which the makers retain complete editorial control, and hold copyright to the completed production. This excludes films made by or for the National Film Board or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It also excludes films sponsored by any public or private agency, where final editorial control over the production is required by the sponsoring agency as a condition of their financial participation.

¹ Government of Canada, The Film Industry in Canada (Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State, 1976.)
The Study

The films produced by the independent community reflect Canada and its people in a way that most Canadian feature films do not even approach. Yet even in the current search for more Canadian content, in terms of policy initiatives on the part of government, or in examination by the academic world, these films and their makers have received very little attention.

This thesis aims to rectify that situation in two ways. First, it examines the process of pre-production of an independently produced half-hour documentary film. Second, it offers some potential solutions to the problem of funding for independent films.

Chapters Two and Three present a case study based on the author's personal experience in making the documentary film Little Mountain. The actions and events, and the interplay of individuals and institutions that were part of the pre-production of Little Mountain are related in a first-person descriptive narrative. (Pre-production is the period starting from the generation of the idea for the film, to the moment when enough resources are assembled to allow filming to begin.) In Chapter Four this account is analysed with reference to the problems faced in pre-production by independent filmmakers in general, and political filmmakers in particular.

The pre-production of an independent film is a complex activity. The contention is that the success of the independent
filmmaker in pre-production is partly dependent on experience, but is largely a function of the filmmaker's commitment to the concept behind the film being made, as well as a commitment to filmmaking as a profession. It is further suspected that independent filmmakers who make political and social documentary films experience continual challenges to this double commitment throughout the filmmaking process.

In Chapter Five, some potential solutions to the problem of funding for independent films are offered. It is suggested that independent films allow for a fuller examination of social and political issues than is possible for films that are sponsored by the government, or that are designed primarily for the commercial marketplace. Recommendations are made that independent filmmaking receive greater support in terms of both funding programmes from the federal government, and in greater access to audiences through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Independent Film Community

The films produced by the independent community fall into various categories. They may be dramatic films, animated films, experimental films, or documentary films. The films vary from thirty seconds to feature length, but are usually under an hour long.

An additional characteristic of independent film, particularly with social or political documentaries, is a
tendency towards a critical perspective on the subject or issue presented in the film. Many independent filmmakers would categorize their work as progressive. Often the reason the filmmaker has produced the film independently is because independence from external financial control allows the issues in the film to be presented as the filmmaker feels they should be.

The independent film community tends to think of itself as an alternative to the established film industry, and it too has its own organizations and institutions. Among the oldest in English Canada are the distribution outlets for many independent films, the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre (CFMDC) in Toronto, and the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution West, (CFDW) in Vancouver. These two non-profit societies were started by independent filmmakers in order to improve the distribution of independent film, both in terms of getting the work shown, and in helping filmmakers receive a financial return on their work.

The CFMDC and the CFDW are run on a co-operative basis. It is up to the filmmakers to participate in the distribution of their films by suggesting community groups and social organizations which might be interested in renting or buying their films. These distributors have their best contacts for distribution with local libraries, school boards, and art galleries. This results in an audience for independent films that is largely regional in nature.
Filmmakers who distribute their films with the CFMDC or the CFDW receive an average of 35 per cent more from each film sale than they would with a commercial distributor. Both organizations are publicly subsidized, with a large portion of their operational funds coming from the Canada Council. The size of the catalogues of these organizations gives an insight into the size of the independent film community. Between them, they carry the work of 568 filmmakers, with the CFMDC listing 906 titles, and the CFDW listing 285 titles. Virtually all of these filmmakers are Canadian.

Not all independent filmmakers distribute their work through the CFMDC or the CFDW. Some attempt to distribute their own work, others sign with a commercial distributor, and some, especially those whose work deals with developmental or Third World subjects, distribute through the Development Education Centre (DEC) in Toronto, or the International Development Education Resources Association (IDERA) in Vancouver. In the Atlantic Provinces, the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Atlantic, based in Halifax, will begin distribution in 1985. The Winnipeg Film Group, a production co-operative, distributes the work of Manitoba independent filmmakers. Quebec has its own network of distributors, but this thesis does not attempt to describe the independent film community in that province.

A rapidly-growing component of the independent film community is the production co-operatives. There is a production co-operative in almost every major city in Canada. These
non-profit societies are funded through the Canada Council, and depending on the province, may receive additional support through their provincial government, and through the National Film Board. The co-operatives own film production and post-production equipment, which is available to their members at very low rates. In order not to compete with commercial equipment supply houses, the co-ops require that films using co-op equipment be independently produced. This is defined as the member retaining editorial control and copyright over the final product.

The funding of the cooperatives is by no means secure. They must apply on an annual basis to the Canada Council for financial support. It is increasingly difficult for newly formed cooperatives to receive funding from the Council. The primary supporters of these groups are their members, who work as volunteers to create a situation where independent films can be made.

In 1979, an umbrella organization, the Independent Film Alliance du Cinema Independant, was founded. The members of IFAci are independent production co-operatives, distributors, and exhibitors. The objectives of IFAci are to facilitate networking among member groups and to lobby for policy changes that would benefit members. The operation and staff expenses of IFAci are funded mostly by the Canada Council. IFAci has twenty-four member groups, representing over one thousand filmmakers.
Aside from these organizations, there are of course many individual independent filmmakers who do not work within the production co-operatives, and who may or may not distribute their work with the distribution co-ops.

While the independent film community in Canada is large, it is not particularly powerful. The films produced by this community are continually confused with National Film Board productions. It is possible that the lack of impact these films have on a mass market is the reason their contribution to Canadian film culture has routinely been ignored by policy makers. Given the limited base of financial support for these films, it is surprising so many continue to be made. This thesis will shed some light on that mystery.

Methodology

The methodology used in the study was participant observation. For twelve months, while the author was involved in the pre-production of an independent film, a detailed and comprehensive journal was kept of the proceedings. This journal forms the basis of the case study found in Chapters Two and Three. Interviews with filmmakers who have produced at least two independent social or political documentary films, and with various film officials, are included in the analysis presented in Chapter Four and in the two Appendices.

Many writers, in discussing the problems of qualitative research, bemoan the failure of many of its practitioners to
reveal the methodology behind their studies — how they gained access to the field situation; whether their role as observer was known to those they observed; how their field notes were recorded.³ They point to one of the first important sociological studies to use participant observation as its primary methodology, William Foote Whyte's classic work *Street Corner Society*,⁴ as an example of how the researcher should report back to his or her colleagues. Following such direction, a brief account of the process followed in this study will be given.

Elliott reminds us that participant observation is not so much a single method as a battery of methods.⁵ Schatzman and Strauss state that the field researcher is a "methodological pragmatist", creating "much of both his method and the substance of his field and inquiry."⁶ Bruyn has defined the characteristics of a participant observation approach to field research using three axioms.⁷ The first is that the participant


observer shares in the life activities and sentiments of people in face-to-face relationships. A corollary to this first axiom is that the role of participant observer requires both detachment and personal involvement. The sharing of life activities must not blind the researcher to the task at hand. The second axiom is that the participant observer is a normal part of the culture and the life of the people under observation. A social role for the researcher must be found that is acceptable to the group being studied. A corollary to this is that the scientific role of the participant observer is interdependent with his social role in the setting. One role makes the other role possible. The third axiom is that the role of the participant observer reflects the social process of living in society. Bruyn explains this third axiom through reference to the work of George H. Mead. All people, Mead argued, must learn to take on the roles of others at some time in their lives in order to communicate in any human sense. This social fact, universal to society, is essential to the method of participant observation - the process of role-taking. "If a researcher is aware of the hazards and rules of the method of participant observation, then he should be able accurately to find the cultural meanings contained in any group he studies - some meanings of which may lie at the root of man's existence in society."  

8 Bruyn, op. cit., p. 21.
Junker identifies four possible social roles for field work: complete participant; participant as observer; observer as participant; and complete observer. My role in this study was that of a participant as observer. Junker defines this as "a field worker whose observer activities are not wholly concealed, but are 'kept under wraps', as it were, or subordinated to activities as a participant, activities which give the people in the situation their main basis for evaluating the field worker in his role." Rather than gaining access to a field situation, I took advantage of my involvement in making a film, and turned my personal situation into a field situation. Those persons I had more than a passing involvement with were aware that I was a graduate student, and was keeping a field diary on my experiences in making the film. A few had the temerity to inquire if they were included in it; upon receiving an affirmative reply, most were either not interested or perhaps too inhibited to raise the subject again. Possibly they would have been more alarmed if they had known that at the end of each day, while they were out at the Railway Club, I was seated at my desk recapturing their words to me.

Junker cautions that his four categories of social roles are not sharply distinguished, and that researchers, over time, or within different situations, may find themselves "oscillating" between categories. This was certainly the case in

10 Ibid., p. 36.
this study. In dealing with funders, I never discussed my role as an observer (becoming a complete participant), and in completing the interviews with various agency officials or with filmmakers, I made plain my research objective (becoming an observer as participant).

The extent to which my participation varied is reflected in the field notes. Only those activities that were directly or indirectly affected by the process of filmmaking were recorded. At the beginning, the notes are brief, and a day's entry runs one to two handwritten pages. By the end of the study, there was seemingly no area in my life not affected by the filmmaking, and the entries run three to six pages - typed.

Lofland gives four characteristics of studies which can "reasonably substitute for face-to-face knowing". First, the reporter should have been close to the persons reported on. This means physically close, over time, and in terms of social intimacy. It also means giving close attention to the details of daily life in recording activities. Second, the report should be factual. Third, the report should contain a significant amount of pure description. Finally, it should contain direct quotations from the participants. Lofland admits that these four are characteristic of any good reporting, be it investigative journalism, or in the form of a novel or a film. But unlike these, sociological studies must embody a fifth characteristic, -----------

that of analysis, in the form of "explicit and articulate abstraction and generalization."

To fulfil the above requirements, it is necessary to choose a narrative style. Bruyn advises the writer of a participant observer account to "choose the style which best expresses the viewpoint of the people involved in the study, avoiding stylistic extremes."\(^{12}\) Following the example of works such as Whyte's classic *Street Corner Society*, or of Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams*,\(^ {13}\) I have chosen to write using the first-person. Bruyn distinguishes between researchers who use systematic procedures to produce a structured study, and those who do not follow the systematic traditions of science, but have a particular style of their own. After much thought, I wish to place this study in the latter category.

The reader should prepare for a case study which is unlike the majority found in academic writing. The intention is to present my experience in producing a documentary film in a manner which reflects the pre-production process as I experienced it at the time. In so doing, I hope that I have managed "to report objectively and subjectively at the same time, to write from both the heart and the head" and that as a result, the reader will "gain in accuracy and insight into the


In Chapter Four, this personal account is analysed through reference to the case study as well as through interviews with filmmakers. This analysis leads to conclusions about the nature of pre-production and independent filmmaking. Chapter Five explores suggestions for policy changes in the structure of government aid to filmmaking.

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14 Bruyn, op. cit., p. 247.
II. THE MAKING OF AN INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY

The Initial Concept

In October of 1981, I decided to make a documentary film on the behind-the-scenes of an election campaign.

My background was not in film production. In Ottawa, a few years earlier, I had been part of a circle of Canadian film buffs, and this group had originated many innovative public exhibitions of Canadian films. At the time, I worked on Parliament Hill for the New Democratic Party, and it had been documentary films that interested me the most, focussing as they often did on political and social issues. We became interested in producing films ourselves, and after some hilarious attempts, decided further education in film production techniques was both necessary and desirable. Rather than go to film school, some of the women in the group decided to try a practical approach.

One woman succeeded in persuading Studio D, the women's filmmaking unit at the National Film Board of Canada, to sponsor a month-long course in film production. The course was held at the Montreal NFB, and was geared to women who had some knowledge of filmmaking, but who needed further training. Ten women from across the country participated, all of us with varying degrees of past experience in film production.
At the end of the month, we had completed two unexceptional one-minute films. Although not the equivalent of formal training in filmmaking (two to four years in most colleges and universities), the course provided a basic grasp of the requirements of film production. Most importantly, the process had been demystified, and we were confident of our ability to continue in the field.

I had taken the NFB course while enrolled as a graduate student at Simon Fraser University. I was preparing to return to my studies in Vancouver, wondering when the opportunity to participate again in filmmaking would arise. During a stop-over in Ottawa, I visited an old friend.

Our conversation followed many pathways, and finally returned to a favourite theme - the election campaign where we had first met. I remarked that campaigns, and the gossip that surrounds their behind-the-scenes activities, provided a constant source of conversation and entertainment for most campaign workers. The excitement of campaigns, the sense of responsibility, the knowledge that actions taken would have very real results, the carnival atmosphere mixed in with very boring and detailed work, all the people and all the personality quirks - these things made a campaign a fascinating experience.

"A campaign would make a good subject for a film," said my friend.

"Yeah, I could make one on John Giles' campaign in the next B.C. election," I said, referring to a mutual friend who had
just won the nomination to be a candidate for the NDP in the provincial riding of Vancouver-Little Mountain. Little Mountain was a two-member riding, and John Giles was running with a woman named Mary Bentley, someone I had never met. I was not very serious in my suggestion, because I felt my friend, like most New Democrats, would be suspicious and untrusting of anything unusual that might hamper the success of a campaign.

But to my surprise, my friend was quite enthusiastic. He urged me to try it, to speak to as many people as possible about the idea as soon as I returned to Vancouver. I began to get excited, and felt the first beginnings of anticipation mixed with doubt that would mark all my proceedings for the next two and a half years.

**Beginning the Process**

From that beginning, an idea that was to shape my world took on its own life and form. My thoughts and actions were increasingly informed by one question - will this help to make the film? I had entered a life where I was constantly talking of my idea, and of my plan for realizing it, to anyone who would listen.

The film meant a lot to me. Making my own film was one of the few ways I could remain involved in filmmaking, something I wanted very much. And this was a film I knew I was capable of making; I had been an organizer for the NDP in several campaigns and I could visualize the way a campaign might be put on film.
In addition, I had a very strong personal identification with the concept behind the film. I wanted to show an aspect of the political process that most people were not aware of, to film the very human side of back-room strategy, and not the public hype of a campaign. I wanted to do something that would encourage people to get politically involved. At some level, the film was based on my life and my understanding of the meaning of my experience - to not believe that such a film would be a useful contribution would be tantamount to rejecting myself. Over the next two years, I often had cause to examine my motives for making the film, and it was always this basic belief in the value of the film that sustained me.

When I returned to Vancouver, I had two main goals. One was to get permission from the Little Mountain NDP to make a film in their election headquarters during the next provincial election. The other was to gain the interest of someone who knew more about filmmaking than I, someone who would advise and hopefully assist me in my undertaking. I thought it would be easier to achieve the former goal than the latter. I had worked for the NDP, and expected that as an insider, it would not be difficult to interest them in the possibilities of the idea. Nor would they be likely to doubt the sincerity of my motives. But I was not really a part of the world of filmmakers, and had less confidence in my ability to present myself as someone capable of realizing an ambitious project.
The first goal I achieved rather gradually. I began with approaching my friend, John Giles, who was one of the candidates for the Little Mountain NDP. I felt his support was essential. He was receptive to the idea, reminding me I would have to get permission from the Riding Association. He also asked if it would be possible for me to film the Socred campaign as well. This was not even slightly in line with my intentions - I had no wish to compare the two worlds, and no desire to present myself as non-partisan in order to get permission to film inside a Socred committee room. I felt his suggestion to be politically motivated, and foresaw that my loyalties could be continually divided between the needs of the film and those of the campaign, if I was not careful to set my priorities. Determining to put the film first, I explained that it was outside my capabilities and interests to film both campaigns. The shift from political organizer to filmmaker was beginning.

Apart from gaining permission from the Little Mountain NDP to make the film, my other concern was to find experienced people who could help me - people who had made films before and who could advise me in the ways of film production. I felt I was a newcomer and in need of guidance. What were the first steps to take, the first details to organize? I knew I would need money, equipment, filmstock, and a competent crew, but I was not sure how to get them. I made a list of all the people I knew who made a living in film, and started contacting them.
One of these people was Sharon, someone I had known slightly for almost a year. We were both members of Cineworks, a filmmakers' co-operative, and were on our way to becoming friends. We talked on the phone shortly after my return to Vancouver. I told her about my idea for the film. She was interested, particularly when I told her about an encounter with an affluent real-estate agent who had expressed interest in the film, and had asked to see a copy of a formal proposal.

Sharon told me that the cost of film could be roughly figured at two thousand dollars per minute. Video was cheaper to "shoot", but the equipment necessary to achieve quality good enough to allow a transfer to film, as well as the cost of the transfer process itself, would make the cost of video comparable to film. She told me about a Canada Council program, Explorations, to which non-professional artists could apply for grant money. Sharon was applying, and offered to show me a copy of her application form. She invited me for supper that night.

Sharon was a partner with two men in a film production company called Mainland Media. Apart from the Canada Council application for her personal film project, she showed me a proposal for a film Mainland Media was hoping to produce, a ninety-minute docu-drama on drug addiction. Already they had received script development funds from the Canadian Film Development Corporation. I was very impressed. The proposal was well laid-out, on grey paper, and encased in a smoke-coloured vinyl folder, which served to emphasize the blackness of the
Mainland Media letterhead. The proposal was divided into sections, with a table of contents to guide the reader. It contained letters of endorsement for the film from various authorities on addiction, a description of the project, and a summary of research. Information on Mainland Media and a biography of each company member was included. There was a ten-page analysis of the market for such a film, outlining the financial return that might be expected on sales and rentals. In conclusion, a three-page budget with costs for pre-production, production, and post-production was presented.

The whole thing looked very professional, and I wanted desperately to turn my idea into a package that looked like theirs. I felt a little naive and amateurish not to already know how to do this, especially in regard to drawing up a budget. Sharon gave me a proposal, which I was to photocopy and return. She also gave me copies of Canada Council forms for film and video production grants, as well as a copy of her Explorations application. They had information on the Capital Cost Allowance for film at the office, she said, and I was welcome to borrow it. I was pleased, feeling well on my way to unravelling the mysteries of producing films.

That evening we went to a performance at the Western Front. I told Sharon I expected the larger unions as well as the NDP-related foundations to provide funding for the film, and possibly the real-estate agent would also contribute. I wanted to get the film going, and was prepared to put a lot of energy
into it. I explained there was some urgency - the provincial election could easily be held the following spring, just six months away. There was no time to lose. At the end of the evening, Sharon said she was interested in the film, and suggested I come down to Mainland Media and talk it over with her partners. I was thrilled - this was what I had hoped for. I had managed to interest at least one filmmaker in my idea. She told me to write a proposal, so Mainland Media could read something concrete, and we made an appointment for the following week.

I began researching the proposal. The basic structure of the film was to follow the election campaign from the first day of the election to the last - concentrating on filming the volunteers and organizers, and trying to capture the behind-the-scenes energy of the Little Mountain campaign.

Writing the proposal took about a week. I was well acquainted with the internal workings of campaigns, and I knew what I wanted the film to express. I went through my personal files of election material, and jotted down ideas and campaign jargon. From John Giles, I obtained documents on the nature of the Little Mountain riding - housing, occupation, voting patterns, and other socio-demographic information. When I had collected enough, I sat at my typewriter and wrote, putting all my conversations and inspirations of the past weeks into words on paper. I asked a friend who had worked in many campaigns to read it over and comment. And then taking her suggestions into
account, I wrote the proposal, a proposal that never really changed over the next two years, no matter how many times the other details such as producer, crew, and budget did.

The day for the meeting with Mainland Media arrived. With some trepidation, I wandered up to an office on the fifth floor of a renovated warehouse that housed all manner of small businesses from architects to jewellery designers. The office was bright, and a little crowded, with three desks and a typewriter, as well as numerous charts and photographs on the wall. I thought it looked very dashing, and was pleased to be associated with it.

Sharon was there, and introduced me to one partner, David. The third partner, Shawn, was not present, but this did not seem to worry them. I gave David my proposal, and he read it as I watched anxiously, and Sharon busied herself with unknown, but apparently numerous tasks.

Finally David looked up and said "It's good, I like it. It reads well, and it sounds exciting."

A general conversation ensued. David had a few suggestions for additional information to include in the proposal. He was not certain about some of the formulations I had used in regard to the film. For example, I had used the term "voice-over", and David, making an unfavourable reference to "NFB-style documentaries", was concerned that I planned on the use of a narrator. I explained I had meant that the voice of a person being interviewed would continue over other images. Sharon
suggested I use the expression "sound montage".

"It will be a long shoot," said David. "Most half-hour films can be shot in five to fifteen days. This one will take anywhere from twenty to thirty days - that is going to greatly increase the costs." He advised me to view the films of the American documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman. I told them about several films the National Film Board had made on the political process, and both David and Sharon said they would like to see them.

I had come to the meeting with a list of considerations I felt would affect the production of the film. As a former organizer, my concern was not to disrupt campaign activities. I wanted to make sure that the lighting/recording process would be as unobtrusive as possible, and that the film crew be kept to a small number of people. As a director, I wanted this as well. I felt that the campaign workers would be more at ease being filmed if they were not overwhelmed with evidence of filmmaking technology.

I also had certain qualities in mind for the crew. Knowing that the actual shoot was apt to be tense, I wanted a crew that could behave with diplomacy and sensitivity in delicate situations. If possible, I wanted to work with women. At the time, there were not many women filmmakers and I felt some solidarity with the women who were trying to break into the male-dominated ranks of film technicians. Hiring women for my own film would provide a concrete opportunity to support their
efforts.

I also had some reason to believe that women would be easier to work with than men. In earlier filmmaking attempts, working with a group of men and women, I had been less than impressed with the arrogance of several of the male technicians. This film was important to me, and I did not want to have to cope with gender politics while trying to control a situation where control would be difficult to maintain under the best of circumstances. I had heard tales from other women directors and while I knew there were undoubtedly men who would not fit the macho stereotype, as an inexperienced director I felt working with a crew of women would provide a more supportive atmosphere for my "trial by fire".

David suggested that if I did not want to use many lights, it might be best to plan on black and white, rather than colour film. Sharon would be the sound recordist, and also assistant director. David would produce, and I would direct and act as camera assistant. We would have to find a cinematographer. David thought the film would be too gruelling for a woman to shoot, for it was likely to involve a lot of hand-held camera work. As I wanted a woman, we left that discussion on hold.

By the end of the meeting there was agreement that Mainland Media would produce the film. I was to make revisions to the proposal, get permission from the Little Mountain NDP to film their campaign, and then have a budget meeting with David. Before this meeting, I should decide on the format of the film,
the title, length, music, and other details. David would then
draw up a final budget, and we would begin fund-raising.

David mentioned that he had heard about my encounter with
the wealthy real-estate agent. Mainland Media had never used
private funders before, but he was sure they could figure it
out, and get the correct contracts drawn up. I volunteered to
read all the information on the use of the Capital Cost
Allowance in filmmaking, and find out how to use it.

I was very happy. It seemed as if the success of the film
was assured. An experienced producer would help raise the money
and keep all the details I might not know about under control.
The only problem would be the uncertainty over the date of the
election.

However, I still had to get permission from the Little
Mountain NDP to film their election campaign. The path I would
have to take involved discussing the proposal with the Executive
of the Riding Association, and then taking it to a general
membership meeting for a vote. But before doing any of this, I
felt it would be both politically smart as well as polite to
discuss the project with Mary Bentley, John Giles's fellow
candidate for the Little Mountain NDP.

With much trepidation I called her, and she agreed to talk
the idea over with me, choosing nine o'clock on a Saturday
morning at her apartment. At the appointed time I arrived, and
we walked up to Bino's on Broadway in the pouring rain. I was
chatting nervously about Greenpeace's latest media event, hoping
to impress her with the extent of my social concern. I had worn my plainest clothes. I knew her reputation as someone who was very serious about politics, and I felt certain that filmmaking as an occupation was not on her list of approved activities for saving the world.

I gave Mary a copy of the proposal, and she read it over coffee. She was not keen on the idea of making a film during the campaign. She was concerned that it would disrupt the campaign, drain energy, take money, scare away workers, and tie up people like myself, who would otherwise be working as organizers. Generally, it was not a good idea.

I countered her arguments as best I could. I pointed out that a film would be just as likely to attract workers as to drive them away, and that most filmmakers are not also campaign workers. I promised that I would not compete with the Little Mountain NDP for funding. And finally, I told her I had considered the whole project very seriously, and would never suggest making a film during the campaign if I thought it would make the difference between winning and losing.

Mary agreed there were good points to having such a film in existence. Still, she thought it should be left up to the campaign manager to make the final decision on whether he or she wanted a film crew in the Committee Rooms. Campaign managers are often not chosen until just before an election, and I explained there would be too many people and too much money involved not to be certain in advance that the film had complete clearance. I
had to know as soon as possible, in order to start fundraising.

We walked back to her place, still in the pouring rain. "I'm not saying no," she said. "It's not my decision. I'm only one person, you'll have to talk to the Little Mountain Executive."

This depressed me. The Executive would be unlikely to support the idea if she did not. I decided to prepare the proposal as nicely as possible in grey file covers, and to practice all my arguments in favour of the film before attending the Executive meeting. After several harrowing days of trying to reach the President of the Riding Association and get on the agenda, I found myself in Hillcrest Hall for the first time, facing a small gathering of people of all ages, shapes and sizes - a typical NDP Executive. The process of "selling" the film in public had begun, and I was excited and nervous.

The film was the first item on the agenda. I passed the proposals around, and when everyone had finished reading, I made my speech. There were only a few questions. I had mentioned that the Riding Association could have final approval of the finished film before it was released, and one Executive member thought that was going too far. It was better that all editorial control remain with me.

Mary Bentley was not present. John Giles was, and stated that he was in favour of the film, although he knew Mary had a few reservations about it. He felt that: "We will have to trust that some channels of communication and co-operation will exist
between the film and the campaign, and that problems can be dealt with if they arise."

And so it was agreed, with little further discussion, to unanimously recommend to the General Membership that I be allowed to make a film in the next Little Mountain campaign. The General Membership meeting was in a few weeks, and I was asked to attend, and be prepared to give a brief talk.

I stayed until the end of the meeting. Afterwards, several people came to talk to me about the film, asking questions, and giving the names of people who would be interested in the project. They also gave me a book of raffle tickets to sell for a Little Mountain Pub Night. I went home happy and exhausted, ready for the next round.

In the intervening weeks, I began a preliminary investigation into funding sources. I read over the Explorations and other Canada Council forms, but did not feel I had the necessary artistic qualifications, and decided not to apply.

I showed the proposal to a friend who worked for the BC NDP. He was enthusiastic, and suggested I contact the Boag Foundation, which was closely associated with the NDP. He also gave me the names of several wealthy people who had been known to contribute heavily to the NDP, saying: "There's a tax write-off for film, isn't there?"

In the next days I read over the information available on the use of the Capital Cost Allowance (CCA). The CCA is a government policy initiative designed to stimulate the film
industry. It allows investors in certified Canadian productions to deduct the capital cost of their investment from their total income, over a two year period. It seemed as if a lawyer might be required to help decipher the interpretation bulletins printed on the subject by Revenue Canada. I decided to call the Film Certification Office in Ottawa and get the most recent application forms, and had the first of a long line of frustrating experiences phoning "East". The number had changed, and it took two calls (at long distance rates) to obtain the correct number. When I finally did get through, it was to discover that everyone in that office had left for the day, although it was only three o'clock Ottawa time. Eventually, I was given a Vancouver number where forms could be ordered.

As a member of Cineworks, a fledgling film production co-operative funded by the Canada Council, I was invited to a meeting with the Chairman of the Canadian Film Development Corporation. I was excited at the prospect of finding out more information on the Capital Cost Allowance and on any funding the CFDC had to offer. When I arrived at the meeting, I was surprised to find only three other persons there. I felt too intimidated to ask what I wanted to know. My questions seemed basic, and I was embarrassed to admit that I wanted to make a film, but did not know how the CFDC worked. I did hear one piece of interesting information. The Chairman told us that the CFDC was applying to Parliament for an increase in its funding, and that they would use part of this increase, if granted, towards
short films and documentaries. The CFDC's mandating legislation had always included support for this type of film, but they had never funded any - feature films always being the priority. I was pleased that this source of funding might be available, and also pleased that I would have until the next budget year to figure out how to use it.

I phoned Ottawa again, and this time got through to the Film Certification Officer. She outlined the procedure for certifying films and although it seemed that a film like mine would definitely receive Canadian certification, I decided not to fill out the endless forms required until it was clear there were people willing to invest in the film.

Two weeks later, I found myself in Hillcrest Hall again, this time addressing a room filled with people sitting on row after row of green and brown folding chairs. I made another speech, outlining the film and the reasons for making it. I had hoped that there would be some discussion, but as soon as I had finished, a well-meaning friend of mine leapt to his feet, cutting off what few questions there appeared to be, and said: "I move that the Little Mountain NDP co-operate fully in the making of this film." The motion was seconded, and carried unanimously. I had the green light to go ahead with fundraising.

The real work was just beginning. David and I met to discuss the budget. We decided to keep calling the film LITTLE MOUNTAIN - a good "working title". David said he would budget
for the lowest rates possible for a sound recordist and a camera operator. The Mainland Media producer's fees would be one thousand dollars a month during pre-production and post-production, and fifteen hundred a month during production. I nodded. Having no idea of prevailing rates, it did not matter to me how much they paid themselves, as long as they helped raise the money.

"And what do you want to pay yourself?", he asked, and I became almost embarrassed. Not yet able to conceive of myself as a filmmaker, I was not sure it was proper for me to make money on the film. I had a fear it might somehow compromise me in approaching unions or the NDP for funding - they might think my motive for making the film was profit. But I also realized my attitude might be naive, and possibly counter-productive to working with others. I asked David to suggest a salary he thought reasonable.

"As director, the same as we get."

I agreed to this, thinking vaguely about donating any future profits to the NDP. I was not worried about personal financial trouble - I had a part-time job as a research assistant, and was certain I could survive on my salary of six hundred a month.

Laboratory costs for processing and printing film are very high. The budget would be based on a half-hour film with a 25:1 shooting ratio. This meant that in the finished film, we would expect to use only one foot out of every twenty-five shot. I
accepted this ratio without question, having no idea how it compared with standard documentary practice. I left the budget with David, and we agreed to meet again after he had drawn up everything. It would be a while before he could get to it - he was going to Victoria, on a fund-raising trip for the drug addiction film, and when he returned he had to work bartending.

Around this time, two conversations occurred which meant little to me at the time. They both involved Mainland Media. A friend who works in video was discussing LITTLE MOUNTAIN with me, and asked about Mainland Media. What kind of operation were they - co-op? non-profit? I had no idea, and had never thought about it one way or another. They were just three people who worked together making films as far as I was concerned. He said it was important information to know, as it might help assess their motives for working on the film. I did not understand his concern, and when David told me Mainland Media was incorporated as a business partnership, I never thought of it again.

The second conversation was with a friend who worked for the Canadian Labour Congress, and who was also a member of the Little Mountain NDP. He asked me about Mainland Media, and I told him they produced social documentaries and that I was happy to be working with them.

"You've seen their work, then," he said, and although I hadn't, I said yes. They had plans to produce films that sounded commendable to me, and they were in the middle of editing a film on environmental politics. I assumed I would like their work if
I saw it.

David and I met again to finalize the budget. There were a few changes. He suggested Sharon be made co-director, rather than assistant director. He felt this would protect Mainland Media against my inexperience. Sharon would be giving me technical advice during production of the film, and would also help me write the script, so it seemed a fair proposition to me. Sharon would be sound recordist, I would camera assist, but we needed to find a camera operator. As we still could not agree on whether the film would be too difficult for a woman cinematographer, we left the decision till later. The total budget, including a fifteen per cent contingency fee, came to $65,107. Producer's fees amounted to $8,750. I agreed happily to everything, and we set about raising the money.

Mainland Media's approach to fundraising was to divide the total budget into "chunks" of money, and then to try and raise a "chunk" from various targeted sources. This, they assured me, was the professional approach to fundraising, and ultimately less time-consuming than raising small sums of money here and there - an approach known as "nickle and diming it."

The first step was to type up the proposal, including the budget. This task was assumed by David, since he was a better typist than I and Mainland Media had a good, self-correcting typewriter. My job was to purchase the smoke-coloured vinyl covers I had previously admired, as well as grey paper to copy the proposals on. I was amazed at the time it took me to
accomplish these tasks. I also had to furnish a list of names and addresses of the people I wished to approach for funding, as well as a draft of a fundraising letter to accompany our request.

The names and addresses of prospective funders were found in consultation with friends who worked for the union movement. They also provided me with a strategy on who to approach first - start from the top within a given union, and work down the hierarchy.

Our initial list of funding sources included the Canadian Labour Congress, the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Boag and Douglas-Caldwell Foundations (two foundations linked with the NDP), and the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holding Society (also linked to the NDP). Letters were to be sent to the Executive Officers of all these bodies - thirteen letters in all. I was certain that the problem was a logistical one; if we could get the correct names and addresses, money would be forthcoming from these sources.

The fundraising letter was one and a half pages long, and both David and I paled at the prospect of typing thirteen copies. The solution was provided by a friend, who suggested the letter be put on computer. Then, we would only have to change the salutation and address for each one. I had access to the Simon Fraser University computer, and my friend gallantly offered to program the letter, and teach me how to make the individual changes. What seemed a simple task took three
evenings to accomplish - and an additional two evenings to run off the letters on Mainland Media letterhead.

And finally the last step - photocopying the proposal. This was my first introduction to what was to become an endless struggle - finding the best photocopy for the lowest price. I had access to several places where I could photocopy for free. Unfortunately, these copies were not black enough, and failed to match the splendour of the smoke-coloured vinyl covers. In despair, I went to Xerox of Canada, and spent forty dollars to get good, clean copies. David typed up the envelopes, the letters were signed, and placed in the envelopes along with a proposal. Off they went into the world, emissaries of my idea.

We decided to send off letters to three millionaires whose names I had obtained, and who were known to be supporters of the NDP. We also wrote to the wealthy real-estate agent. Again, I drafted the letters and David mailed them out. In these letters, we mentioned that a tax write-off was available to investors in Canadian film. We had not yet done any research on the legal aspects of the Capital Cost Allowance, but reasoned that we could do so if someone showed an interest in investing. Neither of us had the time nor the temerity to wade through the bundles of tax interpretation bulletins and other legal material that the use of the CCA necessitated.

David and I divided up the list of people to whom we had written. We were to do a follow-up phone call for each letter, establishing personal contact, and trying to get an appointment.
to visit and talk over the film in more detail.

Before this could happen, we received several replies in the mail. Two from the International Woodworkers of America and the B.C. Federation of Labour - both saying how much they supported the concept of the film, but due to "severe financial constraints" in the case of one, and "severe financial restraint" in the other, were unable to do anything to help except wish us luck. The Douglas-Caldwell Foundation wrote to say it would discuss our request at its next meeting of table officers, and Dennis McDermott from the Canadian Labour Congress wrote to say our letter had been referred to the CLC's National Political Education Committee. But, he warned that:

the high level of unemployment resulting in reduced income for the CLC has made it necessary to impose budgetary restrictions which allow for only absolutely necessary expenditures.

This was not totally encouraging. We made our remaining phone calls. The Boag Foundation offered the first ray of real hope. They had been "taken with the proposal", and although they couldn't fund the whole thing, would probably "provide a hefty chunk." The three men who ran the Foundation would meet to discuss our request in the near future. This was one of my calls, and I asked if David and I could make a presentation to their meeting, but was refused.

I called the real-estate agent, whom I had met previously through a mutual friend. After an initial misunderstanding as to my identity ("I threw your proposal in the garbage"), I made an appointment to meet with him to discuss the film. Meanwhile,
David had called the International Woodworkers of America, and had made an appointment with their Public Relations director. He had tried to do the same thing with the B.C. Federation of Labour, but couldn't get past the receptionist ("she's the worst flak-catcher I've ever run into - she's rude, arrogant, and insulting").

David and I visited the IWA. Their offices on Pender Street are open and luxurious, with cedar panelling throughout and an impressive view of the Vancouver harbour. The Public Relations Director gave us a tour, and then settled us down with coffee. He explained that the lay-offs in the forest industry had weakened the IWA membership to such an extent that most of the head-office staff were working a four-day week to save the cost of their salary. Their laid-off membership in Campbell River would not appreciate money being spent on a film. We could see that, but asked if he would intercede on our behalf, and help us persuade the President of the IWA to support our request at a meeting of the Canadian Labour Congress which was coming up in Ottawa. Unfortunately, it seemed the President might not be there. The Building Trades dispute within the CLC had strained relations between the IWA and the CLC, and the IWA President might be boycotting the meetings. But the PR Director would do what he could for us - he personally supported our concept, and would like to help.

The meeting left us quite pleased. At least he had been pleasant, and at this point any positive reinforcement was
welcome. But shortly afterwards, more letters arrived from the CLC. The National Political Education Committee had recommended:

that the CLC not spend its limited resources on this particular venture, as their consensus was that the film would not be of use in labour's political education program.

And the CLC Labour Education and Studies Centre wrote that their:

budget is severely constrained at the present time, and funding your proposal would necessitate removing funds from our own ongoing activities.

Following this information, we gave up on the labour movement for the time being, and went to see the real-estate agent. This meeting turned out to be rather amusing. He had a "deal" for us. He would get each agent who sold for his company to put up a thousand dollars ("there's a tax write-off on film, right?") and then they would collectively own the film. The only problem was that most of his agents were Socreds. Could we include something on the Socred campaign, or, at least, could we make sure that the film had lots of scenes of Vancouver residential streets in it? Then it might sell to the international market. Or at least to the real estate market, I thought, picturing scene after scene of homes for sale.

His other suggestion was to hold a raffle. We could buy a home for $90,000, sell $180,000 worth of raffle tickets, and make $90,000. I was feeling incredulous, but hoped my stare would be interpreted as earnest attention. A good businessman, he was trying to make money off our need to make money. The meeting ended with David and the agent exchanging business
cards, while the agent promised to think it over some more. We escaped giggling to the car, and decided to wait and see how much money we got from the Boag Foundation before attempting to pursue his suggestions.

During all these activities, I had been spending a fair amount of time with Sharon in social encounters, getting to know her better, and eventually becoming friends. We had a great deal in common. She knew many of my friends in Montreal and Ottawa, and of course, like all women, we could talk endlessly about relationships, and careers, and the joys and conflicts that abound in all of us. I also looked on each social occasion as a chance to talk about the film, and to ask and have answered all the small questions and details that were continually building up in my mind. This latter desire was only occasionally satisfied - we would usually end up having too much fun to discuss "business". But I did manage to glean bits and pieces of information here and there, and I felt it important to build a good relationship with Sharon - both for the film, and for myself, for I had few close female friends in Vancouver, and none in the film community.

Sharon was a busy person, and I did not mind accommodating my schedule to hers. We were constantly arranging and rearranging our meetings around her other projects and commitments. This was true of my whole involvement with Mainland Media. They had one film they were finishing, and another two projects they were trying to finance. LITTLE MOUNTAIN was a
fourth project for them, and was squeezed in the empty spaces of their appointment calendars. At first I did not resent this, for I was grateful for the help and interest they were giving, and I was busy myself, working part-time as a research assistant, trying to find out about film producing, and following various leads for funding LITTLE MOUNTAIN.

Sharon was frequently out of town. This meant that often our plans to get together and talk about the scripting of the film were changed. When we did get together, there was a lot of gossip to catch up on. Soon, Sharon began to confide in me her unhappiness at Mainland Media. She often had personality conflicts with one of her partners, and felt they were continually involved in a power struggle, in which she was most often the loser. Sharon wondered if she would be better off working on her own, or with different partners. I wondered how LITTLE MOUNTAIN would be affected if she did leave Mainland Media. I found myself in a conflict of interest, not wanting her to leave, but not wanting her to be unhappy, either. For the most part, my advice took the form of suggesting she discuss her problems fully with her partners, and try to work out a solution.

As I continued to meet with David about the film, and sometimes with Mainland Media as a team, I felt my friendship with Sharon placed me in an uncomfortable position. It was difficult for me to remain clear on the professional and personal aspects of my relationship with Mainland Media. I had
inside information on the inner dynamics of the group, information they were not aware I had. Sharon conducted herself in a business-like manner during these meetings, but I knew I would later get a report on the private discussion that followed.

One night, in a noisy bar, Sharon and I ran into an acquaintance of mine, a "mover and shaker" in the NDP. He was somewhat drunk. I introduced them, and explained that Sharon was a filmmaker who would be working with me on LITTLE MOUNTAIN. He launched into a rambling lecture on all the things we would have to do in order to capture the backroom spirit of an election campaign on film. I made encouraging sounds, but Sharon became annoyed with him, responding to his remarks in a very cool fashion. I could see she resented being told how to do her job. Not regarding myself as a filmmaker, I did not share her feelings of professional hostility. To me he was an ally, and a potential funder, and his opinion interested me. I began to be aware of the intermediary role I would play between the NDP and the film, as the two worlds were joined temporarily.

By mid-February, the difficulty in getting funding for LITTLE MOUNTAIN had at last become established in my mind. I felt over-worked and under-stimulated. I changed jobs, and began working part-time as co-ordinator for Cineworks, the filmmakers' co-operative. This step helped tremendously in enlarging my contacts, friends, and acquaintances in the film community. I was more in touch with the world of filmmaking, and began to feel at
home there. Most importantly, I was in a milieu where I did not feel silly to say that I wanted to make a film, but didn't have any money. It was the norm, in that world.

Sharon and I continued to be friends, and I wondered more and more if she would ever be able to help me with the film. She was the busiest person I had ever met, seeming to thrive on back-to-back meetings. Although I later discovered this was typical behavior for independent producers, at the time I was unsure how her lifestyle would adapt to working full-time and without interuption for four weeks on a film. We had trouble getting together just to talk about the script. But I enjoyed her company very much, and as there was no money for the film yet, and no election in the offing, it did not seem necessary to mention my concerns to her. Instead, I arranged for her to accompany me to a Little Mountain NDP Annual General Meeting. I hoped it would give her inspiration for the film, and a feeling for the process and the personalities.

The meeting was a long one, and typical of NDP meetings, complete with factions, points of order, and cake and coffee. I divided my attention between the antics of the meeting and Sharon's reactions. I was pleased by the results. Sharon had dipped her foot into the substance of the film, had met the main characters, and had seen the inside of Hillcrest Hall, which would be the main location. And it was a relief to present concrete evidence to the Little Mountain NDP that someone other than me was taking the film seriously.
I had become a little more jaundiced about my relationship with Mainland Media at this point. I had done a lot of work on the film, and they had done very little. I worried about what might occur if Sharon left the company, and I decided to meet with them and clarify our relationship. In the meeting, I insisted that I have control over who would be hired on the film crew, and as an editor. I pointed out that although I could make the film without them, they couldn't make it without me.

A few days later came the news that the Boag Foundation was not going to give any money to the film. We had heard from several sources that the Boag was likely to give us twenty thousand dollars. It was more than a little devastating to read their letter informing us that while:

we agree that the idea has merit in the larger educational field, its close identity with a specific political party makes it impossible for us to contribute within our terms of reference, which is to promote socialist education.

I was shocked, and also angry. If they wouldn't fund it, who would? We decided not to take this quietly. I phoned some friends who were likely to know the behind-the-scenes of the Boag's decision. They said that of the three directors, one was a purist about the mandate of the Foundation, and it was likely that he was the one who had not wanted to fund the film. Everyone advised me to speak to the directors in person.

This duty was assigned to David, as I was about to leave on a two week trip to Eastern Canada. I was attending the Canadian Images Film Festival in Peterborough as part of my job for the
film co-op. I also planned to stop off in Ottawa, and lobby for
the film at the Canadian Labour Congress, and on Parliament
Hill.

Before I left, I booked out all the films I could find that
had relevance to LITTLE MOUNTAIN. There were only four, part of
a People and Power series that the National Film Board had
produced. I had watched them before, but wanted Sharon and David
to see them as well. Because of their busy schedules, the
screening had been delayed until almost three months from the
original date.

Sharon, David, and I watched them the night before I left,
sitting after hours in the NFB screening room. All of us were
tired, and had colds. It was pouring rain outside, which made
the dismal atmosphere complete. Sharon seemed to feel we would
never get funding, David was critical of the films, and I was
worried that the whole project was falling apart. With funding
proving hard to find, it seemed doubtful that Sharon and David
were still in support of the film. Everyone's motives seemed
questionable, including my own. I felt like a poor imitation of
human glue, and wondered when and how final decisions about
cancelling projects are made. How would I accept such a
decision? But I was weary of trying to assume a competent and
hopeful, yet realistic attitude.

My friendship with Sharon made it difficult for me to raise
the subject — did she still want to be involved in LITTLE
MOUNTAIN? She was also attending the film festival in
Peterborough, but we had no time to discuss anything except the social whirl.

At the festival, I attended a panel session on Women and Filmmaking. The women on the panel were asked whether women who lack technical expertise should direct films. Their opinions differed considerably, but I took comfort in the words of a film director from Vancouver. She felt the director should be familiar with technical requirements, but the main task of the director is to know the subject of the film. A director hires a crew with technical knowledge, and must count on them to behave professionally. She had had little technical ability on her first films, and had worked with male crews who took advantage of this, undermining her self-esteem and her control of the films. Still, her advice would be that if you want to direct, go ahead and direct, because you could spend a long time developing technical skills, and still be far away from coping with the majority of problems a director has to face.

I felt heartened. Other people were in my position, and everybody had been in my position once. If they could do it, I could do it. Besides, it was very stimulating to watch films for a week, and very tempting to imagine my own final product up on a screen at a similar event. I left the festival feeling rejuvenated.

This was just as well, for I was off to Ottawa. The appointments at the CLC were relatively easy to obtain, probably because they were certain they were not going to fund me. I
spent almost an hour with the Director of Political Education. After it had been fully established that he was not going to change his mind, I asked for his advice on other sources to approach. He began his response by telling me that he did a lot of fundraising himself, and that: "It's not that you haven't written exactly the right letter yet. There really isn't much money out there." His advice was to try and pre-sell prints to CLC affiliates and the larger union locals. (A pre-sale is when a print is sold before the film is made.) I could do this by getting the Federal NDP to write a letter asking for financial support for the film.

His advice was problematic. First, the film was being produced by me, and involving the NDP in fundraising would threaten the independence of the project. Besides, it would be tremendously difficult to orchestrate such a scheme from Vancouver, since the head office of the NDP and most unions are in Ottawa. And while a pre-sale approach might provide money for the actual production of the film, it would drastically reduce the market for the finished product.

I spent a day on Parliament Hill, being shuffled from office to office, getting advice from various NDP staff and MPs on how to approach the different NDP foundations, and making a list of important figures whose endorsement I should obtain. Following these efforts, I spoke to David in Vancouver. He had phoned the recalcitrant Boag Foundation director, but had not made any progress: "He didn't move an inch." We agreed to map
out a new strategy for fundraising as soon as I returned to Vancouver.

During my first weekend back in Vancouver, I had supper with Sharon. Sitting in a Robson Street restaurant, I confided to her that I felt responsible for all the problems with funding the film. I spent too much time on projects for the co-op, and not enough time working on LITTLE MOUNTAIN. Sharon protested. She was sure I had done all I could - and I had the feeling that in her own mind, the project was finished.

I admitted that I had doubts about her interest in the film. Sharon was surprised, saying that she did want to work on it - but she was not going to produce it. When the time came to co-direct, she would be right there, and would work flat out for the entire election. I wanted to tell her that I needed more help than that, more support. I needed someone to bounce ideas off, to work with in developing a script. But because I was not sure if this was her responsibility, or if I should be counting on David for these things, I said nothing.

Sharon asked me directly how I felt about working with David as my producer. I replied that I liked David very much, but was beginning to feel that I was supplying most of the ideas and the energy for the film. It was an illusion that there was someone I could rely on. Most of my communication with David consisted of him checking up on my activities.

The issue was not just one of work imbalance. As executive producer, Mainland Media was to own seventy-five percent of the
film, as well as receiving almost nine thousand dollars in producer's fees. This was a lot of money to get in return for the use of their letterhead. In addition they would receive credit as producer on the film itself, even though I had done the work. Things were not progressing as I had hoped.

Sharon pointed out that I should be able to count on my producer for more help than I had so far received. Although she did not feel that Mainland Media's producer's fees were too high, she did feel that I had better have a meeting with David, and be direct about my feelings. I wondered if she was confusing my agenda with her own.

Sharon suggested that I consider producing LITTLE MOUNTAIN on my own. I could do it if I made producing the film a priority. She would give advice, and would help with crew organization and technical details. And she would still co-direct when the time came. Perhaps Mainland Media could be retained as Executive Producers - that way I could still use their letterhead, tax number, and "track record".

I laughed, saying that so far in my fundraising efforts, not one person had asked about the quality of Mainland Media's work, nor about my ability as a filmmaker. She admitted that money is often raised on force of personality, and not on credibility of work.

My grievances with David were aired at our next meeting. He readily agreed that I had done most of the work so far, and was happy to officially share producer status with me - including
the producer's fees. These arrangements made me feel better, but did nothing to alter our material situation - a film with a $65,000 budget, on an event that could take place at any time, did not have one penny raised.

David and I re-assessed our strategy. We decided that we would need to raise only twenty thousand dollars in order to at least shoot the film. If we tried the pre-sale method, at five hundred dollars each, we would have to sell forty prints before we would have enough money. We rejected this plan as being too long, and too cumbersome. I suggested approaching the National Film Board, but David felt we shouldn't go there until we had raised a portion of the budget. I talked about trying to borrow money. David said it was too risky for Mainland Media to take on a large loan, and that I would be crazy to borrow money and make myself liable: "That's why people form companies."

We ended by drawing up a long list of tasks to perform. The list consisted of endorsements to gather, calls to make, and letters to write. Again we divided the tasks between us. The meeting took two hours in total, and when we had finished I felt the film was back on track, for we had worked out a plan of action that was suitable for both of us.

I had become desperate enough to consider raising money from the NDP. I had not wanted to do this, worrying that if the NDP supplied a major part of the money for the film I would be under some sort of responsibility to them. I wanted to retain complete editorial control, and felt if I accepted money from
the NDP they would expect in return a film that was directly suited to their purposes, and certainly not a film that might be ambiguous in tone and atmosphere.

I called an acquaintance who worked for the NDP in Victoria. She thought the best approach would be to send out a general request for funds to all constituencies in B.C. She suggested that I write to the Provincial Executive of the NDP, which was meeting the following week, and ask that they circulate such a request with a Party mailing. That would not only save me the mailing costs, but would add extra credibility to the request.

This scheme had a certain appeal. I would not be asking the NDP, but rather individual Riding Associations for financial assistance. Money would come in small amounts from everywhere, rather than a large sum from the centre. I would not feel obligated to produce a film that would please the NDP, and all contributions would be voluntary.

I contacted a friend who worked at the NDP Provincial Office, and explained the scheme. I asked if it were possible to arrange a meeting with the Provincial Secretary of the NDP. I wanted to discuss the idea in person, and get his backing for the mail-out. My friend agreed to set up a meeting, but then called back a day later to say the request did not require Executive approval, and the Provincial Secretary could make the decision himself. He suggested I wait until after the Executive meeting to discuss it with the Provincial Secretary, as he would
be less busy then.

My energy for fundraising began to flag. No money was coming in, despite our persistent efforts. It was demoralizing. The film was an important part of my life, but at the same time I began to feel distant from it, like a dream one has difficulty remembering the next morning. So little headway was made for all the energy and time invested. I began to realize that fundraising was not an occupation for ordinary mortals, for people who get tired, or feel shy. Nerves of steel were required, and a brashness that would not hesitate to barge into any meeting, to ask anyone for any request. I was beginning to doubt that I had the requisite personality characteristics.

Still, I very much wanted to make the film. Regularly, I thought through the premise behind the idea, and of my reasons for wanting to make it. The positive response I received from people whenever I discussed it convinced me that others would find the film interesting, it was not just self-indulgence on my part. I had not yet explored all possibilities. It was much too early to give up. Besides, I would have felt a disgrace to the arts if I let four months of constant rejection of my idea hold me back.

Into my life came a bright spot. One day at Cineworks I began chatting with Joanne Bateson, a cinematographer, who was spending an afternoon doing some volunteer work cleaning films for the filmmakers' distribution co-op next door. We knew each other very slightly, and I wanted to talk to her because she was
one of the few women working in film. I asked her how her last film was doing, a film she had produced, directed, shot, and edited herself. Our conversation led to an exchange of personal information about ourselves, and eventually I told her about LITTLE MOUNTAIN.

To my surprise, Joanne loved the idea. She had worked as a volunteer for the NDP, and felt a campaign would make a great subject for a film. I gave her a copy of the proposal (I always carried them with me), and she read it over, saying how it sounded like a fun film to work on: "I see it as very warm, very human. Is that how you see it? I hope you get the money."

Feeling very brave, I asked if she would be interested in working on it: "We don't have a cinematographer yet."

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, are you interested?"

"Of course!"

We began to chatter, exchanging ideas, when suddenly Joanne, who had been cleaning films on the renews all this time, cut her finger on a reel. By the time we found the band-aids, our conversation had ended, but we agreed to talk later in more detail. I was ecstatic. And Sharon, when I told her about it, was pleased: "Joanne has ideas, she has contacts, and she has a good reputation - three important things."

Spring had come, and with it the rumours of an impending election grew as rapidly as the flowers and grass. Joanne's entry into the project spurred new hope, and I began to
investigate new fundraising alternatives. I would go to the NFB, I would try again to pierce the mysteries of the Capital Cost Allowance. And when I ran into an old acquaintance who expressed interest in helping fundraise, it seemed natural to explore his offer further. John had never raised money for film before, but had experience as a "bagman" for election campaigns. He felt there were a lot of individuals within the NDP, or sympathetic to it, who would contribute to the film if they were offered a tax write-off in return. He had the contacts to know who they were, and the moxy to approach them.

This seemed worth trying to me. It was a source of money I would never approach myself. The only problem might lie in persuading Mainland Media to go along with this unorthodox (by their standards) method, and my acquaintance's unorthodox (by any standard) personality. Would they want their name used in this situation?

I was not at all certain of the legalities involved in the use of the tax write-off. I began to make the necessary phone calls, and spoke to David about this new tack. He agreed to meet and talk it over. He invited me to a press screening Mainland Media was about to hold, a screening of their new documentary on environmental politics. It was my first opportunity to view their work, and I was very interested in seeing what kind of film they were capable of producing.

I attended the screening. As I watched the film I began to feel uncomfortable. The structure was loose, the problem
ill-defined, and the politics of the situation only vaguely expressed. The film worked on a emotional level, but even this was not consistent. I wondered what use the film would be, what audience would learn, or gain, from watching it. It did not seem useful as an organizing tool, nor for informing or affecting a non-activist audience. Why had they made the film so weak?

Suddenly, I realized the answer lay in the relation Mainland Media had to the film subject in the first place. They were not committed to the issue, were not environmental activists, they had merely contracted to be interested in it and to produce a film. They were trying to make a living producing documentaries on social issues, and with this film finished they would move on to another issue – handicapped kids, drug addiction, racial discrimination. On each one they would do a competent job. But the finished result would always be the same. A lack of passion for the subject would lead to a lack of passion in the resulting film. And what a wasted opportunity – for the subjects of the film.

I left the screening as soon as I could, thinking furiously, trying to apply this new understanding to my own life. I wanted to re-evaluate my approach to LITTLE MOUNTAIN, realizing that the process used in producing the film would ultimately be reflected in the finished product.

Why was I making this film? I did not view myself as a career filmmaker, and had no desire to make film after film for the rest of my life. I wanted to explore citizen participation,
people taking interest in the political sphere, a sphere that ultimately determines the quality of our lives. I wanted to make a film that showed a group of people who did participate, who, no matter what their motives, at least recognized the connection between the political process and the vicissitudes of everyday life.

I felt closer to the world of politics and political activists than I did to the world of filmmakers. And yet I had stopped working as a political organizer, because I had come to believe that it was through art, and especially through popular culture that political notions could best be expressed and received. That was why I thought it important to make a film.

I mused on the ties of friendship that contribute to the success of most endeavours, and wondered where they were present in my project. I wanted to work with friends who would be interested, who would help me – not just people who knew about film. I realized I was approaching the process of making the film from Mainland Media's perspective, the method they used to fund projects. But I was different from them, I was part of the community I wanted to make the film about. I realized it was appropriate to use other methods of funding the film, ways less polished than Mainland Media's methods, but more appropriate to my relation to the project and to the people who would be interested in it.

I went home on a crowded Granville Street bus, packed with the old, the infirm, the drunk, and the unemployed, thinking all
the while about art and creativity and social usefulness. I would just have to continue on and see where the process was taking me.

Following up on this new insight, I met with John, the person who had volunteered to help fundraise. Over breakfast in a cheap restaurant, he questioned me in detail on all the avenues David and I had tried so far. I was embarrassed to hear myself continuously saying: "No, I didn't try that yet", or "I talked to him, but didn't ask for money." Finally, I told John that I was now incapable of asking people I knew personally to donate money to the film. My identification with the film had become so strong that asking friends for money for the film now felt too much like asking them to give money to me. I felt like an addict with a habit to support.

John said he would come up with a list of potential donors. If I supplied him with information on the Capital Cost Allowance, and drafted a letter that explained the film and the tax write-off, he would personally approach everyone on the list and ask them to donate. For this, he requested ten per cent of the money he raised. John gave me several tasks that left me both overwhelmed and hopeful at the same time. The most urgent of these was to obtain letters of endorsement for the film from several prominent New Democrats. He was amazed this hadn't been done long before, and now that he mentioned it, so was I.

With hesitation, I contacted David and outlined the plan to him. To my surprise, he was receptive. I told him I was drafting
several letters: one to request endorsement for the film; one to be used in a general NDP mail-out; and one for John to use when he approached individuals. David said that he would like to read any letters before I sent them out.

I told David I had been thinking about the budget. Planning only for the costs that would have to be met to actually film in the election, I had come up with a figure of ten thousand dollars. This time, he was not receptive.

"What about our producer's fees?" he asked. "Does that mean you are not including your own salary? I'm going to have to talk this over with Sharon and Shawn - this is a decision that involves Mainland Media, and not just me." We agreed to meet later in the week to talk it over, and to introduce John to the Mainland Media team.

I was angry. I knew that the film was one of many projects for them, but I had expected a little more commitment to making it than that. Was the bottom line whether or not their fees could be raised up front? I spent the rest of the day at my typewriter, and came up with nine draft letters to potential funding sources.

My next step was to phone, once more, to the Film Certification Office in Ottawa. This is the office responsible for certifying films as Canadian, thereby rendering the money invested in them as eligible for the 100% Capital Cost Allowance write-off against income. That was the case in 1982. In 1983, the write-off remained at 100%, but over a two-year, rather than
a one-year period. The years for which the deduction is made depends on the year in which the shooting of the bulk of the film (principal photography) takes place.

There are three stages to the certification process, but only the third one is mandatory. It is possible to get an advance letter of "comfort", which is basically an opinion stating that the project appears as if it will meet the Certification requirements. This letter can be shown to potential investors. Following completion of principal photography, a preliminary certificate can be issued to investors, allowing them to deduct 50% of their investment from that year's income. Eighteen months after completion of principal photography, a final or "release" print of the film must be shown to the Certification Office. After this, a final certificate is issued to all investors. They in turn must submit the final certificate to Revenue Canada, or their income tax return for the previous year will be re-evaluated. This process must be followed by all who wish to certify their films as Canadian, no matter what the size of the budget.

I explained to the Certification Officer my plan to ask people to give donations of one hundred dollars, in return for a tax deduction. She advised me to check with the "B.C. equivalent to the Ontario Securities Commission", explaining that if too many people were involved in a project, it would be considered a public offering.
I contacted the appropriate office in B.C., which turned out to be within the Department of Corporate Affairs, and outlined my plan once again. I asked if I would have to make a public offering if I wanted to give people a tax break for the money they donated to the film.

"Donated?" he said. "Why no. We only deal with people who expect to make a profit on their investment." I felt confident I had done my homework, and called John to tell him it looked as if we could go ahead with the plan. I just had to wait until everything was sorted out with Mainland Media. I dropped off to David all the letters I had drafted, and he promised to call me as soon as possible.

While I was waiting I contacted Joanne again. She was still interested in the film. I explained that apart from the problem of raising money, there was no way of knowing just when the film would take place. An election could be called that fall - but possibly not till the following spring. Would that fit in with her plans?

There didn't seem to be any difficulty. She would be teaching two days a week in the fall, and that would leave her lots of time to work on the film. She said she would give me a copy of her resume, and I promised to give her a copy of the film proposal. Joanne wanted to meet to discuss the amount of autonomy she would have in shooting the film, and I wanted to meet to discuss my vision of the film. She also agreed to come to Hillcrest Hall and assess the lighting needs. I was pleased
and comforted with Joanne's attitude. She was happy to provide technical advice, but warned me that she did not want to become involved in producing the film - she had her own projects that required her time and attention.

I was relieved to be working with Joanne. There is a male bias in film, due perhaps to the Hollywood mystique that has been carefully cultivated around the technology. The women who work in the technical end of film have usually had to work hard to get there, but at the same time they are not likely to pretend they know all there is to know. In something like film, where equipment repair is long and costly, it is better to work with those who err on the side of caution. I looked forward to working with Joanne.

A day later David phoned. "I've read these letters you wrote, and I want to say I really admire your commitment." This sounded ominous, too much like Personnel Management 101. "However," he went on, "I am not sure of the legality of your tax write-off letter. And the other thing is your mention of needing only ten thousand dollars. Mainland Media would never go public with a figure that is not full budget. It is not professional.

"I can see where you are coming from, and how much you want to make this film. But as a professional company, I don't know if Mainland Media wants to get into raising money in this manner. I do sympathize with you. We were in your position a few years ago. Sometimes, to make first films you have to take
desperate measures. But this - well - it is just not professional." He was also upset to see I had listed Joanne Bateson as camera operator: "Without knowing more about her, I just couldn't allow that."

I was pleased my letters had galvanized David into action. He hadn't put this much energy into the film in months. And yet I was deeply annoyed. Joanne had given me more information and advice in two conversations than I had received from Mainland Media in five months. If they weren't familiar with her work, it reflected badly on them.

David went on. "Now, perhaps Mainland Media is going to hold you back, and you must evaluate if you think this is the case." We agreed that Mainland Media should meet and discuss it, and that I would join them after their meeting.

"And don't worry if you decide that we would be better off parting company," I said. "We will still be friends."

"Oh yes," he replied, "there's no room for feelings in this business."

Before meeting with Mainland Media, however, it was time for my long-awaited appointment with the recalcitrant director from the Boag Foundation. Why I was going to meet with him was a question I couldn't quite answer. It had to do with my increasing feeling that I could only justify my involvement with this project if I left no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored. I was determined to make him listen to me.
I arrived for the appointment a bit late, not feeling very optimistic, and in the process of undergoing a deep-seated evaluation of my life philosophy. The house was set back from the street — small, very neat, and with a beautifully manicured garden bursting with daffodils. I rang the bell, and after a short pause the door was opened by the director. The house was very dark and quiet. He led me into a small room off the front hall, inviting me to make myself at home. I sat on the couch. He sat on a easy chair. I told him I wanted to give my background, and the story behind the film, and then perhaps get his comments and advice. He raised his hand slightly, indicating assent, and I launched into my story. I ended it by telling him that with no help from the Boag Foundation, and no help from the labour movement, I was forced to think of going directly to the NDP, and to individuals. But that was such a long and slow process I wasn't sure it could be accomplished before an election was called. I didn't know what to do.

He agreed it was tricky, and proceeded to tell me his story, which had to do with the founding of the Boag Foundation in 1943. Allan Boag had become totally disillusioned with political parties (here he listed all the parties Boag had seen come and go over the span of his years), and Boag had wanted the director, whom Boag believed would always be a true socialist, to take all Boag's money and administer it. The director had opted to share the responsibility with two others. Boag died 18 months later, but he had always been clear about one thing — the
Foundation was not to be used to support political parties, but only for socialist education. And my film was just too closely associated with the NDP. He liked the idea, they had all liked the idea, but it was outside the mandate of the Boag.

However, there was a way I could approach them. That was through using the idea of volunteers. "That is really very interesting to me, why people volunteer," he said. He went on to describe his recent bouts with ill health, saying he could never have survived without the help of the volunteers at the Cancer Clinic: "I think it would be great, a film showing all the different people who volunteer for different things."

Obviously, my strategy was not working. I spent almost two hours there, listening to his tales of the past, and looking at his CCF trophy room. We talked about ideas and ideals, about perseverance and commitment to a cause.

I admired the role he had played in Canadian politics, and suddenly I wanted some - recognition? - from this man. I told him I was wondering if I should give up trying to raise the money for the film, that I didn't know if I wasn't trying hard enough, or, on the other hand, if I was being stupid and blind, and failing to acknowledge that it was impossible. I think I wanted some encouragement from him, some validation. "Well, no one can say you haven't tried hard enough," he said kindly, and I immediately felt better. "Never give up," he said, "there is always somebody who will give when no one else will."
I left, feeling very dreamy and thoughtful, and on my way to a completely different atmosphere - the meeting with Mainland Media.

As soon as the discussion was underway, I said bluntly that I understood the problems they were facing with LITTLE MOUNTAIN. They were in business to make money, and a film that was hard to raise money for was not very interesting. Shawn, who had taken charge of the meeting, smiled, and said I was right about the profit, but wrong, in that LITTLE MOUNTAIN was the kind of film they would like to have their name on. They were still willing to try and make it work.

He went on to say that he was not sure about the film certification process. It wasn't that he didn't trust me, but it would be good to have something in writing, confirming that the proposed strategy was officially validated. I could only agree with him.

"Another thing is the budget," he said. "You think you can make this film for ten thousand dollars, and Mainland Media is not willing to accept that figure. We think it will be a minimum of thirty thousand. I know I haven't been very involved in this project, but everyone seems to agree that you have done most of the work, and Mainland Media hasn't put a lot of time or money in it. But still, we have to think of the budget we made up. How can you possibly think you could do it for ten thousand dollars?"
I replied that I had taken the budget figures for stock, salaries, and equipment rental. I realized that ten thousand was not enough to make the whole film, but it would be all that was needed to actually film the election, and the rest of the money could be raised later on.

"But that doesn't pay us for any pre-production time," said Shawn.

"You haven't done any pre-production," I said. "I've done most of the work on fundraising. And as far as script-writing and technical help goes, I've had more advice from Joanne Bateson than I've had from you."

"Well," said Shawn, "we've been pretty busy, and we can't put time into projects that there isn't any money for. But we will find the time if there is money, and there will be a lot of work to do, location scouting, helping storyboard, all kinds of stuff. And when the shoot is on, you will get our undivided attention, we will get the crew there, and arrange all the locations."

I was confused. Couldn't the crew get themselves there? And what locations? Practically the whole film takes place in Hillcrest Hall. I could see that those kind of details could quickly become overwhelming, and that having that kind of help could be a great relief. But was it worth having to raise another twenty thousand dollars?

Shawn had to leave. "Before you go," I said, "what do you think of the idea of John working as a fundraiser?"
"Just fine, I hope he can raise the money."

"Shouldn't the ten percent he charges come out of the producer's fees?"

Shawn was putting on his coat. "Well, we can all take a cut, you can take a cut, the crew can take a cut. Anyway, keep discussing it. I'm sure cooler heads will prevail when I'm gone."

Sharon, David, and I decided to have a further meeting on Monday. I was to think things over on the weekend, and decide if I wanted to remain with Mainland Media, or leave them and produce the film on my own. I felt a leap of hope, and at the same time a pang of separation anxiety.

"Don't get depressed about raising money," said Sharon. "That's the kind of business it is."

That weekend I found myself at a trendy "arts" party. I recognized a documentary filmmaker whose work I admired, and decided to introduce myself, using my job as co-ordinator of the film co-op as an excuse. After a short conversation on the co-op, he asked me if I also made films. I told him I was trying to raise the money for one. "Oh," he replied, "welcome to the club."

I explained that I was making it through Mainland Media, and outlined the film. He wanted to know if I had asked the NDP for money. I told him I knew the NDP connections fairly well, but that the NDP did not have much money, mostly buying finished prints or giving small donations. I said this in my best
Mainland Media manner, trying to show my disdain for small sums of money. He said, "Well, that is okay. Take small amounts, money always comes in dribs and drabs. It adds up."

What a refreshing attitude! I asked how long it had taken to raise the money for a film he had worked on, a documentary on farmworkers.

"Three years," he replied, "and it's still coming in, it's not finished yet." Tentatively, I said I thought if I could just raise enough money to get the film shot, it would be easy to raise the rest of the money later on.

"It's never going to be easy," he said, "but at least you'd have a film."

Our conversation had a galvanizing effect on me. I was amazed that someone who was an established filmmaker would hold that attitude, an attitude labelled by Mainland Media as "unprofessional". What did professional mean? Could there be competing definitions?

My previous thoughts on filmmakers who are committed to issues and filmmakers who contract themselves to issues returned. Was my commitment to filmmaking? In that case, the image I projected as I went about making the film would be the most important thing. I should be careful how I presented myself to funders, and to filmmakers, always keeping in mind the correct contact, the right connections, and the future deal. But if my commitment were to the subject, concerns over professionalism would change. Professionalism would mean
remaining clear on the content of the film, taking into account the best interests of the people in the film, making the film because it is important that the subject be examined. I did not believe that either definition of professional had much meaning regarding the technical quality of a finished production – all filmmakers will strive for the best in that regard.

Did I want to make the film, express the ideas I wanted to express, if the only way of doing it was through a process I detested? Surely the finished film would reflect the contradictions of its making. What was the point for me, coming from my background, to be involved in a project if it couldn't be accomplished in a manner that spoke to another way of thinking about life and human organization? I decided to leave Mainland Media. I would make the film by asking advice from friends, acquaintances, or strangers – whatever the case demanded. And I would find the money in a way that felt right.

I was amazed it had taken me five months to gain this understanding. A friend pointed out that I would have spent the first five months floundering about, with or without Mainland Media. It was bound to take a certain amount of time and experience before I was capable of producing a film on my own.

The parting was amiable. I called David and advised him of my decision. After a short silence, he said, "Well, it is turning into that kind of a film. You will probably have to scrape it together and make all sorts of personal sacrifices. And that would conflict with the stage Mainland Media is at
now."

We made arrangements for me to collect all the correspondence files on LITTLE MOUNTAIN. And that was it, a complicated relationship severed with one phone call.
"The Struggle Continues"

So began phase two of my career as an independent producer. I made an appointment to see about assistance from the National Film Board, and met with John to finalize the fund-raising letters he was going to use. Joanne was supportive of the change in management of the film - she had even offered to let me use her company's letterhead. But thinking it through, we realized that needless problems at income tax time might be created by this route. I decided to make my own letterhead. After endless discussion, the name E-Day Productions was chosen. I spent one evening attempting to lay-out the letterhead with Letraset, doing a hopeless job. Sharon told me about an inexpensive graphics firm that would do the complete lay-out, and produce one hundred copies of the letterhead, for only twenty-four dollars. Two days later I was in business.

I began asking members of the co-op about the film - every question I could think of from lighting requirements to budget considerations. Everyone was generous with their time, and I wished I had done this from the start, getting advice from people who loved film and got pleasure from sharing the knowledge they had accumulated.

A friend of mine, who worked for a Member of Parliament, was going to Ottawa for the repatriation of the Constitution ceremony. She graciously agreed to take with her my written
requests for endorsement of the film, and presented them in person to the MPs I had written. The responses arrived in a few weeks, praising the idea in glowing terms, and urging others to support the film. No one offered to donate any money themselves.

I had still not heard from the Provincial Secretary of the NDP about my request to include fundraising material in a Party mailing. I called again - and received in return a phone call from his secretary. She explained that he had wanted to discuss my request with the President of the NDP, who was currently on vacation. I musn't think that he was putting me off. I spent a few minutes wishing I had followed the original advice given me, and written directly to the Executive. There are times when trying to use inside connections only leads to frustrating delays.

I had to re-do the budget Mainland Media had drawn up. My main consideration (apart from eliminating all producer's fees), was to cut back on every possible item. I sat down with the price list from the local lab. What was an intermediate print? How did that relate to an answer print? My limited education in film production had not extended to laboratory post-production, and it was difficult to decide on the prices to use in my calculations. I wanted to do it correctly; I was taking my proposal with the new budget, on the new letterhead, to show the National Film Board. I would not seem a very credible risk if my budget was inaccurate. I tussled with it for an evening, and when I had finished, the budget was reduced from $65,107 to
$38,615.

I went to the NFB production offices, feeling apprehensive about the meeting. I worried that I was about to find out that they couldn't help me, and although I had no concrete expectations, I was not eager to learn that one more potential avenue of succor was barricaded.

The woman I saw at the Film Board was sympathetic to the proposal. She suggested I approach the NFB headquarters in Montreal, and ask them to provide "services". This turned out to mean processing and printing of the filmstock, and also transferring the sound tapes on to magnetic film stock. I could also ask the Vancouver NFB to provide film stock, and the use of equipment and editing facilities. The Vancouver NFB would not be able to provide a camera or a tape-recorder - their own production schedule was too heavy, and since I did not know when the election would be, it was impossible to plan in advance. They could probably provide auxiliary equipment, such as microphones and cables. In short, no one Studio of the NFB could provide everything I needed, but if I could manage to work out an arrangement between studios, and if I could get a crew to work for deferred wages, then at least the film could be made for very little additional cash.

She told me about a new program in the Vancouver NFB. It was designed to help women filmmakers. The parameters of the program were not yet clear, but it had a budget of fifteen thousand dollars. This was an additional source of funds, and
she advised me to investigate.

She turned to the budget pages of the proposal, and just as I had feared, began to question me on the details. Why was there no money allotted to script-writing and research? Black and white film was a bad idea — the film should be in colour, and the budget adjusted accordingly. It was a good idea to budget for a duplicate negative, as well as two answer prints. Not knowing what that meant, I nodded sagely and resolved to find out. I had a whole new list of things to do. I marched out into the bright spring sunshine, full of hope, and strolled down to the Credit Union; I opened an account in the name of E-Day Productions. I wanted to be prepared for the money that was bound to start rolling in.

Slowly and painstakingly I re-did the budget. I started by calling the lab, in an attempt to clarify the final steps of post-production. I received a patient and detailed explanation that strained the limits of my intellect. I took notes, I phoned friends, I looked up books. Finally I had a finished budget. This one was going to the Film Board in Montreal — it had to be accurate. Throwing all shame to the winds, I took the budget to the lab, and asked if I had included all the steps in all the right places. It was in order.

With the new changes, the budget came to $44,441. I sent off the new, improved proposal, printed on E-Day letterhead, to the Executive Producers of Studio D and E at the National Film Board in Montreal. The letters were sent Special Delivery.
Sharon, who was still planning to work on LITTLE MOUNTAIN, was going to Montreal on other business in a few days, and she would speak in person to the Executive Producers, while I would phone them from Vancouver. A double-barrelled attack.

In the meanwhile, I directed my energy towards the Vancouver NFB. I called the Studio, and spoke to the appropriate person. He was a bit gruff, but as I still had trouble conceiving of myself as a filmmaker, I marvelled that he would speak to me at all. He had been given a copy of the proposal by the woman I had seen earlier. He felt the idea might have been done before, and wanted to do some more research before he said yes or no. I quickly related all the films that had been made on subjects remotely related to mine. "Well, you've obviously checked that out," he said. "But the film should be in colour." I told him that it was going to be, and that I had drawn up a new budget. "Well, I might be able to help you under our Training and Experimental program. But the most I could give would be two, maybe three thousand dollars. And maybe some editing time, later on."

I nearly fainted with pleasure. I told him I had sent the proposal to Montreal, and was hoping that both the Montreal and Vancouver NFB would assist me. He suggested I call him back after I had heard from Montreal. I mentioned my proposal might be suitable for the new women's program I had heard about - I was a woman, and was hoping for an all-woman crew. He promised to pass the proposal on after he had read it again.
I hung up in a glow. The next day I called the NFB in Montreal, trying to pry out a response to my letters. I began calling at 9:15 a.m. - a bad time to start dealing with a time zone that is three hours ahead. Everyone was at lunch, only the answering machines were working. I continued to call until 5:00 p.m. Montreal-time. The Executive Producer of one Studio was out-of-town, and in the other Studio the answering machine was on all day.

Phoning East is a trying experience. You have to project your thoughts to not just a different location, but to a different time of day. It's like living in the future. For people like me, it exacerbates the tendency to anticipate the phone call, to plan in advance what the other person's response is likely to be.

For example, if you phone first thing in the morning, around 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. Vancouver-time, the person you reach is perhaps hungry for lunch, and will be in a hurry. But if you phone around lunch, Vancouver-time, they might be tired and cranky after a hard day's work, and want to go home. The rest of the time, no matter when you phone, they will probably be in a meeting. In this case, you have to make a hard decision. Will you leave your number, and wait for them to call back? Or refuse, and resolutely persist in calling them again and again.

The next working day I rose early to try again. The person who had been out of town was now in a meeting: "Can he call you back?" I decided to be affirmative. "No, thanks, I'll call back
later, after lunch your time." (It never hurts to remind them you are calling long distance.) The other Executive Producer had not come in yet, although they were expecting her at any second. I was passive, and left my number.

I called in the afternoon, but was still unable to make contact. I was prepared to let it wait another day, when the phone rang. Amazingly, it was the Executive Producer of Studio D. "I have three phone messages from you on my desk," she said. "Are you calling about something you sent to me?" I explained about the letter and the proposal. "Oh yes," she said, "Sharon was here today and she mentioned it to me. I haven't read it yet, it's probably in the pile of proposals on my desk. What does it look like?"

"Smoke-coloured," I replied wanly. Over the phone came the sound of rifling paper.

"Found it." Silence, as she looked it over. I sent my best vibrations over the line. "Okay," she said, "I'll have to read this, and get back to you. I don't know when that will be, maybe tomorrow. If not, you can call me collect."

It was a beginning. I called the Executive Producer of Studio E. He was on another line, but I elected to hold. He came on the phone, apologizing. He had received my messages, but he had been extremely busy lately. In fact, he had just come out of a meeting where they had been informed of cut-backs in their assistance program to independent filmmakers. He had seen Sharon, and she had mentioned my proposal to him - but he
couldn't find it. He said he would read the package I had sent to Studio D. I thought sadly of the waste of my carefully crafted letter.

I asked him about the cut-backs. It seemed from now on they would be limited to providing processing, workprinting, and sound transferring, until the film was in a rough-cut stage. It would be up to the independent filmmaker to pay for the cost of the film to make the workprint, and for the cost of the magnetic film stock to transfer the sound on. They were expecting more details later. In the meanwhile, he would read over my proposal and call me back. I had some reason to doubt that, but no option except to thank him and wait for his response.

The next morning Sharon called from Montreal. She was going to see both Executive Producers that day, and would talk to them again about LITTLE MOUNTAIN. It did not look good to her. I told her I had talked to both of them, and perhaps that would help. I was disturbed when we hung up, and realized I had forgotten to tell Sharon about the Vancouver NFB's interest. I called her back. "Well, that should make some difference!" she said, "I'm glad you told me." We hung up again. This time I felt much better.

In the early afternoon, the phone rang while I was working at the film co-op. It was the Executive Producer of Studio D. She had liked the proposal, and Studio D was prepared to offer me services, meaning that I would be able to send the film we shot and the audio tape we recorded in making LITTLE MOUNTAIN to
the labs at the Montreal NFB, and they would process and print the film, and transfer the sound from the audio tape on to magnetic film stock. I thanked her effusively, and she gave me the name of the person in Studio D to contact for all questions relating to my film. I hung up, the proud possessor of an NFB "assist".

I was ecstatic, if a little confused. I didn't really know what I was being offered, except that those items accounted for almost a third of my budget. Did this mean the rushes of the film would be synchronized and edge-numbered in Montreal? I phoned Mainland Media. They had received an NFB assist for their last film. I spoke to Shawn, who looked up their contract.

"It says an edge-numbered workprint," he said. "But don't ask them outright. They might say no. Ask for written confirmation of the assist, and word your letter so that it implies you expect synching and edge-numbering. That way they will have to make an effort to refuse." Success through lethargy.

I phoned the Executive Producer of Studio E. He was on the other line. The secretaries in his office had begun to know me, I had called so often, and they promised to get him to phone back. When I did speak to him, I told him about the assist from Studio D, and asked if he knew whether synching and edge-numbering were still going to be provided under the assistance program. He sounded harrassed, saying it wasn't clear to him. There was to be a second meeting on cutbacks shortly,
and he would try to find out then. There were two problems, he said. One was the peculiar nature of funding at the Film Board - they had to make sure staff filmmakers were occupied, which meant there were less resources for co-productions and assists to independents. The other problem was that the two people at the Board who had been looking after the assistance program had had their duties terminated. There wasn't anyone around who fully understood what the cutbacks meant in terms of what was previously offered. He suggested I call the Head of English Production if I required more information right away.

"It's awfully difficult," he said, "my Studio gets requests for assistance from filmmakers all across Canada, anyone who has a film that is social or political calls me. And Studio D gets requests from every woman filmmaker. We can't help everybody!"

A new weight of responsibility settled on me. Now that I had the credibility of Film Board support, I had to work hard to raise the rest of the money. Luckily, the plans I had made with John to raise one hundred dollar donations were going ahead. We had drafted the letter he was to use, and spent a whole afternoon sitting on the floor at the film co-op, signing each one. As we signed, I told him that I had mentioned our plan to Graham, a friend who was a lawyer, and he had doubted that the strategy of tax write-off in return for donation was correct. I had told Graham I had confirmed it with two different people from two different offices, but he had said, "It doesn't matter what they tell you over the phone. You might have misunderstood
them, they might have misunderstood you. You can't hold them to anything if it's not in writing. Get it in writing." I told John that as a result I was making an appointment with a film lawyer, but it seemed safe for him to go ahead and start contacting people.

The next day, I spoke to the lawyer on the phone. He informed me that I had completely misunderstood the use of the Capital Cost Allowance. A donation would not qualify anyone for a tax write-off. It was necessary for the person to invest, to actually purchase a portion of the film negative. For that to occur, I would have to sell shares, and he could tell me how to do it. I made an appointment to see him the following week, and then tried to find John, to tell him what had happened and to stop him from handing out the letters with the incorrect information. I couldn't get hold of him anywhere, but comforted myself that in one day he couldn't have contacted many people.

The glow was shattered by a phone call I received from the NDP Provincial Office. An organizer was confirming my presence at a conference the following week. She added, "Oh, and bring some of those letters. John was here last night showing them around. A lot of us are interested." I phoned John constantly all that evening. Twenty-four hours later, I spoke to him. He had given out all the letters we originally signed, and had just run off another hundred copies.

Feeling tremendously guilty, I explained the situation, telling him that I was waiting to see a lawyer, and we would
have to hold off on our plans for now. He was aghast, but recovered quickly, saying that he wasn't too frazzled, but why didn't I try to find a lawyer who could see me sooner? I explained there weren't many lawyers in Vancouver who knew anything about film law, and this was a lawyer I felt comfortable with. "So these sheets are useless," said John, "or as useless as a sheet printed on two sides can be."

Finally, it was time to visit the lawyer, who was a filmmaker himself. My first question related to how much his services would cost. "The first hour is free," he said. I told him about the services I would receive through Studio D. "Studio D," he said disparagingly, "I wish they had a Men's studio." I was annoyed. Many male filmmakers tend to forget they dominate the other NFB Studios, and resent the help Studio D provides to women filmmakers. They manage to describe it as a sort of enlarged arts and crafts area, where any idea can get support as long as it comes from a woman.

I stayed in his office for an hour and a half, but when I emerged I was not any the wiser. He told me there was a way to utilise the Capital Cost Allowance, a route using "friends and associates" as investors, that would allow me to sell shares without going through the Securities Commission. No more than thirty people could be involved, so the value of each share would have to be at least one thousand dollars, if I was to raise enough money to pay for the film. All the "friends and associates" who invested would be eligible for the write-off. It
would cost about a thousand dollars in legal fees to do the paperwork.

I was not really happy with this route. It seemed complicated, fraught with pitfalls. I wanted something clear, and simple, and above all - fast.

"Why don't you find a registered charity to sponsor you?" he said. "Then the people who give donations to the film can get a charitable tax receipt. Or else apply to the Canada Council. You would surely qualify."

I determined not to go through the Capital Cost Allowance route until I was desperate. The complications, the legal fees, the book-keeping - it seemed a lot to endure to raise the remaining money. I only needed fifteen, maybe twenty thousand dollars, now that I had the NFB support. I decided to try raising the money directly, asking for donations of five hundred dollars in return for a credit in the finished film. I would ask trade unions, wealthy individuals, and the NDP. I could at least try ... it was the kind of fundraising I could control, and it had the "grass-roots" appeal I had in mind when I left Mainland Media.

I informed John that our short-lived scheme was off. I felt badly - he was understandably annoyed at having passed out inaccurate information on my behalf ... and I no longer had anything for him to do. I could only apologize weakly, and castigate myself for being so rash. I had swung to the other side of the pendulum; too slow with Mainland Media, and too
hasty on my own.

The following day I made a list of people to call for advice. Some were helpful, and some were not. An acquaintance who worked for the B.C. NDP suggested I ask their Communications Committee for money. He would put me on the agenda of the next meeting. I could also write the Provincial Secretary and ask the Party as a whole to contribute. I told him I had not been able to get the NDP to mail out information on my film, along with a request for funds, to all its Riding Constituencies. "Write a letter," he advised, "and ask formally. That way it will have to go to an Executive meeting." It was the stage I had been at a month earlier. Oh well. I had managed to successfully adopt the "better late than never" attitude that characterizes fundraisers. I didn't feel unduly chagrined.

I continued to press the Vancouver NFB for assistance. I informed my gruff friend of the services Studio D had offered me. He said, "Well, I did some checking, and I felt the subject of the film has been covered, but obviously Studio D doesn't share that view. Are you sure they are going to cover those costs?"

"Well," I said, "they phoned me and said they were. Have you got the new proposal I sent you?"

"Yes, I saw it a minute ago. I have twenty proposals on my desk right now that I'm considering, and another twenty I'm not considering at all. Listen, let me talk this over with the woman who heads our liason program with Studio D. Maybe between the
two of us, we can work something out. What do you want?"

"Stock," I said.

"And I suppose anything else you can get. Okay, I'll call you about this tomorrow."

I called him the next day, and received the welcome news that they would help me. The assistance would come through the women's program. They would provide film stock; the amount would be worked out later. I should call the head of the women's program tomorrow – he knew she was too busy to talk to me today. All of this had taken place over the phone. They were giving me help even though they had never met me in person.

It turned out the women's program would give me five thousand feet of colour negative filmstock. It might also pay for the cost of synching and edge-numbering if the Montreal studio would not cover those costs. Right now my film budget called for twenty-two thousand feet of film – five thousand feet was a contribution, but not enough. I was not sure if twenty-two thousand feet was excessive; the figure had come from the original Mainland Media budget. I spoke to the head of the women's program, telling her I wasn't clear why my film was being handled by her. I was indeed a woman, but the film was not a "women's issue". If it was because I was planning on a female crew, I hoped neither Sharon's nor Joanne's future projects would have their funding jeopardized. She told me she had a fifteen thousand dollar budget, and had to start to spend it – if she was too careful of stepping on toes, she would reach the
end of her budget year and not have spent a thing. I was glad of
the help, but was not thrilled my film had been seized on as a
way of spending her budget, especially if I was better situated
in the Training and Experimental program - a program designed
for independents, and with a bigger budget. Surely that bigger
budget was not reserved for men? I made arrangements to meet
with her the following week.

Strangely enough, having finally secured some financial
support, having finally got the "in" at the Film Board, I began
to worry about it. There is a love/hate relationship between
independent filmmakers and the NFB. I wanted their support, but
worried it might involve challenges to my loyalties, or
conditions I would not want to meet. Could one accept money from
the Film Board, and still criticize it? I had better keep trying
to diversify the sources of my support.

I looked over the Canada Council application again. I could
fill out the forms, but what would I send as support material? I
hadn't filmed anything, so far. I put the forms away, and
concentrated on my second approach to labour. A friend and I
poured over the trade union listings in the Yellow Pages. She
pointed out all the unions she knew that had any connection with
the NDP, and I wrote down their names and addresses. I called my
CLC friend, and asked him what he thought of the new strategy:
would unions be likely to give money in return for a film
credit? He was moderately pessimistic, saying, "You will get a
lot of people saying no, and a lot of people who won't bother to
answer at all. But some might say yes. If you won't get too discouraged and depressed by that, you could give it a try." He gave the names of several people who might help me in planning my approach.

I asked him if there were any unions that had film equipment. No, but there were several that had video equipment. He gave me a complete run-down of all the equipment available through the labour movement in Vancouver: "B.C. Fed has a 2600, and we have a 3100...". He always spoke in numbers. I had no idea what they meant, but jotted it all down, knowing I could ask Joanne about it later.

Mainland Media phoned to say they had received several letters of endorsement for LITTLE MOUNTAIN. I dropped by their offices to pick them up. David and Shawn were there; we chatted about my NFB assist. David informed me that I probably would not have received one if I had produced the film through Mainland Media. "We've already had several assists, they won't give us any more for a while." I told them I still didn't know how I would raise the rest of the money, and was thinking I might shorten the length of the film. "Don't do that," David said. "You've been given the chance to make a film. You owe it to all your supporters, and there will be plenty of them before this film is finished, to make the best film you can. Make it a length that can show on television, not this odd-length, twenty-minute personal stuff."
The endorsement letters were all from various MPs. They were good, but the one I especially wanted, from Ed Broadbent, had not arrived. I phoned Ottawa, to a friend who worked for Broadbent. Could he help? He promised to do his best. He would write the letter himself, and "send it up the line". Maybe Broadbent would sign it.

I began my approach to the NDP. I was already on the agenda of the Communications Committee, but decided to phone the Chairperson to confirm it. He told me the Communications Committee had the authority to spend their own money, and a decision to assist me would not have to go to a Council meeting. I broached to him the idea of a mail-out to all constituencies. His reaction was rather petty. Why should we help Little Mountain make a film? What are they giving? I found his attitude dismaying, to say the least. My decision to make a film in the riding of Little Mountain had been conceived quite separately from the intrigues of NDP backroom politics, but it was obviously not possible to approach the NDP without dealing in their reality. I said I would write to him about the film in more detail.

I spent the next days preparing letters. My plan was to write "master letters", photocopy them, and type in the individual names and addresses. I wrote a master letter for trade unions, and for the NDP in each province across Canada. I also made a written request to the BC NDP for financial assistance, and typed a news story about the film, for
submission to the NDP woman's magazine, *Priorities*, and to *The Democrat*, the NDP monthly newspaper. This was a lot of work for a poor typist. Cineworks had a self-correcting typewriter, and I stayed there until three in the morning two nights in a row, typing in names and addresses, and preparing the envelopes.

I dropped off the letters for the BC NDP at their offices, and stopped in for a few minutes to visit with a friend. He had always been enthusiastic about the film, and felt that with the NFB support I should have no trouble raising the money I needed, a sum I was now setting at fifteen thousand dollars. His advice was to go to MLAs and MPs, people who would like to get their names in lights, and who would donate to the film in return for a credit. He drew up a list of names and addresses of twenty people he considered likely prospects. "Just give them a summary of the proposal, and tell them where to send their cheques." He made it seem so simple: "It's taking off! The NFB support has given credibility - get people to get on now or be left behind!"

I typed another master letter, this one for individuals, and another twenty envelopes. I hadn't mailed any letters yet; I was still waiting to receive the endorsement letter from Broadbent. When it arrived, (bless my Ottawa friend) I went to a friend's office, and photocopied ten more film proposals, as well as forty copies each of three endorsement letters. I had wanted to use her typewriter, but after all that photocopying it seemed a bit much to ask.
I needed more names of people to approach. I called a man who was active in the NDP Small Business Association. "You're barking up the wrong tree," he said, "we're all going bankrupt. Why don't you call the NDP Lawyer's Association?"

A call to a CLC labour person connected with the NDP was more fruitful. He agreed to provide me with a list of unions that would be good bets for support to the film. When I met him, he handed me a neatly typed list of unions, the top officer of each, a selected contact person, and a phone number. We went over the list name by name, and I asked his opinion on my Yellow Pages list. He had useful comments and insights. I asked what he thought of approaching the unions that belong to the Confederation of Canadian Unions. He replied that he didn't know much about them, but I should probably give them a try.

"But what about the union politics?" I queried. "Would the CLC unions want to participate in the film if CCU unions do?" He replied that perhaps I should put the CCU unions at the bottom of my list. He told me which unions were small, and would not have much money, and which ones used to be NDP until the NDP had voted them back to work while the NDP was in power. He told me which of the top officers were nice guys, which ones were old New Democrats. It was a brief lesson in B.C. labour politics.

I asked him to appraise the letter I wanted to send to the unions. He said, "I see here you mention hiring crew. I imagine you'll get some questions on that, on whether it'll be a union crew." I was surprised to hear this. There was a world of
difference between a low-budget documentary and a film that would allow the hiring of a union crew. He said, "If the subject comes up, all you have to do is say you are discussing it with the union." I tried weakly to explain the difference, but he cut me off, and repeated, "Just tell them you are talking to the union."

He wished me luck, saying that it was not an easy time to raise money from unions. He suggested that I send only the letter of endorsement from Broadbent, and leave out the letters from the other MPs. "Broadbent is pretty evenly regarded," he said, "not like these other guys. Just go with Broadbent." He suggested modifying my letter: "Tell them you will be phoning. You should talk to someone if you want it to get to a meeting, let alone have it supported."

For the first time, I met in person with the woman at the National Film Board who was assisting me. She confirmed that I could have five thousand feet of Kodak 7247. I told her I was planning on extensive use of the new high-speed filmstock, 7293, and could she give me that instead of 7247. She seemed to find that an impossible request, and I couldn't imagine why, unless they were planning on giving me old stock that they wanted to get rid of. I decided not to argue. It was a problem that could be resolved later. Instead I went off with the staff technical person, who overwhelmed me with information I couldn't understand about filmstocks and lighting conditions. I retreated home, feeling stumped, and read a book on film speed and
lighting exposures. It was the only way to feel better when confronted with technical advice I couldn't understand.

Luckily, technical concerns were not a major consideration during the first months of the film. It was fundraising that occupied my time and attention. Occasionally, I received bits of technical information, and stored them away for future reference. For example, Sharon, on first viewing Hillcrest Hall, said "We'll have to replace all those fluorescent lights with daylight-balanced tubes." I was seldom aware of how important any particular item was - nor of how expensive or difficult to locate it might be.

As time went on I began taking technical concerns more seriously. It was imperative I understand them, if not for their contribution to the finished film, than at least for their monetary and logistical implications. I had to understand what was needed, and why it was needed - or I would not be able to organize getting it. I wished I could have a technical advisor attached to me, instead of constantly having to ask different people. My method of assessing technical information was to ask as many people as possible about the problem I was wrestling with. If their answers cross-checked, I would consider that information as known, and proceed on that basis.

I was fortunate to acquire the help of Joanne. She was very free with advice, and always willing to enter into discussions on technical requirements. I felt quite dependent on her, and I trusted her advice.
On a sunny morning in May, Joanne and I went to Hillcrest Hall to assess the lighting situation. We had never really talked about anything besides filmmaking, and it was both pleasant and strange to sit in her car and begin what might possibly be a friendship. It was occurring to me that this was a part of the filmmaking process - meeting new people and making new friends.

I watched her at work. She looked at the windows, the fluorescent lights, the fuse box, the wall sockets, the electrical appliances in the kitchen, and at the brown walls and white ceiling. She took readings with her light meter in all four corners, and concluded it was going to be a difficult lighting job. The huge front window let in large quantities of sunlight, but not enough to flood the whole hall. That would mean a mixture of daylight and tungsten light was in the room, and we would have to balance the film for one or the other. We could put blue gel on the lights, or orange gel on the window. Orange gel is not very attractive, and would not improve the already shabby appearance of Hillcrest Hall. On the other hand, having to constantly climb up ladders to put blue gel on the overhead lights could be disruptive to the campaign. I knew I had better review my rudimentary knowledge of film lighting, or I would be unable to participate in the selection of the best alternative.

We went back to Joanne's house, and sat in the kitchen. We drank coffee and ate watermelon, fresh, red juice dripping over
our hands. It felt like summer. We talked, not about the film, but about our past lives – getting to know each other.

Sharon was still out of town, and phoned to say she would be away another month. I wondered again if she would ever help me on LITTLE MOUNTAIN. Now that Joanne was involved, it was not so important that Sharon co-direct. I trusted Joanne, knowing I could obtain all the technical advice I needed from her.

I had been advised to get the commitment the NFB had made me in writing. The Vancouver NFB agreed readily. I phoned my contact person at Studio D in Montreal, and asked for a letter outlining the services they were giving me. She seemed insulted. I asked if she found it an unusual request, and she replied she had never had one like it. "Our Executive Producer promised you, and I'm sure that is good enough." She had not worked out the budget for LITTLE MOUNTAIN, including what the cost to the studio would be. Since I was coming to Montreal in a few weeks, we agreed that it could wait until I got there, and I would sign the contract then.

A typical evening occurred on May 21st. An NDP fundraising banquet was being sponsored by the Garibaldi Club, and Ed Broadbent was to be present as a guest of honour. The tickets were expensive, and I couldn't really afford them. but I thought the contacts would be too good to pass up. The people I sat with were involved with the union movement. Every time the name of a union came up, I would try to find out who ran it, and what kind of financial shape they were in. The suggestions they had for me
did not seem practical. I told my neighbour I sometimes wished I had never started on the film. "Well," he said, "you can stop, can't you?". "No," I replied.

After the meal, following some very boring speeches, I went to socialize with the crowd gathered around Broadbent. I spoke with his Press Secretary, someone I knew from my days on Parliament Hill. I told him about the film. "Oh, you're the one behind that film!" he said with surprise. "They gave it to me to evaluate, to see if we would endorse it. I was against it. You can get burned on something like that. I didn't know you were involved." I was angry at myself for not having realized that he would be the person to count. As it was, I had received the letter anyway.

I spent the evening talking about the film, or wishing I was talking about the film. I was introduced to the head of the Garibaldi Club, who had received a letter from me asking for money. He wanted to know what was in it for the Club. How was I planning on featuring Italians in my film? Could I interview a Club member? The temptation to say yes was great, but I told him I could only include people working in the Little Mountain campaign. "I'm just asking you the questions that will come up at our meeting," he said. "I support the idea myself. We can probably give two or three hundred dollars." I talked and talked about the film, and hoped that in all that talk, I might find one or two persons who would take an interest in the film, who might be inspired to use their connections to swing some money
over to me. But apart from a hang-over, the evening had no concrete results.

Joanne and I began to talk more frequently. She felt that with the NFB support, we could pull off the film for twelve thousand dollars, cash. That would pay for salaries, equipment rental, the rest of the film stock, and audio tape.

I started to question everyone I knew on what equipment they had access to. Where had they got the equipment for their last film? How much did it cost to rent? Did they know anyone who might be helpful? Part of the problem was that most film technicians who own equipment do not rent it out unless they go with it. And the people I wanted to work with did not have any equipment.

There was a possibility that Cineworks, the film co-op I worked for, would be able to provide sound recording equipment. Our budget from the Canada Council included money to buy a Nagra tape-recorder. A Nagra is the film industry's standard, a very high-priced machine. The co-op had five thousand dollars, which meant the Equipment Committee would have to buy second-hand. The decision on which model to buy, and where to get the best deal was not going to be made in a rush. I could only hope that a Nagra would be purchased before I needed one.

I asked the NFB again what equipment I could borrow. It seemed I could borrow almost anything for a few days. They had two cameras, and often NFB productions didn't use either of them. But for a long shoot, like the one planned for LITTLE
MOUNTAIN, it was unlikely they would lend a camera for the whole time. They might let one of their Nagras out, though. It just depended on their own production schedule, and what was happening when the election came. Of course, they would have to be fully confident of the ability of the people using the equipment.

I received the welcome news that two people I knew were prepared to give five hundred dollars towards the film, through a business they jointly owned. This was the first money anyone had offered, and it felt good. I didn't try and get a cheque from them, though. I did not want to take their money until I was certain the film was going ahead.

My fundraising efforts were going at full speed. I was constantly making phone calls, writing and mailing letters. I was leaving shortly for Ottawa, where I was to give a paper at the Learned Societies, and I wanted to have all my fundraising initiatives underway before I left. I was also trying to arrange a recording of a meeting of the Little Mountain Election Planning Committee. It would take place while I was gone, and I needed to find people to record sound and to take slides. After much hesitation, I asked two members of the film co-op to help me out. They agreed, on the understanding that they would be listed in the credits of the film. It was up to me to arrange the borrowing of equipment, and buy the film and tape. In between all this, I was very busy at the film co-op, where I was co-ordinating National Film Day, a free exhibition of Canadian
Film that would take place ten days after my return from Ottawa. I was more and more exhausted each day, and sometimes found it hard to remain optimistic.

To give myself more confidence, I audio-taped, by myself, a Little Mountain NDP General Member's Meeting. I thought doing such a thing would help me feel in touch with the film, and reassure me that it was really going to happen some day. It was a way of convincing myself that the film was more than an idea. It was also good for the people of Little Mountain to see some film equipment, and be reminded of what they had agreed to. I borrowed a tiny Nagra SN from a friend - everyone at the meeting loved it. They were curious about the way it worked, and I welcomed the opportunity to answer their questions. The tape I produced was terrible - I had neglected to turn off an overhead fan, and there was a persistent buzzing sound in the background. But I enjoyed the experience very much. It made me feel in control again, and reassured me that the actual production of the film would be fine.

The weekend of the NDP Provincial Council meeting was approaching, and I was getting excited. A decision would be made there on how they would help me. I thought I was likely to receive one or two thousand dollars, as well as permission to do the mail-out. I had already received replies to my request for money from the Ontario NDP. They liked the idea, but had no money to contribute. The Alberta NDP came next. They liked the idea, but had no money to contribute. They would, however, buy a
copy when the film was finished. And finally the Manitoba NDP. They liked the idea, and would discuss it at their next meeting.

I discovered my request to the BC NDP would first be discussed at an Executive meeting. I was not allowed to be present. I thought I should call the individual members of the Executive, and lobby them separately, but my spirit quailed. I just did not have the energy to do it.

The Executive made the decision to table my request, and refer it to the Communications Committee. This was not unexpected, and not much of a setback, as I was scheduled to attend the Communications Committee meeting the next day. I did want to get the matter settled. I had been delaying mailing my fundraising letters, waiting until I was able to include an endorsement from the NDP in the package. I no longer thought I could expect others to contribute to the film if the NDP would not.

 Shortly after the appointed time for the Communications Committee meeting, it became apparent there would not be a quorum. Only three people had showed up. I felt like the ground had dropped from under me. I had been counting on the results of the meeting, never dreaming there might not be a definite, positive response. No one seemed to know when there would be another meeting - maybe not until fall. The three people were sympathetic, but seemingly overcome with inertia. They suggested I write again. I refused to give up, and finally one of them agreed to phone the Executive of the Committee the next day, and
see what could be arranged. I was to call him later in the week. The disappointment was bitter. I reminded myself that it was these kind of setbacks that really required inner strength. I had to persist. I decided to go to Cineworks, and type. It was one of the hottest days of the year, and I looked forward to being alone and working my sorrows away. Unfortunately, it turned out a film class was screening German films in the next room. I sat and re-typed the film proposal from back to front. I had been meaning to do this for some time. I wanted to change the lay-out to make less pages, and lower photocopy costs. I also wrote to the Federal NDP, and asked for a contribution to the film.

The resolution of this saga was that the Communications Committee, after some hesitation, agreed to give me five hundred dollars. In return, I was to someday provide them with a videotape of the film. They would give me a letter of endorsement, as long as I would draft it. If I wanted to pursue the idea of a mail-out, I would have to write again to the Provincial Secretary, and find out how to re-activate my request, now that it had entered the bureaucracy. Somehow, it seemed very little in return for the enormous amount of time, energy, and emotion invested.

I was leaving for Ottawa in a few days. There was no longer any point in putting off mailing the fundraising letters. I spent a marathon evening organizing the mailing. The proper letter for each envelope, a one-page summary of the film
proposal, and three letters of endorsement. The latter were chosen judiciously, depending on whether the letter was to a wealthy individual, a labour union, or to an NDP Riding Association. There were fifty-two letters altogether. I typed, photocopied, addressed, stuffed and stamped the letters. I had purchased an address stamp for E-Day Productions, and it was fun to see the professional touch it added to the envelopes. I mailed them off, and planned that on my return from Ottawa, I would phone every person I had written. Just in case some of them tried to contact me while I was away, I purchased a telephone answering machine. I wanted to feel confident that no funder would call and be unable to reach me.

I arrived in Ottawa for my first Learned Societies meeting. I talked there with someone I had worked with on Parliament Hill. He was a film buff, and I showed him the proposal for LITTLE MOUNTAIN. He had suggestions for funding. I could get money from the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in New York. Or I could engage a fund-raising firm, such as the one used by Oxfam and Amnesty International, and get someone famous to write a letter on my behalf, which would then be mailed out across Canada.

This was not the kind of advice I wanted to hear. More impossible suggestions. I appreciated his interest, but I had become too cynical to believe that anything concrete could result from someone's interest. Advice is cheap—action would be more helpful. I told him about the runaround I was getting
from the NDP. He was not surprised. "The Party is like that," he said. "Keep away from it. Its structures are just a burden on you."

I agreed with him, but I was determined to see through what I had started. Since I was in Ottawa, I decided to see the Federal Secretary of the NDP, and explain my request in person. My letter had been received, and was to be discussed at a Federal Council meeting the following week. I found I could not get an appointment. She was too busy to see me. I was furious; the NDP Federal Secretary isn't God. Why should she be so unreachable? I called an acquaintance who worked as Research Director for the NDP. He promised to intercede for me, but suggested in the meanwhile I try and see the Assistant Federal Secretary, who was probably more accessible.

I did make an appointment with him, explaining the film and emphasizing that it was important the NDP give some money. I needed that endorsement to raise funds from other sources. He seemed to understand my point, and promised to speak in support of my request when it came up at the meeting. I felt I had done all I could on that front, and walked up to Parliament Hill. I visited all the MPs I knew who were on Federal Council, telling them about my film, and asking them to support it when it came up on the agenda. They assured me they would.

I dropped in at the office of the MP I had once worked for. It never hurts to keep old contacts alive. The result of this effort was a benefit evening for the film. It would take place
in a month, and would be sponsored by the NDP staff association. A former colleague of mine would organize it.

My next stop was Montreal. I was going to the NFB, where I would sign the contract with Studio D, and visit with the Executive Producer of Studio E.

Unfortunately, Montreal was in the middle of another Metro strike. It took over two hours of bus, walking, raincoats, and broken French to finally arrive at the Board. I had no set appointments, and had mentally prepared myself for one last day of inserting myself into people's door and schedules. The first step was to convince the commissionaires who guard the doors that I was harmless, and had acceptable business within the building. I spent the rest of the day at the NFB, visiting various people, making requests, and asking advice. I met with the Executive Producer of Studio E, and had a pleasant and wide-ranging chat with him. We talked about the cutbacks to the assist program. Although there was a charge for the cost of magnetic film stock, it could be avoided. He knew how to get mag stock for free. There are two copies made of the sound transferred to mag stock for every NFB production. Most of this mag stock is never used, and is relegated to storage. It is possible to re-transfer sound on to it without a noticeable loss of quality. If I used this mag stock for my sound transfer, there would be no charge for it. He would be happy to explain to my producer in Studio D how to obtain some. This was a relief, since I didn't know what he was talking about and had vague
images of myself in the basement of the NFB, rooting around on dusty shelves.

I turned up three times at the door of my producer's office; she was never in. I felt a little desperate - my main task was to get the contract signed, and I was returning to Vancouver the next day. But on my next attempt, she was sitting at her desk, and greeted me in a friendly fashion. She gave me a copy of the budget, and of the contract for my film. The contract amazed me. It stated that the NFB was helping me under its Program of Assistance for Films and Filmmakers in the Private Sector - the PAFFPS program. The assistance could be withdrawn at any time. Of course I signed it anyway.

The budget was a revelation. I felt very strange. Someone else, someone not me, had taken the figures I knew so well and placed them on official NFB accounting firms. The film had taken on its own life, outside my head, and outside my circle of friends. I was to place my signature where the line indicated director. I felt like I was handling history. From then on, when I doubted the reality of my plan, I had only to remember those very tangible forms. I signed, and as the forms passed from my hands back to hers I felt like waving good-bye. They were to be consigned to a filing cabinet, and would have to work their magic from that somewhat inglorious locale.

All of this business was conducted in an informal and chatty fashion. We were interrupted every few minutes by phone calls, or by people dropping in. I was happy with this friendly
atmosphere – I welcomed the opportunity to ingratiate myself with this producer whose assistance and good will would play such a large part in my future.

When we had finished, I was ushered into the office of the Executive Producer of Studio D. I had met her during my training course, and we had talked on the phone when she agreed to assist my film, but I wanted to visit her, even if only briefly, to remind her visually of what I looked like. Following the initial pleasantries, she said, "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. We just learned yesterday there has been a freeze in the assist program. I know we made the commitment to you sometime ago, but because you didn't sign your contract until today, I'm not sure it can go through."

I was stunned. My one achievement, slipping away from me! I said I had phoned my producer and asked for a written confirmation, and had been told it could wait until I came to Montreal. "Well," she said, "perhaps I haven't been keeping her fully up-to-date. Administration has been unveiling this slowly, a bit at a time. But maybe she has already included you in our budget. I'll check."

She left the room, and returned holding the forms that I had just fondly bid farewell. They looked forlorn and pathetic now – useless bits of writing on green paper. And a signature that had come too late.

She promised to do what she could to get it through. If that proved impossible, she would try to sandwich it in among
other monies she expected to receive soon. I was not consoled, saying that I couldn't make the film without the assist. All my fundraising was based on the credibility the NFB support had given me.

"It's not like you'll be shooting tomorrow," she said. "You can always leave the exposed film in a fridge until a solution is found. Leave it with me, and don't say a word to anyone. Just go ahead as if everything is okay. Probably everything will be worked out by the time an election is called."

How different her world was from mine! Not worry, with my film project crumbling about my ears? To her, it was one more administrative problem in a world of administrative problems. To me, it was a crisis of major proportions. Without the NFB assist I would never make the film. It represented about twelve thousand dollars worth of services. I would not be able to raise that money. My bitterness increased when I learned the cause of the cutbacks. All lab services were being turned over to a massive NFB-private sector co-production.

I retreated to my friends' house in misery and disarray. How was I going to cope with this one? My friends were wonderful. They comforted me, saying that if I had a commitment from the Executive Producer, all would be well. It would just take time and energy - two elements already in short supply.

I returned to Vancouver. Things were not going well. After months of work I had only a thousand dollars in cash. I might lose my Film Board assist. When would the election be called?
The people who had recorded the Election Planning Committee meeting had not had a good time. The meeting had been long and dull, and one person had been rude to them, objecting strenuously whenever they tried to rearrange something due to lighting requirements. The sound recordist told me: "If you're going to make a film there, you'll have to talk to them and make sure they co-operate. And the noise in that room is terrible." This was depressing news. Maybe the film was impossible for other than financial reasons.

I borrowed a tape recorder from Simon Fraser to listen to the recordings - they were clear, crisp, and I liked them very much. The slides were good, but not quite what I had hoped for. I reflected that I couldn't expect to transfer my vision to someone else in a short conversation. To get what you want, you have to be there. "And even then," said a filmmaker friend, with a touch of bitterness, "you never get what you expect."

The tapes and the slides revived my enthusiasm, reminding me how much I loved the subject matter. I knew if I had enough money and time I could make a good film. But it was June, and I had more obligations than I wanted to think about. National Film Day was a week away, but I resolved to set some time aside to work on the film. I had sent fifty-two letters out before I left for Ottawa, and it was time to follow them up with a phone call. This proved much more time-consuming and energy-draining than I had imagined.
Phoning. It is an absolutely essential tool of fundraising, yet it presents myriad conflicts, especially among the inexperienced. For example, when phoning a list of people, you do not want to make any appointments with less important people, in case the more important people are only available in that time slot. But if you wait too long, there may not be appointments with anyone. There is also a minor crisis every time someone is supposed to call back. Your choice is to use the phone and make the hundred other calls on your list, or to wait, leaving the line free. But how much is a decision to wait a sensible approach? Is it not merely hiding from responsibility, gaining a welcome respite from the task at hand?

A typical phoning session would find me sitting at my desk, a list of names and phone numbers in front of me, writing paper nearby, and of course, the phone. The latter would assume immense proportions, overshadowing the other, more friendly objects on the desk. The first step was to find someone in their office. Most of my conversations took place with receptionists. After twenty minutes, this resulted in confused notes on people who would call me, people who I would call back, and people yet to be called, all milling about on my once-organized list, now reduced to chaos.

Phoning the union officers was the most difficult. The majority were not in. Some unions had their phone continually busy, and no matter when I called, the line would be engaged. Of those unions that could be reached, a multitude of problems
emerged. One union was under trusteeship, and could only make decisions about spending money through a complicated procedure. Several union leaders were in negotiation. Other unions were on strike, or preparing for one. One union would give a donation, but only if others gave first. Most said they would discuss it at their Executive meeting, but I could not be present. A municipal employees' union informed me they had already discussed my request, and had turned it down for lack of information. It was too late for me to come – having already been defeated, it would take a two-thirds majority vote to bring it to another meeting. Many unions had not received my letter. After listening to my verbal explanation, they told me to write again. Of all the calls I made, only one union gave a positive response.

The question I was asked most frequently was: "How will this film be of use to labour?" Many said they were already affiliated with the NDP, and seemingly could not distinguish between me asking independently for a donation, and the donations they regularly make to the NDP. An interesting situation was the response of the Telecommunication Workers Union. I had spoken previously to two persons on the TWU Executive, and both had agreed to support the motion. But the request had come at a politically bad time. The TWU membership had just rejected a referendum asking if the TWU should become officially affiliated with the NDP. The rejection was especially strong in the Lower Mainland locals. The Executive felt that to
give money to a film about an NDP election campaign would be seen as a challenge to the members' decision. Therefore, no money for me.

Hard times were affecting many unions, for example, the Fisherman's Union. They were not having any Executive meetings during the fishing season. When they did meet, I would not be allowed to present my case. Rather, a member of the Executive would do so. The next scheduled meeting was in September, and I was advised to write them again in August, and give an update on my progress. But I should be aware that another plant was closing down in Massit, the fourth fishing plant closure of the month, and finances were pretty tight.

Tiring of fruitless calls, I phoned the Federal NDP in Ottawa. I wanted to know the decision on my request. The first hint came when the person who agreed to advocate my request told me he had not been present at that section of the meeting. The decision had been negative. "We rejected all the requests we got," he said helpfully. I was sad, and astounded. What dullness, what lack of foresight! How could they not give five hundred dollars towards a fifty thousand dollar film, a film they had every likelihood of benefitting from? Eventually, the hurt turned to a simple bitterness, and I continued tracking down the unions.

Things began to fall apart. All my attention was demanded by National Film Day. As much as I wanted to work on the film, other obligations in my life were more pressing - mostly because
they were projects that involved other people, people who wanted my participation. I had a major grant application due for Cineworks, a General Members' Meeting to organize, an appeal to City Council over National Film Day funding, an old friend who was coming to stay for three days, and I was expecting my youngest sister for a two-week holiday.

In an effort to remain organized, I made a list of the things I had to do for the film. They all seemed equally important. There were thirty-one items to follow up, sixteen phone calls not yet made to the unions, and another twenty-two calls to make to the wealthy individuals who had received letters. So far none of this activity had resulted in any money, and I was beginning to doubt it ever would.

In fact, I was beginning to doubt more and more that it was possible to make the film. Apparently, I had been completely mistaken in the sources of funding I had tried. The tactics I had used were obviously not good enough, the strings I had tried to pull had not been pulled correctly. I was tired, and depressed, and uncertain of my desire to continue. Although fall was the more likely occasion, there could be an election at any time. I found myself wishing that a snap election be called. Then the waiting would be over. I would not be able to make the film, but at least I could stop trying.

I applied for a student loan. If the election was in the fall, I could use the money towards the film. I also applied to VISA for an increase in my credit card limit. I received word I
had been awarded a scholarship, a generous sum that would support me for a year. It was a wonderful opportunity, but I regarded it with mixed feelings. Accepting the scholarship would allow me to stop working at the film co-op, and leave more time free for the film. But I felt guilty about leaving the co-op job after only six months, and I wondered whether I should give up the film, and finish my schooling, and accomplish at least one thing.

Sharon was instrumental in my decision to continue on with both the thesis and the film. "You may be a year later than you planned in finishing your thesis," she said, "but so what? In an extra year, you can have a thesis and a film. You might be broke, but that will only be for another couple of years, and it will be worth it." I decided she was right. Besides, my friend Graham, a lawyer, had volunteered to help me raise money through the Capital Cost Allowance route. I trusted him, and was bolstered in spirit.

My sister was visiting, and I needed a rest. I decided to take a holiday. This happy resolve did not turn out quite as expected. Rather than put the film out of my mind, I worried about it constantly. I had hoped that a respite from the phone calls would provide me with an opportunity for reflection, for reaffirming my faith in the project, and in my ability to accomplish it. But I couldn't find any answers. Instead, I asked myself constantly if I was sure I wanted to make the film.
The Ottawa benefit for the film was about to take place. I knew I should have phoned earlier, to make sure everything was organized. But I couldn't bear the notion of another phone call. I couldn't forget it, either. I knew the benefit would not be successful unless some energy was put into it, and that energy would have to be inspired by me. And I had no energy. So throughout our camping trip, I worried. I went into heart palpitations every time I passed a telephone booth. I rehearsed possible phone conversations in my sleeping bag at night, and wandered the windy beaches practising my long-distance hello. But I never phoned.

When we returned from our holiday, I found out the benefit had only raised one hundred and thirty-five dollars. I was suitably disgusted with myself. Also waiting for me were a series of rejection letters from various NDP constituencies. It was too much. I did not feel I could go on any more with the project. I was tired of rejection. I was tired of working alone. I was tired of being depressed. And I was tired of being tired. My sister had left, and it was time to return to work on the film, but I was paralysed. It seemed the most important thing to do in the world, and at the same time the least possible.

In despair, I called my best friend in Montreal, and poured out my troubles. "What about Sharon and Joanne?" she said. "Get together with them for regular support meetings. Get your friend Graham involved. Don't work in a vacuum." She advised me not to work on the film for two weeks. I should go on the supposition
that I was not going to make the film. At the end of two weeks, if I was happy with that decision, than so be it. On the other hand, if I did regain hope and energy, I could start again.

I decided to try her advice. Although I did not announce it to my friends, I made a resolution to abstain from all activity on the film. I had some prior research obligations to fulfil, and thought I would spend a week at SFU. I longed for the peace and tranquillity of the university setting - no pressure, just calm and measured thinking, reading, writing.

After a week researching in the library, my senses returned. The work was boring, tiresome, finicky, and I realized that university life is no more tranquil than any other. Work everywhere, in every field, is accomplished in much the same manner - by dint of much effort, much boring and tedious legwork. Accomplishments are not miracles, but the result of many long hours of unseen work and dedication. This was true of books, of dissertations, and of ... films.

I talked with Joanne, telling her I was discouraged, and not working very hard on the film. I told her I felt stupid, phoning unions that were on strike, or facing huge lay-offs, and asking for money for a film. "You're not wrong to feel that way," she said, "but get to work. There's an election coming soon, and I want to make a film." She said she had received a letter from the NFB in Montreal, congratulating her on getting her film approved: "I didn't know what they were talking about. Then I realized they meant LITTLE MOUNTAIN." So. At least the
NFB support was back in place. Joanne and I decided that six thousand dollars would be enough cash to shoot the film. Every month, our budget went a bit lower.

I was feeling mollified, but a short while later Joanne and I talked again. She burst out, "I've been thinking about the film. It's such a long shoot, it takes almost as much crew and equipment time as a feature!" I admitted I had been thinking about shortening the film, cutting it down to fifteen minutes. We could shoot a bit each of the first three weeks of the election, and save most of our stock for the week before election day.

"That's not the same thing at all," said Joanne. "You would lose your original idea, the slow build-up, the personalities, the growing tension. If it has to be re-thought, and the last week is the most exciting, maybe that's when we should film, and forget about the first weeks."

"But no one would know us," I cried. "We wouldn't have built up any rapport, and people would be too busy to talk to us."

"Everyone likes to talk to a camera," she said. "Anyway, it needs rethinking."

I talked to Sharon about the possibility of shortening the film. "Don't change it," she said. "If you have any money, then sink it into tape, and make a video. Do it the way you wanted, from beginning to end. Otherwise, you'll never be happy with it."
I was not impressed with the idea of video. But I didn't know anymore. I only knew I had an idea for a film, that I wanted to make it very much, and that I did not have enough money. Should I keep trying to raise money? Sharon put it very bluntly: "This is a film you can do. You know the subject matter inside-out, probably no one else could make it. And if you don't make this film, what will you ever do in film? You don't have formal training, you'd never be able to compete with all the people who have experience. You'd have a hard time getting work as a production assistant."

That was true, and it reminded me of one of my original reasons for wanting to do the film - there was no other way I could work in film if I did not make my own. At the beginning, it had seemed a sensible approach. I had envisaged that things would proceed much more smoothly. I hadn't foreseen the web that fundraising would be, nor all the other aspects of pulling the film together. And I had never anticipated that my self-image would be so severely shaken, to the point where I was not sure I wanted to get up in the morning, let alone make a film. I hadn't foreseen the dangers of working alone, hadn't realized the importance of building a support network. Or perhaps I had, perhaps my experience with Mainland Media had caused me to swing to the opposite side of the pendulum. At any rate, I was now in the position of needing a massive dose of self-confidence if I was to continue.
At last it came, through an inspiring conversation with a new friend, who was also a filmmaker. I was able to articulate my worst fears, and find gentle reassurance that they could be overcome. I told him I had a vague sense of people whose good opinion I wanted to merit, people in film and people in the NDP, and I feared that a failed attempt to make the film would ruin me in their judgement. It was judgement I feared, judgement that I could never measure up to their expectations, never do a good job. What if my inexperience not only made a bad film, but what if I also damaged the election campaign somehow? What if I was thrown out of the Committee Rooms in disgrace? Considering how I was feeling after my months of unsuccessful fundraising, I was not sure I would have the mental or emotional strength to withstand, let alone prevent, such catastrophes.

My friend took a very sensible approach. "Suppose you do get thrown out," he said, "suppose that things get really bad, worse than you can even imagine right now. In a year, you won't be upset. The disaster will just be a story you can look back on, and relate to your friends. There is nothing wrong with trying and failing, even if it is the oldest cliche in the book. You will feel worse about yourself if you don't try. And besides ... your fears about being kicked out are truly paranoid. You're thinking you're more important than you really are. I'm sure the people in the campaign will have a lot more pressing things on their minds than the film crew."
"In terms of your technical knowledge – don't worry about it. As long as you understand the subject, as long as you understand what is happening around you, you will be a good director. Your biggest problem will be knowing too much about both sides – the election campaign and the film crew. You'll find it hard to make a decision because you'll see the problem from both perspectives. But if you know what you're there for, you can direct, so don't worry. The only thing you should worry about is raising the money. Well, ... don't worry about it, but work on it."

And so I passed my second crisis, and continued on with the process of making a film.
Return to fundraising came slowly. I began another of my endless redrafts of the budget, and broke down my list of forty-two things-to-do into small, manageable bits. There were still new sources of funding to try; I decided to apply to the Canada Council Explorations Program.

It was more complicated than I had feared. A few months before each application deadline, Explorations places quarter-page ads in all newspapers, alerting the public to the competition, and urging applications. I called the toll-free number (Council offices are in Ottawa), and after several attempts reached the receptionist. She told me they didn't give out application forms. First, I would have to send a synopsis of my project. The forms were complicated; they did not want people filling them out if their project was not eligible for consideration. My options were to send the synopsis, or to phone and explain my proposal to the Project Officer for British Columbia.

I knew it could take days to reach a Canada Council Officer, toll-free number or not. Getting the line free, and the person at their desk is logistically impossible, considering the time difference between Ottawa and Vancouver, and the number of meetings Canada Council Officers seem to attend. Instead, I was sent a brochure on the Explorations Program, and in the end,
inevitably, I scrawled off a note explaining the film.

I noticed a poster from the federal Department of Communications, advertising money for Canadian Studies. I called the department of the Secretary of State in Ottawa, telling the woman who answered I was inquiring about the funds available for research into Canadian Studies. "It's not for research," she replied, "I want to make that clear right from the start." I outlined my film, trying to make it sound as Canadian as possible. "Offhand," she said, "I'd say you don't have much of a chance. First of all, your film takes place in British Columbia, and this is a national program. The projects funded must be pan-Canadian in scope, but with an inter-regional balance. And quite frankly, we have to keep up the balance on the French side. I must tell you that proposals with strong French content receive more favourable consideration." I was astounded she would be so candid - hadn't she heard of Western Alienation? She promised to send the program booklet, but warned me: "The booklet is written very broadly. We have narrower guidelines we operate within."

The same day I experienced this reminder of Canadian political reality, the United Steelworkers announced that any decision to fund my film would have to be made through their Toronto offices. They had already forwarded my letter. I called the USWA in Toronto, and amazingly, was immediately connected to the person I wanted. "You must be tired of phoning labour bureaucrats and having them say they haven't made a decision
yet," he said. "But I just got back from two weeks vacation. I'll put it on the top of my pile, and talk to someone about it as soon as I can. We wouldn't give a lot of money — but then you haven't asked for much. I won't give you a lecture on how tight money is. I'm sure you've heard it before. Call back in two weeks, and for God's sake, call collect. We have a bigger budget than you do."

My good feelings about this encounter were damaged when the head of the District Labour Council reversed an earlier decision to assist me. He had said he would cover an invoice for audio tape, but later decided it was not a normal expenditure for his organization. In my new spirit of properly following-up all leads, I visited him to discuss it in person — and essentially wasted an hour and a half.

I was convinced I had not tried hard enough with earlier sources, and decided to try again. After several attempts, I reached the Provincial Secretaries of the Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario NDP by phone, and asked if they would buy a copy of the film in advance. They would have to take it to an Executive meeting; I would have to write a letter outlining my new request.

My recent burst of activity was taking place at Simon Fraser University, in the office of a vacationing professor. I had rejected Cineworks and my one-room apartment as suitable places to work. SFU was much better. I had access to a post office, a type-writer, a phone, and a photocopier. A production
office, at last.

My charge card limit was increased to twenty-five hundred dollars; if I could get free equipment, I would have enough money to make the film. Try the university, I was advised, try Education, or Psychology - they have all sorts of equipment. The camera was the big thing. It had to be able to shoot in synch, and it needed to hold at least two hundred feet of film at a time. It couldn't be too heavy, as there would be a lot of hand-held camera work.

There were no such cameras available to me through the university. A Cineworks member told me about two places in town that did the bulk of equipment rentals. I called one of them. It would cost $120 a day for a camera body, a battery belt, and one magazine. A lens would cost $70 a day, and extra magazines were $25. A tripod head cost $35, and legs to go with it an extra $12. Rental was on the basis of a four-day week. To get the minimum equipment needed for the duration of the election would cost $5000.00. It was not a viable alternative.

Joanne suddenly realized that all the film we shot would go to the Montreal NFB for processing. It would take a minimum of two weeks to get any back, if we were lucky. "But that means we won't get any feedback!" she shrieked. "What if there is something wrong with the camera? What if you don't like my shooting? We have to process it in Vancouver!" I promised without hope to see what I could do; it would cost over seven thousand dollars to print the film locally.
My thoughts turned to script-writing. A script was not complete; I did not really know how to script a documentary. I had wanted to prepare well in advance, and be clear on what I wanted to capture on film. There would be no time for such planning once the election was called. As it became apparent that money was difficult to raise, I realized that no one, not even me, was going to put a tremendous effort into writing a script for a film that might not be made. I felt uneasy about this; somewhere along the way I had been imbued with the understanding that a good, well-planned script was necessary for an interesting and worthwhile film.

When I first met Joanne, she told me of a film she had worked on where the director had absolutely everything storyboarded well in advance. But the pace of the film had been too hectic, and the director rarely discussed with the crew what she was planning - and never took their advice into consideration. The film was now being edited, and was very difficult to piece together. There were no cut-aways or establishing shots; the film was not coherent in structure. I definitely wanted to avoid that situation.

I collected notes, jotted down ideas, and talked about the film, but I never sat down and planned a script. A filmmaker friend told me I shouldn't be so hard on myself for not having the film worked out visually: "It is pretty hard to work on that kind of planning when it isn't certain the film will even happen. I'm sure if you got the money you would find the time
and motivation to work on the script."

This comforted me, yet I wanted to work on the script. I thought about it and worried about it a large proportion of the time; that was seemingly all the energy I had for it. I explained my dilemma to friends in Montreal. They counselled me to make it a priority to work with my cinematographer, and pull together a shooting script. "If you don't have a script when the election is called, you'll be in real trouble. Schedule the time. You'll always be sorry if you make a bad film because you didn't have a script ready."

I was not the only person having trouble. A friend of mine had her script rejected by the National Film Board on the grounds that it was "not middle-class enough". They were interested if she made some changes to it. We joked about having two scripts - one that was officially submitted, and the "other" script, for the film you were really making.

One night I sat down, and read over all my notes and observations, finding ideas that dated back to the very beginning of the project. There was a lot of material, and a lot of potential. I knew it would not take long to pull together a viable plan.

The Explorations forms arrived from the Canada Council. I needed to find three people to act as references; I also needed support material relating to the project. I decided to make a slide-tape of the Election Planning Committee meeting recorded in June, as well as a video tape of interviews with volunteers
from the Little Mountain NDP. A video would give me a chance to practice interviewing, and find out how well Joanne, Sharon and I worked as a team. It would also give the Little Mountain NDP a hint of things to come. Organizing the video tape required finding equipment, people to interview, and lining up a crew. I received permission to use the video editing facilities at Simon Fraser University; my CLC friend promised use of their video equipment. For the slide-tape, I could easily borrow a slide projector. The hard part was finding a time when the SFU sound studio was free. Even in summer it was in use almost twenty-four hours a day.

Time was the biggest problem. A potential funder was in town for a few days, and I decided to put together a rough version of the slide tape to show him. I sat in the sound editing room, slowly remembering how to cut and splice sound tape, and felt as if I was in the thick of all the thoughts and feelings and ideas that I had ever had about the film. I listened to the tapes, and instantly recognized the material I wanted to use. I wondered if the material I was choosing would be relevant or interesting to any one else. Was it too self-indulgent?

Part of the problem was related to financing. Since the main use of the slide-tape was for the Canada Council application, I wanted to do something that would be non-partisan. But I wanted to show a rough version to a funder from labour, and I was drawn towards using some of the funny,
but more political material. I wished I was a propaganda filmmaker. Then I'd know exactly what to pick. It would certainly be less draining than trying to walk the line in editing a piece that would not offend the Canada Council, labour, the NFB - or myself.

And editing is so much work - cut, splice, label, hang. I had intended to mix a three-track tape of the meeting, aiming for a blend of voices and statements that was humorous, semiconfusing, but enlightening. But I was not sure I had time to re-learn how to do a good sound mix. Who would I find with the technical skills to help me?

In between editing I worked on letters and phone-calls. I wrote again to the Boag Foundation and the BC Federation of Labour, asking that they reconsider their earlier refusal to fund the film. I wrote to the unions that had sounded positive when I had made my follow-up phone calls. I phoned Graham, my lawyer-friend who had volunteered to help produce the film, and arranged a meeting.

My views on the amount of money I needed to make the film had changed again. I was now aiming for five thousand dollars. It was not that I had stopped intending to pay people, or to rent equipment. I was just a little more desperate than before, a little more willing to stretch the situation. I thought people might give money more readily if they thought I could possibly attain my goal.
The finished film would be distributed through the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution West, a non-profit society that sells, rents, and promotes the work of independent Canadian filmmakers. I asked the Director of the CFDW to act as an assessor for my Canada Council application. She agreed, and told me I should investigate all the possible markets for LITTLE MOUNTAIN as part of my pre-production work. She suggested I talk to the NFB as well as the Provincial Education Media Centre.

I made an appointment to visit the Head of Distribution at the NFB in Vancouver. I outlined the film, and asked him about its marketability. "No market," he replied. "Maybe an educational one, schools, depends on the film. Maybe colleges, political science departments. But it's not a bread and butter film. It's a Film Board film, nobody else makes that kind. Even if school boards use it, they won't use it enough to buy a copy. Perhaps a labour market - the CLC - but they are notorious for videotaping films without permission, and then never renting another copy. It's shocking - you'd think they'd be the last people in the world to take someone's work without paying for it."

I found his views a little depressing, but called the Provincial Education Media Centre, making an appointment with the person in charge of the Social Studies curriculum. Strangely enough, she turned out to be a neighbour of mine, and we met at her house over coffee one morning. She was much more encouraging. She felt a film like LITTLE MOUNTAIN could be ideal
for their curriculum; they had no other films that dealt with participation in the political process. She saw no problem with the film covering only one political party. I added her comments to the relevant section of the Canada Council application form.

I had become a little more jaundiced about the different fundraising leads I was offered. I was still willing to check them out, but had lost the sense of urgency that used to occur when I heard a new suggestion. Anxiety is often a by-product of hope; I was less anxious about fundraising, because I was more certain that nothing would come of it. Nonetheless, I had a meeting with Graham, who was also a friend of John Giles, the candidate. I compiled a collection of all the letters I had sent and received, all my proposals, and lists of contacts, and gave them to Graham to look over. He was reassuring. He thought we could easily raise ten thousand dollars, using the Capital Cost Allowance. "Big chunks are easier," Graham said. I had thought that once, too. But he agreed to investigate the legalities of the Capital Cost Allowance. We would meet again in two weeks.

One hot, sticky day I went to see about getting a line of credit with Vancouver City Savings, my credit union. The loans officer was a young woman, and we chatted pleasantly while filling out the forms. My assets were pathetic - a battered ten-year old car, a part-time job, and a one-year scholarship. Still, I only wanted to establish a three thousand dollar creditline. It was firmly explained to me that a part-time job did not constitute job security, and unless I could get someone
to co-sign, I would not get credit.

I tried another VanCity, just to see if all loans officers were alike. This one suggested I get my father to sign for me. He told me that they were increasingly strict with granting loans, since so many people who had been steadily employed for years were finding themselves laid-off. A young woman wanting to make a film was definitely not going to get a loan these days.

I showed the unfinished slide-tape to someone from the Ottawa CLC. He liked it, and thought my best chance of getting money from the CLC was from pre-sales. A decision like that couldn't be made until their National Political Education meeting in November, four months away. The election was likely to be before then, but I decided not to get upset. There was no use trying to rush things. I had union contacts, but had no idea how to make the best use of them. The labour movement was like a strange machine, levers and wheels, cogs and dials, and I did not know the right buttons to push. I could get it started, but I couldn't keep it in motion.

With just a few weeks of summer left, I was finding that most of the people I called were gone - for the day, for the week, and many had departed till after Labour Day. Summer in the city - not a good time for fundraising.

The booklet on the Canadian Studies program arrived, and I realized with joy that the Project Officer was an old acquaintance of mine, someone I had met through an NDP campaign. I called her in Ottawa, and after some initial chat, outlined my
film to her, along with a larger project to investigate funding for documentary film across Canada.

She did not think it would be a good idea to focus on the film, as it was too specific for their program. But if I wrote a proposal for the larger study, and showed how it was inter-regional in nature, as well as of use in forming national policy, it would probably be accepted - even if it did not deal particularly with Quebec. The film should be mentioned only as a vehicle that allowed the other research to be carried out. If I sent her a draft proposal in ten days, she would look it over and make suggestions for changes. It could then go to their next application review, in early September. It seemed a rather complicated way to get money for the film, and I was not sure if I had time to write an application. I decided to try it, anyway.

Sharon, Joanne, and I had planned a meeting to discuss the film. Sharon had confirmed the date twice, but at the last moment she cancelled out. I realized I had to come to grips with my relationship with Sharon. I did not feel she was interested in the film. Why did we keep pretending she would be co-director? Because she still paid lip-service to the film, and because I liked her as a friend, and enjoyed sharing things with her. I did not want to have a confrontation with Sharon. I also knew I could not expect to get her full attention until I raised the money for the film. I talked it over with a friend. "You don't sound like you want Sharon to co-direct," she said. "Just tell her. A co-director isn't someone who just walks in, they
should be working with you constantly, sharing, fund-raising. You're not under obligation to her. And besides, when it comes right down to it you don't need a co-director. You'll decide yourself, anyway." I felt a growing sense of urgency to straighten things out with Sharon as soon as possible. It was mid-August, and current rumours predicted an election call soon after Labour Day. That would give me a month at the most to pull everything together - apart from submitting the Canada Council grant. I decided to abandon my plans for the Canadian Studies application. This was not the time to launch new schemes.

I set off for my meeting with Joanne. It was time to "get serious". I started off on the problem of the script, telling Joanne I was conscious of not being prepared enough, and wanting to know what form she would prefer the script to be. She got out examples of shooting scripts. "I don't think you can ever have too much down on paper," she said. "As long as we remain flexible and open, a written script won't hamper us during shooting."

We discussed the personalities in the campaign, and the possible ways of structuring the film. I showed her the notes I had made so far, and she told me to write them up, and to make a list of all the texture-creating details I wanted in the film. "They don't always happen," she said, "and don't assume I notice things just because we've discussed them before. There is a lot of pressure during shooting. Don't interrupt me in a middle of a shot. They have to be done in a certain way if they are to be of
use, and there is no point in ruining one shot to try and get another. Most things repeat themselves - but you have to realize you can't get everything you want." I asked her what was the least amount of money she would work for. After some indecision, she said fifty dollars a day. I said that if I got any money, I would pay her at the going rate. It was a remote possibility, but it should at least be discussed. Joanne asked how much Sharon was working for. I told her Sharon might not be involved.

"Because she is too busy?"

"Yes, and because I don't want her to co-direct as well as sound record."

"Well," said Joanne, "just tell her. She'll probably be relieved." She mentioned an experience she had with a friend who left a joint project to work on a film that paid more - it had really hurt. We discussed the upcoming video interviews. "You don't have any money for this, do you?" she said. "If you get the grant, I'd like to get paid." We agreed on a date for the interviews, and Joanne said she would like to see the equipment beforehand.

We moved into a discussion of making the film a video instead. Joanne was more enthusiastic about this possibility than ever before. It meant she could get instant feedback on her shooting and lighting, rather than waiting three weeks to get film rushes back from Montreal. We could shoot more freely, not having to worry as much about the money that was being eaten up with every passing second. And it was so much easier to find
video equipment.

I agreed to begin investigating video - checking if the CLC would lend their equipment for the election, if the quality of their equipment was suitable, whether the Film Board would give video tape instead of film stock. I left Joanne's house feeling hopeful and excited. The whole thing might work, after all.

The next night I met with Sharon. I dreaded the discussion, but felt I had no choice. I explained I didn't think she should co-direct, and listed some of my reasons. "Well, I know I haven't been calling you about it every day," she said. "But quite frankly, I didn't have the sense it was a project that would go." I said I would understand if she was no longer interested in sound recording. "No," she said, "I am interested. I'm glad you told me. I had always thought of it as your film, but there is something about the term co-director which gives certain rights, and a professional stake in the outcome of the film. I don't mind not having the responsibility."

And so it was settled. We went into a discussion about doing the film in video. Sharon was enthusiastic, and had all sorts of suggestions as to how I could use the available resources. I was pleased with her enthusiasm, but a little dismayed at the idea of having to learn a complicated system of post-production for video. Just when I had film terminology and budgeting under control, I would have to learn a whole new system for video. Still, it was a relief to think that the project could be completed. Sharon agreed she would record sound
the following week during the video interviews.

I arranged for Hillcrest Hall as a location to shoot the interviews, and contacted various members of the Little Mountain NDP, hoping they would all turn up as scheduled. I called my CLC friend to confirm borrowing the video equipment. It was no problem, but first he wanted to meet Joanne, and watch her set up the equipment. I protested that she was an instructor of video at a community college - but he insisted. He was responsible for the equipment, and it was his duty to make sure it would not come to any harm. He would bring the equipment to Hillcrest on Friday night, and meet Joanne and me there.

I was depressed. Joanne was doing me a favour, and I knew she would hate to be watched while she figured out equipment she had never seen before. I told Sharon about it. She thought it was an insult to Joanne, but did not see that I had much choice. I sighed. I did not mind having to humiliate myself to get the project underway, but I hated asking other people to do so, especially for free. "Well," said Sharon, "You want to do the film, so you jump through the hoops. If there are more hoops, you do more jumping."

Joanne understood the request from my friend's point of view, but she really did not want to do it. I said I would try and borrow a cheaper camera from him, one he would not be as concerned over. "Oh no," said Joanne. "If there is any chance we can use this equipment in the election, we'd better check it out now. If I have to, I'll make myself available."
It came to pass that Joanne, my CLC friend, and I all stood in Hillcrest Hall, video equipment all around. I left them to it. Joanne was charming, and competent, and seemed to know more about the equipment than my friend did. The camera was a good one, and Joanne was very impressed with it; it would produce a broadcast quality signal.

The interview session was successful. The interviewees said all the right things, the equipment worked well, and Sharon, Joanne and I made a good team. It was nice to feel that something could go right, that production might be pleasant, even if the pre-production phase was anything but. By the end of the day, Joanne and Sharon, who had only a social acquaintance, were exchanging personal information, and seemed on their way to becoming friends. After the last interviewee had left, we hung about, discussing the day, eating some food, packing up the equipment - and talking about the possibility of an election.

Sharon was in the middle of editing a videotape, and did not want an election for at least six weeks. Joanne wanted one soon, except not in the first week of September, because that's when she started teaching again. But after that, she would like an election as soon as possible, so it would be finished well before she began work on her own film in December. I didn't care when an election came, as long as it happened when we were free to work on it. Rumours were strong that the election would be within a month. There was a lot of material I wanted to film in the first week of the campaign - I hoped we would all be ready
to jump into full swing as soon as the election was announced.

We had recorded five interviews on six videocassettes. They had to be edited down to fifteen minutes, and sent to the Canada Council within a month. Plus there was the slide-tape to finish. Joanne and I went to the college where she worked, and looked at the videotapes. She had concerns about the camera. It was not "following its focus", and would have to be adjusted. She would try to arrange to have it done at the college where she worked. Joanne sat with me and helped compile a list of the myriad bits of equipment we would need. I tried hard to comprehend. It would be up to me to pass this information on to someone else, and I wanted to do so accurately. "It must be incredible for you," said Joanne, "taking in so much new information. You must be overwhelmed." I was overwhelmed. I did not try to understand the technical uses of the equipment in any detail - just enough so that I could assess situations, and avoid unnecessary complications.

I still wanted to make a film, not a video. Film equipment is more portable, and less subject to breaking down. And the notion of a film was much more romantic and appealing than video. The large images, the colour, the editing process - I wanted to make a film. Video would mean a completely different distribution system, with some doubt I would be able to reach the audiences I wanted. At that time, 16mm film was still the easiest thing to distribute - most communities had a film projector, but video equipment was less common. As well, video
equipment comes in so many different formats. Half-inch, three-quarter inch, beta - I might find it easier to make a video, but not as easy to get it shown. I decided to find out how to make a video so it could be transferred to film.

I received notification that I would get twenty-seven hundred dollars under the Canada Student Loan program. That money, along with the funds I had already raised would definitely be enough for a videotape. I also had my charge card to fall back on. The CLC would lend their equipment, and the NFB said it was willing to give me videotape instead of film stock. I decide to prepare for the use of video, and conduct myself as if the election could come at any time. If there was no election, I would continue to try and raise the money for film.

Election speculation was in the air - and also on the radio, in the newspaper, and on everyone's lips. I felt like I was in a race. Joanne, Sharon and I had elaborate plans about what we would do as soon as the election was announced. In the meanwhile, I was busy editing the videotapes for the Canada Council, and working two days a week at the co-op. I continued trying to fundraise, writing letters and making phone calls, but it did not seem likely I would raise any additional money before the election.

My personal finances were becoming strained. Months of paying the costs of photocopying and phone calls had taken their toll on my modest income. I could no longer afford to pay for
quality photocopying. I was saved by a friend who worked for a union. She suggested I photocopy at her office on weekends. I did this a few times, and it was a great savings, although I felt shifty every time I asked.

Graham did not seem to be making any progress on his end of the fundraising strategy. He hadn't been able to get the information he needed on the tax implications of film investment. He had called a lawyer who specialized in film law, but the lawyer had refused to give him information. This annoyed Graham very much, who seemed to think it was against the lawyer code of honour. The film lawyer had said: "They all want advice for free. You can't make a film without a couple of thousand dollars up front for legal fees." So once again, I was left with the task of finding someone who would explain how the Capital Cost Allowance worked. Graham's participation seemed less urgent to me, now that I knew I had the resources for a videotape, but it was disappointing to realize he was not going to be the financial saviour I had had longed for.

Joanne and I were in constant communication. There were a variety of technical considerations to be worked out around video, and we were both trying to obtain all the relevant information. It was wonderful to work with someone who was equally concerned about the project, and I was grateful for her help and support. Sharon was working fourteen hours a day editing her videotape, and still hoped to be free when the election was called.
I spent the entire Labour Day weekend editing the videotape for the Canada Council, staying up till dawn to finish. I showed the tapes to Sharon for advice. She made several useful suggestions, and advised me to forget about completing the slide-tape. The written material and the videotape would be sufficient for the Canada Council application - and I couldn't afford any more all-nighters if the election were indeed called the following week. I filled out the budget section of the form, typed the final version of the grant application, and sent off copies to the three persons who had agreed to act as my referees. The decision would not be announced until December.

I was feeling guilty about Joanne. She was teaching less courses than usual, partly because she hoped to make her own film, but also because she was counting on the election film. I told Joanne to go ahead with the scheduling of her own film. We couldn't be sure when an election would be called. If it happened later in the fall, it would conflict with her own production schedule, and I would have to find another cinematographer. But I did not want to have the guilt of her not getting her own production underway on my shoulders.

Yet there seemed no doubt an election was coming. The opinion polls showed the Social Credit government ahead in the public favour. The British Columbia Government Employees' Union was on strike. The Warren Report on electoral boundaries had been released, recommending the creation of seven new Socred ridings. All it needed was to be made into law. The legislature
was recalled, and our sense of excitement was barely contained.

Arrangements for the video/film continued at full speed. I received six new hour-long videotapes from the B.C. Federation of Labour. These could not be used in a video portapak, which only take twenty-minute tapes, but after some pleading I convinced the proper people at SFU to make an exchange. Unfortunately, the cost and time calculation on the exchange was such that I ended up with only nine twenty-minute cassettes—from 360 minutes to 180 minutes.

The Film Board had agreed to exchange the film they had promised for an equivalent dollar value of video and audio tape. They would order it for me as soon as I clarified exactly what I wanted. They also agreed to pay for a lighting "consult" with a local cinematographer who had made a video that was transferred to film. He had no specific advice to offer, and I felt increasingly uneasy about making a video. No one in town seemed to have accurate information on the transfer of video to film—they just knew that it was difficult to do correctly, and that many who had tried had run into insurmountable problems. I spent a lot of time on the phone, calling people I had been referred to for advice, who then referred me back to the first person. I was desperate to straighten everything out. The election could be any time and I was still not clear on all the variables facing the project. I longed for the simplicity of film, but still felt the costs were beyond my means.
I asked an old friend of mine if she would be production manager on the project. I knew her from university, and I felt it was an inspired choice. She was looking for work, having been unemployed for a long time. I had tried to help her get work, but with no success, and felt guilty about her situation. She was an enthusiastic and committed worker, and had a fair amount of experience in video. I thought she could operate the VTR, and handle production problems. Joanne also thought this was a good idea, and I asked Sandra if she would work on the film for five hundred dollars. After some hesitation, she agreed.

I was still working two days a week at the film co-op, although I was scheduled to finish shortly, and begin my scholarship. One member who had always been particularly helpful in discussing the needs of my film told me there was a camera available through the CBC. It was an Eclair ACL, a small, light camera that would be ideal for our purposes. He had used it during his university days, and he called his old instructor and obtained the appropriate names and phone numbers. I should call the CBC, and invoke my university connections. I put off doing this - I felt nervous about calling the CBC, and was sure they would never lend me a camera for a month.

The film co-op had finally purchased a Nagra sound recorder. As a member, I had the right to use it for five dollars a day, a very small fee compared to sixty-five dollars a day for a commercial rental.
We were not the only people gearing up for the election. The Little Mountain NDP were working hard, preparing for the announcement. Election Planning Committee (EPC) meetings were held weekly, and I attended every one, partly to keep myself up-to-date with their plans, and partly to keep them up-to-date with mine. My relationship with the majority of the Little Mountain activists was good; I had been attending their meetings for almost a year. I explained to an EPC meeting that I wanted to hang a lighting grid across the ceiling of Hillcrest Hall. Hanging the bar would take time to arrange, and I wanted to have it done before the election was announced. I realized it was still possible that there would be no election. In that case, they would have to put up with an iron bar hanging over their heads until an election was called — a matter of months, maybe even a year. My request was quickly granted, and I was pleased, reading their assent as an indication of future co-operation between the film and the campaign. To ensure I could get in and out of Hillcrest Hall as needed, I was given a set of keys — the ultimate symbol of trust.

Joanne and I dropped in to Hillcrest Hall early one Saturday morning, intending to map the electrical circuits. It was crowded with election volunteers; we had to come back later. Circuit mapping involves turning the lights off and on, and there was no way we could interrupt their work. One Little Mountain volunteer, a pipefitter, offered to obtain an iron bar we could use as a lighting grid. Joanne thanked him for his
help. He said she could repay him by helping at an NDP benefit dance he was organizing. I intervened quickly, saying I would help instead. Poor Joanne - unpaid for the work she was putting in, and now coerced into Little Mountain NDP activities. Next they'd be giving her raffle tickets to sell. I wanted to protect the film crew from that pressure, but on the other hand, I wanted the crew to develop a rapport with the Little Mountain volunteers. I couldn't do that by setting up an artificial barrier around them. I decided in future to leave it to the crew's discretion.

Joanne's brother hung the bar for us. We did not have enough lights, and I received permission from the Film Board to borrow some from them. This meant I had to take out insurance - two hundred and fifty dollars for a month. It was expensive, but worth it - renting lights would cost a lot more.

Joanne, Sandra and I went to the NFB to get the lights. Joanne was in charge, picking and choosing. We were able to borrow lights, extension cords, gel, grips, and gaffer's tape. The only disappointment was not being able to borrow their really nice lights - a set of Ianaro red-heads. Those lights were reserved for the use of a Film Board production that would be shooting the next week. The lights we borrowed were older, and obviously well-used, but they were durable, and they were lights. The person signing the equipment out to us made disparaging remarks about video, and revealed that the NFB had an Eclair NPR camera they rarely used. The NPR model was heavier.
than the ACL, but it was a good camera.

We drove to Joanne's house, unloaded the lights, and I phoned the CLC to see if I could pick up the video equipment. I was aghast to hear my friend say he would have to ask his boss; I was to phone him back in an hour. It was the first time I had heard there was any doubt about our using it. Over Chinese food, we discussed the latest set-back. I wondered if we could use the Film Board camera, and make a film instead. "In that case, we'd need a camera assistant," said Joanne. "You'd have to do it, Sandra. I could teach you." I worked out the cost of film on a napkin. Over three thousand dollars. It did not leave any room for salaries. I called back the CLC, and it was fine - we could come right over. So once more we piled into my car, drove across town to the CLC offices, and signed out the equipment. After dropping off Sandra at her home, Joanne and I returned to her place. We unloaded the equipment, and surveyed our spoils. Four cases of lights, three cases of video equipment. It looked impressive.

Our plan was to go to Hillcrest Hall late one night, when all the volunteers had gone home, and hang the lights and cables. I did not want to put this off for too long - the election call was expected momentarily. But Joanne had to teach over the next few days, and I had several tasks to perform in the meantime.

I had given up fundraisng for now. There was little time to get everything done, and I decided to use my time organizing the
shoot. I had to pick up a tie-in box from some filmmaker friends of Joanne's. A tie-in box allows one to bypass a fuse box, and access the entire power supply in a building. They are not supposed to be used unless connected by an electrician. Sandra's father was an electrician, and he had agreed to come to Hillcrest Hall, and decide whether it was safe to hook it up. There was no charge for the tie-in box: her friends "had not come by it entirely legally", according to Joanne. One of them helped me carry it out to the car - it weighed about eighty pounds. I mentioned I had heard he and his partner did a lot of their fundraising through the Capital Cost Allowance. Could he tell me how they did it?

He was extremely pleasant, and invited me into the house, which doubled as a production office. Rifling through his filing cabinet, he produced copies of the offering memoranda they had used, and all the different agreements necessary. I could keep them and use them as models for my film. He also gave the name of his lawyer as a further source of information. He was friendly, and it was a relief to finally get hold of concrete information on the use of the Capital Cost Allowance.

I was still trying to get information on how to ensure a good transfer from video to film. I had consulted every institution and individual I could think of. No one knew, but they all mentioned the name of a local cinematographer who had produced what was commonly acknowledged to be the best film from a video transfer ever seen. I left a message on his answering
machine. It took a few days to reach him in person. During this
time, I had borrowed even more video equipment from a school
colleague involved in an artist-run gallery. He wondered if what
I was doing was art, but loaned me the equipment anyway. I had
two complete sets of good video equipment at my disposal, but I
still nourished the hope of making a film. The following day,
the "expert" returned my call. I explained what I was doing. He
laughed. "The only way a good transfer can be done is to use
one-inch video, and a top-quality camera. There is no other way
the signal will be strong enough to transfer an adequate image
to film. If all you've got is three-quarter inch video, I
wouldn't even try it."

So. That was it, the expert had spoken, the person all of
Vancouver had referred me to. All I could make was a video. It
could never be transferred to film. I sat down again with my
budget sheets. If I could cut down on the amount of filmstock,
if I could borrow a camera - I could make a film, without having
to put excessive amounts of money on my charge card. The more I
thought of it, the more excited I got. Sharon phoned. She was
exhausted, still editing, but had gone to the Film Board and
arranged to borrow the microphones and cables we would need for
sound recording. I told her I was considering switching back to
film. "Do it!" she cried. "If you think you've got the
resources, make a film. It'd be so much nicer to work on. And
it's what you've always wanted."
The next morning I met with Joanne and Sandra at Hillcrest Hall. We were to hang the lights. I told them I was thinking of switching to film; I had a call in to my producer at the NFB to beg for the use of their second camera. Both of them argued against me. Sandra was worried that she knew nothing about film. Joanne was worried about not getting the material back for weeks, that she wouldn't get feedback on her camera work. "But," she concluded, "if you want to make a film, and that's one of the reasons you started this project in the first place, then that's a good enough reason."

The NFB producer had to ask their technical person if we could use the camera. It was Friday, he would not be in until Monday. Joanne did not want to hang the lights until she knew if they were needed for film or video. Instead, we spent the afternoon driving around, dropping in hardware stores and picking up all the small items we needed to make safety chains for the lights.

On the weekend came the NDP benefit dance. I sat at the door, taking tickets, and chatting with the people I knew. Everyone was excited, working on the premise that an election was not far away. I told an acquaintance that the film was likely to be a video. "Oh no," he groaned, "That's such a waste of your time and effort. It should be a film. Film is the only thing that can reach broad audiences. Maybe I can lend you the money you need to do it in film." I told him to make a donation instead. I would not dream of using his savings to fund a film.
It was one thing to ask organizations for money, but I did not want to worry about losing anyone's life savings, or having it be years before they could make their money back.

By Monday morning, I had decided I wanted to make a film so badly I would go into debt, live in garbage cans, and eat nothing but peanut butter sandwiches. I called the CBC Film Department, and inquired after the spare camera I had heard about. The person I spoke to was pleasant and helpful. He thought the camera was out with the television production, the BEACHCOMBERS, but he could arrange to have it brought back to Vancouver. I was welcome to use it as long as I could get SFU to guarantee they would take responsibility for it. That was it - quick, simple, and friendly. I couldn't believe it.

The next days were a blur of activity. I had to insure the camera, get letters of guarantee signed by SFU, get proof of my insurance to SFU, and arrange for filmstock and audio tape through SFU's purchasing department. I returned the video equipment I had borrowed from the artist's gallery, explaining to my friend that I had decided to mortgage my children's future, and make a film instead. "Ah," he said, "you're becoming a real artist." I wasn't sure about that. I felt much more like the ringmaster at a three-ring circus.

The Film Board had given permission to use their camera, an Eclair NPR. We had already picked up the camera from the CBC, an Eclair ACL, but were greedy enough to want to choose between the two. The equipment person pulled out the camera, and proceeded
to give Joanne a lecture on its finer points. He was interrupted
by a phone call. As we listened, it became obvious he was
speaking to the camera assistant on an NFB film that was being
shot in Northern B.C. They were having trouble with their
camera, and she had phoned long-distance for advice. "I'll send
you a second battery," he said. "And if that doesn't work, I'll
send you the NPR." He hung up, and looked at us. We looked back
at him, and then at each other. So much for the NPR - there was
no way they would lend it to an independent if there was the
least chance an NFB production would need it. But we did borrow
a tripod and a spreader, as well as camera report sheets and
camera tape. A respectable haul.

My exhilaration and excitement knew no bounds. From morning
to night, I was on the phone, or in the car, completing some
task, arranging details, and always with one ear to the radio,
waiting for the election call. My friends were supportive -
phoning to check if I was bearing up under pressure, and
inviting me over for food and relaxation. And I had received
three cheques for one hundred dollars each - completely out of
the blue, from people I barely knew.

I had no time for the task that required my attention the
most - the script. It was still not written. I forced myself to
take a day off from the frenetic arranging activities, and sat
at my desk. I read over my rough notes. Hesitantly, I jotted
down some headings. I started typing up my ideas, faster and
closer. At the end of two hours, I had filled seven sheets with
the details I wanted to film in each of the main areas that would make up the structure of the film. It was fun. Later, I showed it to Joanne for approval. "It's good," she said, "It's just what we need. Photocopy it and give copies to Sharon, Sandra and I."

    Joanne and I spent a evening at Hillcrest Hall. She hung the lights on the grid, and I taped and chained them on. I had insurance, but still was not anxious for a light to drop on the floor, or worse, on someone's head. We were almost ready for an election. All that remained was to test the camera. I decided to film a meeting of the Election Planning Committee - for the test, and because it might be used in the final film.

    Joanne was teaching Sandra how to be a camera assistant. She gave Sandra a manual, a magazine, and some exposed film to practice loading the camera with. Sandra was quick with her hands, and seemed to catch on well. While they practised in Joanne's kitchen, I drove down to the NDP Provincial Office. Everyone there was discussing the latest move of the provincial government. It seemed the Socreds had just announced some controversial cutbacks in social spending. It did not seem like a move a government planning an election would make. "The election is off," someone announced firmly. "They won't go now until spring."

    I drove back to Joanne's, distraught. Bursting in the door, I told them what I had heard. "There's got to be an election," said Joanne. "We've got to get it over with, so I can start
planning my shoot." Her film was scheduled for December. We had no choice but to wait, and see what each day's new political wind would bring. We weren't lacking for company in our anxiety. Every form of media, both local and national, carried hourly items on whether the election was off or on.

We went ahead with the test shoot. The battery on the camera did not work well, and Joanne worried there would be a flicker through all the material we shot. That did not turn out to be the problem. The next day the lab informed us, snickering, that the film had been loaded backwards. Nothing had turned out. Sandra was horrorstruck and Joanne felt guilty over not checking Sandra's work, but I was quite calm. That's what tests were for. There was no real money lost. The film we used had been a sample from Kodak, and there was no charge from the lab. Next time we would do better. We did do better, although the battery problems continued. It didn't matter; it seemed definite the election was cancelled.

I was not sure how to proceed. Every day I kept the camera and the lights, I was paying to insure them. I did not want to return them until I was certain they would not be needed. I decided to keep all the equipment until the insurance ran out. If the election was not called by then, it probably would not take place until the spring.

My script called for capturing the pre-election preparations on film. Joanne, Sharon, and Sandra agreed to participate in two shoots – one of election signs being
silkscreened, and another of volunteers doing office work. I felt guilty asking them. They would not be paid unless an election was called, an increasingly remote possibility. I found it difficult to muster the enthusiasm to organize the shoots - but we did them.

Directing was more difficult than I had anticipated. I was grateful to get experience when the pressure was not intense. I also learned that technical disasters can strike without warning. During one shoot, Joanne forgot to put the correct filter on the lens. She apologized, offering to replace the film stock, and shoot it again another time. But there was no time left. The scene was not important enough to extend the insurance, due to expire the next day. I felt very solemn. I had never worried before about technical things going wrong. Now I realized how devastating mistakes could be - and how expensive.

That was the end of phase three. I couldn't thank the crew enough - and having no money to offer them, I showed my gratitude by returning by myself all the equipment we had borrowed. It was a melancholy affair. The excitement and anticipation was gone. It was just lift and tug, load and unload, contemplating the following spring, and realizing I would have to go through the whole thing all over again. It was not much comfort that the cancellation of the election would give me more time to fundraise. Perhaps Joanne and Sharon would not be free when the election was called; perhaps the CBC camera would be unavailable. Even I might be too busy. The situation
was out of my control. There was nothing I could do except hope for the best.
III. EPILOGUE

Six months later, on April 7, 1983, the Premier of British Columbia announced that a general election would be held May 5, 1983. The announcement was expected, and I had spent the prior two weeks lining up equipment, and crew. The CBC camera was still available; unfortunately, neither Joanne nor Sharon were free. Both were working on films of their own, and could not take a month off to devote to the election film. I quickly put together another crew - there were five of us altogether. Two men worked as Cinematographer and Assistant Camera, and two women worked as Sound Recordist and Production Manager. After all my efforts to the contrary, I ended up working with men anyway, and I never once regretted it. I knew these four people through Cineworks; we were all members of the co-op. They had gone to the Simon Fraser University Film Workshop together, and since graduation had worked at various jobs, and on their own film projects. LITTLE MOUNTAIN was the first opportunity for any of them to work in a paid position on a film production. The remuneration was not great; they worked for eight hundred dollars each.

The Nagra sound recorder was rented from Cineworks at one-twelfth of the commercial rate. The microphones and cables came from the National Film Board. I bought the audio tape with my own money. Lights were supplied through the NFB, and through
the cinematographer, who was co-owner of a film lighting company. The crew was paid with the money I had from the year before, and I added another fifteen hundred dollars from my scholarship to cover all the other expenses.

As promised, the National Film Board provided six thousand feet of film stock, and also paid for the processing of 1400 feet of it in Vancouver. This allowed us to view our work periodically. We shot fourteen thousand feet of film altogether, and the rest of the stock was purchased using my VISA charge card. The offer of services from Studio D in the Montreal NFB was still in effect; during the shoot, we took our exposed film to the Vancouver NFB office, and it was sent to Montreal for processing. The Pacific Region had agreed to pay for edge-numbering at the local lab if I synchronized the rushes myself; I decided to do so, and avoid the inevitable delay in Montreal. This worked out well. The film we sent to Montreal was processed and work-printed, and sent back to Vancouver within three weeks.

Production began on April 9, 1983 and went through until May 8th. We filmed approximately twenty-five days during this time. The main location was the campaign headquarters of the Little Mountain NDP, an old building known as Hillcrest Hall, and the site of many an election campaign. The room is small and dark, and in retrospect it is amazing that a place so crowded with busy, anxious people could also accommodate a busy, anxious film crew.
In the end, I was grateful that the election had been postponed till spring. In the intervening months I had worked as Location Manager on Joanne's film, and that experience had given me many ideas for the production of my own film. Nonetheless, it was more difficult than I had expected. I suffered from what I now refer to as "the burden of politeness", trying to get what I wanted as tactfully as possible, when often a blunt request would have sufficed. I was glad I had spent so much time in pre-production, and as a consequence had developed a degree of rapport with most of the full-time people in the campaign. They trusted me, and did not care what we filmed, as long as we did not substantially slow down the momentum of the campaign. The campaign workers were co-operative, and came to refer to us as "our film crew", and yet it was trying, organizing interview sessions with busy people who were continually on the phone, or were liable to wander away and deal with some campaign crisis if we stopped filming them in order to change a roll of film. Attempting to film natural interactions, the crew would occasionally circle the Committee Room with our lights, camera, and recording equipment. People generally ignored us, at least until we interrupted their comments with a shout of scene identification followed by the crash of the slate. As director and producer, I was responsible for making sure that everything took place with as little upset to the campaign as possible. This meant it was the film crew that had to bear the brunt of the burden - hanging around, waiting for someone to be
available, then jumping up under sudden pressure to quickly film a situation.

Yet I also had a responsibility to the crew. A combination slave driver and party hostess, I felt badly for not paying them adequately. They were putting in long hours of hard work under difficult circumstances, and I felt tremendously obligated to them. But that's how low-budget films are made, and there was no other option. As inadequate as I sometimes felt, I kept these doubts to myself, and tried instead to present a public image of someone who was professional, warm, and capable.

A few examples might serve to illustrate our usual working conditions, and the resulting constraints on production. Facts and figures will help provide a context. A four hundred foot roll of colour film takes about twelve minutes to roll through a camera, and costs approximately ninety dollars. It costs one hundred and thirty-four dollars to process and print. A roll of audio tape, that costs approximately nine dollars, lasts for about fifteen minutes, and costs thirty-five dollars to transfer to magnetic film stock.

During the election, the organizers met weekly to discuss the progress of the campaign. I wanted to film two of these meetings, one in the second week of the campaign, the other in the last week. Six hundred feet of film, and six rolls of audio tape were budgeted to record a two-hour meeting. This meant we had to be judicious in our choice of material to cover, and alert to capture it when the desired items came up.
In the first meeting, we were trying to find the best way to organize ourselves to film it. The sound recordist sat on the floor, out of sight, and miked the circle of tables where the campaign organizers were sitting. The production manager sat at the back of the room, out of sight, monitoring the levels on the Nagra, and changing tapes as required. The camera assistant stood in the background, valiantly trying to keep accurate reports on what was being filmed. The cinematographer had to hand-hold, partly because there was no room for a tripod, and also because the people I wanted to film were sitting at different spots around the table, and he had to be free to move around.

The organizers sat down, and I had to ask them to re-arrange themselves so that the persons I wanted to film were sitting in the best light. They were embarrassed, but re-shuffled amid much joking. Each organizer had a report to give, and we filmed snippets of the reports given by the organizers who were to be featured in the finished film. The sound was recorded continuously, and the cinematographer turned on the camera when I gave him the signal. I would call out for a slate when I wanted him to stop filming, and he would point the camera to me and I would slate with a clapperboard. This caused no end of merriment to the organizers the first time it happened.

Our system worked well; the only real problem was making sure the audio tape was not running out just as the camera was
turned on. This problem was dealt with by having the camera assistant continually checking with the production manager in the back, and quietly informing me of the results. We filmed most of the reports needed, and turned off the sound, for the next report to be filmed would not take place for some time.

Suddenly, a conversation started up. It was a debate on how the campaign should deal with the Peace March that was to be held during the election, in the riding of Little Mountain. It was a chance for the campaign to raise the profile of their candidates. On the other hand, some organizers felt that it would be crass to campaign during an event as symbolic as the Peace March, and doing so might bring charges of opportunism against the candidates. The discussion exemplified both the nature and the process of political decision-making in campaigns. I wanted to film it.

There was hardly any film stock left, and I wanted to make sure there would be enough film for the two reports still to come. We went ahead, and filmed several of the speakers in the debate, and still had enough film left for the reports. Unfortunately, there was not enough film left to do many cut-aways, shots that can be used to bridge editing points in speech or picture.

The material on the Peace March discussion was good, and I very much wanted it in the finished film. But when it came to editing, the lack of cut-aways presented a tremendous obstacle. Almost every shot that was filmed that evening was needed to
piece the scene together. The editor and I spent hours on that sequence, screening and rescreening the material for usable cut-aways, cutting and re-cutting the sound track to provide additional information the visuals could not. It is an example of how the constraints of production, resulting from the constraints of pre-production, end up affecting the final product. Even a slightly bigger budget would have allowed us to use more film stock.

By the time of the last meeting, just a few days before election day, both the crew and the campaign workers were at the end of their tether. Space was at a premium in the headquarters, and no one knew where the meeting was to be held. The cinematographer had to know, in order to begin the lengthy process of setting up the lights. I trailed around the committee room, trying to ascertain where the meeting would take place. None of the organizers wanted to decide. They could wait until the last minute and just plunk themselves down wherever it seemed they would disturb the least number of volunteers; we had to know where it was going to be as soon as possible if we were going to film it at all. And I wanted to film it, for some of the discussion in the meeting would be needed in the finished film.

Finally, a site was allocated, and we went to work setting up the lights. It took about an hour. Just as we finished, the Chairman of the meeting came over and informed me they were ready to start in five minutes, "over there". He pointed to a
spot on the other side of the room from where we had set up. I was aghast. Normally, I would make every effort to accommodate our needs to the needs of the campaign, but in this case it would be impossible. "You can't do that," I said, "we're set up for over here, it will take us an hour to change the lighting." Politeness was ready to give way to desperation, but eventually the meeting was held where we wanted.

It was a very hot night, and our lights made it even hotter. No doors or windows could be opened to let in air—there was too much noise on the street, and it would ruin the sound track. People were literally sweating. I felt sorry for the campaigners, and also sorry for the crew, who were in the position of being the jailors of these poor, hot New Democrats. But there was nothing to be done about it, and no way to speed things up.

The sound ran continuously. We did not have much film stock, and waited until the pertinent bits of the meeting came up to turn on the camera. Because we filmed intermittently, we had to leave the lights on. Most people were good natured, but one woman added to the tension when she angrily slammed an outside door I asked her to close because the noise from the street was interfering with the sound recording.

It was at times like these I was glad production would soon be over. Film requires so much time, energy, and money that it is hard to maintain a sense of perspective, even under ideal conditions. In spite of all these difficulties, two sections of
the meeting are in the finished film. They are used to convey that the organizers are tired, excited, and that there is still much work to be done before the impending reality of election day.

I had to fight the urge to film everybody in the campaign. I knew there were people who were feeling slighted because they had not been interviewed. On the other hand, towards the end of the campaign, I found it more difficult to ask the people I needed for interviews. No one ever refused, but they were tired, and busy, and it seemed an imposition. It had to be done though, and I could only apologize to them, and try to get the material as efficiently as possible - at the cost of great pressure to the film crew, who were themselves feeling the consequences of a month of tense work under trying circumstances. On top of all this, we rarely got any feedback on our shooting, because most of our filmstock was sent to the NFB labs in Montreal. We just had to hope that the material essential to the narrative of the finished film was in fact usable.

On election night, I had two film crews. I was with one, in the headquarters with the candidates and the organizers, waiting for the results of the election to come in. The other crew was with the production manager, in the big hall where campaign workers were to go following the close of the polls. As it became clear that the NDP were losing, not only in Little Mountain, but also in the province, the atmosphere became tense and depressed. We felt like ghouls, filming people during their
worst moment of defeat, people we had come to know quite well. It was difficult to film, because we were tense and depressed ourselves, and as a result we ended up with very little synch material.

Over at the "Victory Party", the other crew was not faring any better. The only person in that crew who had been part of the campaign was the production manager, and they were in a crowd of election day workers, most of whom were not even aware that a film was being made of the campaign. They were definitely regarded as outsiders, and felt that the crowd was hostile towards them. The material that crew gathered was mostly unusable. In the final film, the only part used of the footage they shot were snippets of the speeches made by the campaign manager and the candidates. Again, this was partly the result of financial restraints. We had very little stock left, and had to guess when the candidates were about to say something that should be filmed. The ideal would have been to film the speeches in their entirety.

In editing, hours were spent trying to get around our election day material. Test screenings had proven to the editor and I that viewers of the film wanted a fair amount of election day coverage - and we did not have strong material. It took months of careful sound and picture editing to create an election day on film that conveys both information and emotion.

More money would not have changed some of these problems. But it would have meant that the crew was getting well-paid for
such difficult work, and that alone would have lessened the stress we were under. It would also have allowed us to be more liberal with film stock and audio tape. As it was, any mistake on the part of a crew member took on the overtones of a national disaster.

At the end of production, I was left with very little money in the bank, a huge VISA bill, and no money to finish the film. I felt empty and drained. I had spent a year and a half preparing for the election. Now it was over, and there was still much work to be done. There was no fanfare, no sense of accomplishment. Post-partum depression set in with a vengeance, and it was almost a month before I could face the work that had to be done to bring the film to completion.

The Explorations grant I had applied for the previous year had been refused. My application had been approved by the regional jury, but was squeezed out on the national level. The Explorations Officer advised me to re-apply. I had done so during production, making the application deadline of May 1st. The day after the shoot ended, I received a phone call from the Canada Council informing me that since the film had already been shot, I could not apply for any money towards production costs. I would have to re-write my application, outline what had happened during filming, submit a budget for post-production costs, and send some of the film as support material. They would extend the deadline to give me time to do this. Luckily, the film had arrived back from the NFB. The sound was still in
Montreal being transferred, so the only option was to send an edited selection of silent rushes. In August 1983, I received a notice from the Canada Council informing me I had been awarded $10,393. This money allowed me to hire an editor, and cover the majority of the post-production laboratory costs.

I had used the summer months to certify the film as a Canadian production through the Canadian Film Certification Office. A friend and I had prepared the necessary paper work, using as a model the examples given us by other filmmakers. His job was to sell shares in the film; twenty shares at two thousand dollars each. He sold one to a man who had been active in the Little Mountain NDP, and had earlier expressed interest in such an investment. The money left over after my friend's commission was enough to pay off my VISA bill. No other shares were sold, but by that time the Canada Council grant had been received and the pressure had diminished.

The film was edited by a woman who was also a member of Cineworks. Although I had permission to use the editing facilities at the National Film Board, there were no editing machines available full time. We opted to use the editing machine at Cineworks, at a cost of ten dollars a day. Later, we moved our material to the NFB when an editing machine became available for three months on a full-time basis.

Editing was much more enjoyable than production. The material we had to work with was clear, and crisp, and interesting. It was a massive job to pare it down to a half-hour
film. Naively, I had only budgeted for two months of an editor's time; it ended up taking six. The editor was paid for only three and a half months. This increased the pressure to get the film done, and to try and save money to put towards her salary. At the same time, we wanted to make sure the job we were doing was as high quality as possible, for the film would serve as evidence of the calibre of work we were all capable of, and hopefully lead to future work.

With editing taking longer than expected, the Explorations grant did not cover all the costs. I was saved by the women's program at the Vancouver NFB, where our fine cut (picture editing completed) was good enough to warrant an additional fifteen hundred dollars. The film was finished in March 1984, and had an official premiere in Vancouver at the Robson Square Media Centre on April 25, 1983.

I am happy with the finished film. Even with all the constraints of its production, the film is almost as I had visualized it. The only lingering doubt I have is whether or not I should have included more "politics" in the film. The final film is non-partisan, in that it does not address the issues the campaign was fighting, nor does it elaborate on NDP politics. Only in the visual images, the kinds of people who volunteer, is one given the sense that it is the campaign of a "people's party."

I did this deliberately, with several factors influencing my decision. Films are a standard length for television, and
there are certain lengths that are easier to use in a classroom format. A film might be better if it were five minutes longer, or ten minutes shorter, but often that will make the film an awkward length to distribute. And of course, if the film is made longer, the costs will be higher, as laboratory charges are by the foot. If one has chosen to keep the film to a marketable length, then adding material to the film means subtracting other footage. It is not simply a matter of adding "more politics". The question becomes, what should be taken out?

I also knew that if I hoped to sell the film to an educational market, it would have to be non-partisan. I was aware that the NDP would like the film better if it were more political, but I also knew that the NDP does not buy films in any significant way, and I had about six thousand dollars in debts to clear up. Funnily, making a film about an NDP campaign for a general audience had been a goal from the start. At the time it had been a political decision; in the end it was also a marketing decision. Since the film has been finished, I generally find that people who are active in politics and the NDP wish that the film were more issue-oriented. I also find that people who are not political seem to take away from a viewing of the film all the elements I hoped they would.

The next chapter will take a more analytical look at the experience related in the case study, and draw some conclusions about the nature of pre-production in independent filmmaking.
IV. FILMMAKING IN PERSPECTIVE

The prior case study was designed to preserve a record of the pre-production of an independent documentary film. Pre-production can be analysed as a complex activity. It involves presenting the idea to the group of people the film will be about, and gaining their permission, trust, and co-operation to make the film. It involves finding a crew to work on the film, and organizing all the necessary technical resources. It involves establishing and maintaining a network of support within the film community. Most of all, pre-production is about fundraising.

It can be argued that the success of the independent filmmaker in pre-production is partly a matter of experience, but is largely a function of the commitment of the filmmaker to two things: a commitment to filmmaking as a profession and a commitment to the concept behind the particular film being made. These commitments are necessary on the part of any independent filmmaker making a film on any subject, but it appears that independent filmmakers who work on social and political documentaries experience constant challenges to their double commitment throughout the pre-production process. This is because political (used in a broad sense) filmmakers identify in a personal way with the concept behind their films, turning what might normally be considered a business proposition into a
matter for moral and ethical consideration. In the analysis which follows, this characterization of the pre-production phase is examined more fully. The analysis will be based on the case study, illustrated with quotes from filmmakers who have independently produced social or political documentaries.

The Presentation of the Idea

Presenting the idea of the film to the group or community that the film will be about involves gaining their permission, trust, and co-operation to make the film. Even at this early stage, the question of commitment raises its head.

Initially, I felt as committed to the Little Mountain NDP campaign as I did to the film on it. Even though I had made the film a priority in terms of time and activity, I saw myself first as an organizer, and secondly as a filmmaker. Several of the persons involved in the Little Mountain campaign were personal friends, and in the first six months of pre-production, as I attended meetings of the Election Planning Committee, I often had great difficulty in refusing tasks that related to election organizing. This changed as filmmaking drew me in. A fierce identification with the film made me want to protect it. As the long months taught me how difficult it was to raise money, how much the film would cost, and how easy it would be to make a film that was not very good, I realized that if it was important enough to make the film in the first place, it would be irresponsible not to make it a paramount concern. I was
secure in my connection to the concept of the film, and that allowed me to develop a sense of myself as a filmmaker, and to take filmmaking as a profession seriously. Slowly, my commitment changed from the NDP and organizing to filmmaking and making a film on the NDP. I refused to take on election work, and explained when asked that my contribution to the campaign would be making the film. As the months went by, people from the Little Mountain NDP stopped asking me to participate as an organizer, which had the paradoxical effect of making me feel somewhat isolated from them. I was still an insider, but I was not an insider in the same way as before. Looking back, I see that any uncertainty I might have felt due to this shift towards outsider status in the NDP was compensated for by a shift towards insider status within the film community. My understanding of the concept of the film itself was not altered, and my growing allegiance to filmmaking was a positive and necessary step towards a successful film.

Political filmmakers who have roots inside the community they wish to film often face the dilemma of having to decide which world they belong to. The filmmaker is an insider, and hopes the film will help to advocate "the cause". But the filmmaker is also a filmmaker, and responsible for a production that will cost thousands of dollars. The task for the filmmaker is to continue to hold the trust and co-operation of the subjects, working along side of them as befits an insider, while at the same time making sure that the film project is respected.
for the enormous undertaking it is. How one achieves this balance will depend on how the idea was presented by the filmmaker in the first place. If the subjects of the film feel a part of the process, and share in the desire to see a film made of their situation, it is easier to achieve co-operation on this level. The maker of a documentary on farmworkers explains:

At first, people in the union didn't twig, they thought it was just going to be a tape recorder you switch on. So a couple of times I would have to explain "Look, every time we turn that little button it's two hundred bucks - and the camera is a seven thousand dollar camera and somebody has to pay for it" - and explain to them what a Nagra is and what it involves in begging or borrowing or renting. And then they began to realize that every time our little crew stepped out of the house it was a thousand bucks - or would be if you were paying your crew fully. And they started to realize it was a very grown-up game.

It is not just in pre-production that the filmmaker will be faced with this dilemma. Throughout production and post-production the filmmaker is likely to be caught between the needs of the film as a film, and the needs of the people the film is about. Each situation will require a weighing of the double commitment, and a hard decision on the part of the filmmaker, who is in the unenviable position of seeing the situation from both points of view. These decisions seem to be particularly difficult for political filmmakers, who often decide in favour of content over style. This sentiment is expressed by two filmmakers:

A lot of the reason progressive people get into documentary film is because they don't think about film as a medium in itself. I don't know why they choose film, but it's not because film is the right medium for their particular issue. Some people decide to make a
film like they would decide to write a pamphlet. Political films have the reputation of being very boring, very technically poor films, and I think many of them are.

Having worked as a film distributor and programmer, and having a progressive bent, I have seen so many lousy films done by ideologues with no skill and no sense of film - I've seen a lot of them. I have no patience with clear analysis and atrocious form. I say - get back to the gestetner machine. The strength of film is emotion. You can have a compelling sequence in a film, something that can touch people's imagination, that can make them curious, or make them sympathetic - so they feel convinced of the reality of the situation and would want to analyse it further, look to it further, and film does that. Partly through an analysis and reasoning process, but I think the emotional part is its strength, and thirty-four hundred pamphlets could never give you that.

So it appears that the strength of one commitment (in this case, to the concept of the film) will not compensate for the lack of the other commitment (to filmmaking as a profession). Both are necessary to produce a film that succeeds in form and content.

Crew and Technical Resources

No matter how low the budget, a film can not be made without a crew and without adequate equipment. Like many independents, I had a crew that was willing to work for little money. It is perhaps unfortunate, but people and their skills are the only elements necessary to a film where cash is not required up front. There are always a number of unemployed, technically-skilled filmmakers who are interested in working on a film. Their reasons for working for free, or for little money vary considerably: they might be bored; they might want the experience; they might be interested in the subject of the film;
and they probably hope to be paid later on. This is one area where making a social or political film is an advantage, for technically-skilled people are more willing to work for free, or for little money, if they are sympathetic to the subject of the film. Although not paying a crew helps to get the film made, it is not a favorite situation with filmmakers or their crews:

My crews have also been concerned about the issues, and have been willing to work for deferred salaries. But with experience comes responsibilities in family life. I can't ask people to go away for a month, to work for deferred or little money when they have two kids at home. So I have to keep finding new people. But it's important to pay, because it makes the crew realize they are responsible.

It also gives rise to some contradictions. Another filmmaker decries the theory, but is forced to practice it to get the film done:

We decided we wanted a film with high-production values, and decided not to shoot it ourselves, but to hire experienced crew. We talked to a cameraman about doing it on spec - he agreed, and did two shoots for us, getting paid mostly in film stock, which we had been given from the NFB. He then used the film stock on a film of his own he was trying to raise money for. A producer has the responsibility to pay the crew. I feel you can only prevail on your skilled friends once or twice. Just like you can't go to someone's house for dinner five nights in a row without wearing your welcome a bit thin. My feeling is that if you're going to be a producer, and do something that hopefully will have professional production qualities, then it is really your responsibility to get the money to do it. And if not - you owe. Still, for our main crew, they worked a year and a half for no money, and it was a year after that until they had received the last of their deferred salary.

Hiring a crew in this manner often results in compromises over who the filmmakers would prefer to work with, and who they can afford to work with. It is more difficult to make a
successful documentary when working with inexperienced crew in what are usually quite trying circumstances. It is also more difficult to handle "personnel problems" such as quality of work, when one is dealing with volunteers. Such problems are typical of the challenges a filmmaker faces in trying to produce a film of professional quality.

There is also the question of budgeting money for oneself. I laugh when I remember my concern over taking a salary for my work on LITTLE MOUNTAIN. Two years later, six thousand dollars in debt, such concerns seem astonishingly naive. It is not an unusual dilemma, however. One filmmaker describes her transformation:

At first we didn't want to pay ourselves anything. We figured that we controlled the process of production, and we only wanted to pay the editor and the other crew we hired. During the film, one of my partners was on unemployment insurance, the other was on welfare. Because I was owed a lot of money from overtime work the year before, I only had to work one day a week, but I still made full salary. My salary paid a lot of our bills. But that's all changed. I've no guilt about trying to get money as a wage from my films, now. There's a lot of people who do. The poor, starving artist mythology is still very strong, especially in terms of self-censorship, of feeling guilty about taking money for your committed work. It's ridiculous - big-shot filmmakers get fifty to one hundred thousand dollars to make a film. We filmed a strike, where people making twenty thousand dollars a year were fighting for twenty per cent increases - none of us were making anything like that. We were making a film about their efforts, supporting their efforts, but we weren't even capable of taking three weeks off for holidays. Who are we to be above everybody else's needs? If they need twenty-five thousand dollars to live on, that must be what I need too. So you have to judge, it's always tricky, how much to budget for your own wages. You know you will get returns off a film, but it's not like you are going to make a killing - our film has been very successful, and we're still not paid back yet - and it's
been three years.

The filmmaker quoted above has apparently come to grips with the double commitment and no longer finds a contradiction between viewing herself as a filmmaker who deserves to be paid for professional work, and having that professional work be political in nature.

At the beginning of my enterprise, I had known next to nothing about the technical realities of film, and I was concerned about assessing the equipment and other technical needs of the film. That was one of the reasons I had wanted to work with experienced filmmakers. It was the area where I felt least capable of making judgements on my own, and I was ready to accept the advice of almost anyone who had more film credentials than I. I did not want to undermine my already strained image of myself as a filmmaker.

Looking back, I can see my questions were valid, and not unusual. I blamed my lack of understanding on my lack of technical experience, but now I can recognize when someone is providing far too much information, giving details that only the most technical of people would want or need to know. At the time, however, I felt I should be able to participate in any conversation, and it dismayed me when I could not. But I assumed there were certain technical things that all people in film knew. I thought that anyone calling themselves a filmmaker had acquired a certain store of knowledge, and I hadn't conceived I might not be the only one with a less than complete grasp of technical requirements.
As the film proceeded along, I began to realize that I too could share in this mysterious store of technical knowledge. I saw that it was more a question of declaring oneself capable, rather than a case of meeting an invisible standard. I became familiar with the jargon—enough to use technical terms and be more or less certain they were not being tossed about inappropriately, and that no embarrassing faux pas had been committed.

It was not just "hanging around" film that made me feel more competent in technical matters, but a falling off in my admiration for the people I considered to be "real" filmmakers. I realized there was not one level of skill, but a continuum of talent, and it was possible to be located anywhere along it. The glamour that surrounds filmmaking technique had worn off, and I had developed a better understanding of the difference between good and bad filmmaking. Having experienced help did not mean the film would automatically be good—it was talented and creative help that was needed.

At any rate, I was fortunate to be able to patch together the equipment I needed at a very low cost. For most independents, access to equipment varies with who they know. Some technically-skilled filmmakers have their own equipment, but most of them must work on films that pay decently, in order to meet the loan payments on the debt they incurred to buy the equipment in the first place. The choices open to most filmmakers are to borrow equipment from friends, find the money
to rent it from a commercial outfit, or, if the filmmaker lives
in the vicinity of a National Film Board regional office, to
convince the NFB to lend the necessary equipment:

We were able to get cash and some equipment from the
regional NFB in Vancouver. I would burst into their
office on a Friday afternoon, screaming, "I've got to
get a camera for tomorrow, my God, they're having a -
whatever - and I've got to record it." They would
generally lend me what we needed. You go and grovel, put
your dignity in your back pocket, and come away with a
Nagra for the weekend.

The other option, if the filmmaker lives in Vancouver,
Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal,
Moncton, Edmundston, Halifax, or St. John's, is to become a
member of the local filmmakers' co-operative. These non-profit
societies collectively own equipment which they make available
to their members at very low rates. Failing any of these,
resourcefulness is the answer:

We were able to borrow a Nagra tape recorder from a
local hospital. Unfortunately, they needed to use it
three days a month. The strike we were filming went on
several months, and of course there was no way to
prevent important events that we would have liked to
film from happening on the days when the hospital needed
the Nagra back. But it was our only choice, so that's
what we used.

Support in the Film Community

A good support system is necessary to survive
pre-production. The best source of help comes from other
filmmakers. It was the filmmaking and arts community that
supported me in making the film. My reference group, the group I
felt I belonged to, the group that I understood and that
understood me, was no longer the NDP, but the world of the independent filmmaker. Other filmmakers were the only people who acted on the belief that films are important and worthwhile, and that filmmaking has to be supported. The National Film Board and the Canada Council were the only institutions that would provide financial support.

Most documentary filmmakers are willing to give advice to their colleagues. The advice ranges from the general to the specific, but fundraising is a constant topic. Although there is envy over individual success, there is generally a willingness to share ideas and information regarding funding sources, for even though there is a limited amount of money to go around, different film subjects make differing headway within a funding agency. People within the film community are also the most philosophical about lack of success in fundraising. They have seen many films come and go, and many worthy ideas never come to fruition. As one filmmaker said, there should be a category at the Academy Awards - **Best Idea for a Film That Was Never Made.**

Because so much can be learned in even informal chat amongst filmmakers, networking and film community social events are important. On a day-to-day basis, networking and information sharing happens at central locations. In Vancouver, the film co-ops provide an opportunity for this, but so do the editing houses, as well as the reception area and hallways of the National Film Board Production Studio. On more formal occasions, film premieres and film festivals provide important sources of
moral support. There is a gain in solace and determination in hearing the stories of other filmmakers who had the same troubles, and who overcame them. Good films on these occasions encourage and stimulate one's own work. Bad films provide incentive to do better.

Support within the film community is important for all independent filmmakers. It puts political filmmakers in contact with a group of people who are likely to share similar beliefs, and so provide a pool of knowledge, talent, and equipment that can be used on each other's films. Most importantly, being part of the film community helps to solidify a filmmakers's commitment towards filmmaking as a profession.

It is interesting to examine this last statement in detail. It is difficult for independent filmmakers (as it is for free-lancers in any field) to sustain a sense of themselves as "professional". In our society a professional is supported by an institution and institutional structures. A doctor has the hospital, a teacher has the school, and at regular intervals they receive a pay cheque that verifies they provide a recognized service. With no institutional support for their professional role, it is necessary for independent filmmakers to manufacture their own support structures. Film premieres, film festivals, and film organizations all serve to create and maintain a sense of a professional community.

Having to manufacture the structures in order to sustain one's professionalism helps to explain filmmakers' reliance on
"packaging" - using the correct letterhead, the perfect typeface, the need for an office and an answering machine. These supports are necessary to counteract the insecurity of operating independently in a world of institutions. Information-sharing in hallways takes place even though most filmmakers are each other's competitors, for showing knowledge is a way of confirming, both to oneself and to others, that one is an insider to the community.

The love/hate relationship of the independent to the National Film Board is further illuminated by this notion. Filmmakers working for the NFB are granted an instant credibility that is unrelated to their past performance or current projects. It is the institution that validates them as professionals, and not necessarily the work they do. Although many independents have harsh words to say about the Film Board, they also welcome the chance to make a "Film Board film", and be temporarily granted professional status.

Independent filmmakers with a long line of films to their credit do not necessarily retain this need for legitimation. The work they have done, especially if it has received awards or been widely shown, is in itself a statement that the filmmaker is recognized as such by the outside world. But for most of their careers, independent filmmakers will use the film community to maintain their own sense of being professional.

Related to the need for support from the film community is the need for a private support system. Having to manufacture
one's professional support structures as well as draw strength from them takes a certain toll in energy. Even after numerous rejections and defeats, it is still possible to feel hope if there are friends or relatives who will give support and encouragement.

My experience has taught me that filmmaking can have a debilitating effect on one's personal life. Many filmmakers keep part-time jobs that pay their living expenses, supporting themselves in a way that will draw the least time and energy from their film work. Employment and social life have to be scheduled around the needs of the film, which must be worked on in daylight hours, when people can be phoned at their office, photocopy places are open, etc. Working at night to pay the rent, and working in the day to make the film, it becomes increasingly difficult to find time for a non-film social life. Other activities slowly lose priority to film-related activities. As personal interests drop off, and more and more time is taken up with people and events that relate to filmmaking, a sense of isolation sets in. There seems to be no time for normal everyday tasks. It is a lifestyle that lends itself to being single, unless the filmmaker happens to have an unusually co-operative partner. The lifestyle contributes to the creation of the "insider effect" referred to earlier, as well as explaining the tendency for professional relationships to become personalized. A filmmaker explains the lesson she has learned from this:
I've drawn the conclusion that you can't be an amateur with film - you can't cut corners - because you always end up paying the price. You can't play around with film, you've got to play the game the way the game is played. It's a very capital-intensive art, and we've got to go and get the big budgets the way the big producers do. I'm not saying that films done on low budgets aren't good. Many are - but I know that someone paid the price for that, and if it wasn't financially, it was in terms of all the extra work they had to put into it, and all the emotional energy, and how they got personally drained by that. That's part of the price, too, because if you're working on a film there's a lot of other things you're not doing. Politically, you're no longer aware what's happening around you, because you have no time to appreciate what people around you are going through, and you can easily get cut off from everyone else's concerns because you're only thinking about how you're going to get your film done. Those are the dangers, not just for your personal life, but there is also the danger of getting burnt-out very quickly. A lot of progressive filmmakers have made one film, and never make another, and those are the reasons. You've got to protect yourself for your own interest.

In other words, if filmmakers do not manage to match their political commitment to content with a professional commitment to filmmaking, the resulting contradictions will be felt at the level of their personal lives.

Fundraising

Raising money requires a particular commitment and energy. The filmmaker is in the difficult position of having to be obsessed with the idea in order to realize it. The obsession is required because in the pre-production stages the whole project is nebulous. No one expects, or even necessarily wants the filmmaker to do it. Success is largely determined by personal tenacity, and knowing that, it becomes very difficult to give up, especially when it usually took courage to go public with
the idea in the first place.

Working with ideas is like working with something that is not really there. The only evidence for the reality of the project is in the proposals and letters that are sent out searching for support. Because the project will only be realized through financial support, it is only through receiving financing that the project takes on the solid outlines of something that is real, has substance. The receiving of money is like a confirmation that the idea exists, and because the filmmaker is so intimately connected to the idea, the receiving of money is like receiving confirmation that the filmmaker exists, and has valid ideas. To receive no money is to experience personal rejection. And yet it can be worse to receive partial support or a promise of financial assistance in return for certain changes to the film treatment. Such a situation requires a filmmaker to deeply review the nature of his or her commitment to the film concept. If the film in question is on a political or social issue, the filmmaker will have a much more difficult time acceding to the request, for to change the "line" on the issue is likely to be regarded by the filmmaker as forsaking all political, moral, and ethical beliefs. Very few filmmakers can remain immune to market considerations for ever, and there is already some level of contradiction in trying to retain ideological purity while at the same time trying to raise money wherever possible. Once again, the double commitment will come into play, and the
filmaker will have to weigh whether retaining the completeness of the original concept is worth having to make the film on a shoe-string budget. Many filmmakers alternate between fierce determination to raise the money, and wishing to drop the whole idea and be put out of their misery. Other filmmakers take a more pragmatic approach:

Fundraising is just necessary, it's like paying the rent. I don't think I'm a professional fundraiser. You have to realize you don't have tenure in the Film Board, you can't sit around and magically money appears. It's just the way it is, it's the nature of independent filmmaking. You've got to do it, it never stops. Because you have to hustle everything, and when the film is finished, you have to hustle and sell it. What do people expect? That the Canada Council will give them a living? I don't think that will ever happen. Unfortunately, living by your wits may not be everybody's notion of the most dignified way to get from A to B, either professionally, or to pay the rent.

Making a film is in many respects similar to operating a small business. There is a need for an office to work from, and a host of services such as typing, photocopying, and filing to organize. Letterhead, business cards, incorporation - even minor tasks require time and attention to detail. The business aspect is not the favourite element of most filmmakers, but if they are going to be successful they need to master these skills. Film is expensive, and one can not avoid using business techniques when dealing with thousand of dollars and potential heavy debt. This makes it unlike other forms of expression, such as writing or drawing. Even the simplest film will require fundraising ability. Other desirable attributes of a filmmaker include personal charm, technical knowledge, accounting skills,
aesthetic judgement, and tenacity.

The costs of film are tremendous, and in business terms it is difficult to justify making a film when there are barely sufficient resources, and not much likelihood of making a financial return off commercial sales. Those who do so are motivated by a commitment toward the subject, and by a commitment toward their chosen career. Filmmakers with an idea, and a great desire to realize it on film, are faced with a "no-choice" choice. They can either find the resources to make the film, or give up the idea. Since these alternatives are likely to repeat themselves, if filmmakers choose the latter more than once or twice, they will soon have to stop conceiving of themselves as filmmakers. At the time, I thought this problem was limited to people like me, who entered filmmaking from an unorthodox background. Now I realize that such considerations are universal, no matter what training a filmmaker may have. A successful documentary filmmaker looks back on his career:

After I graduated from film school, I set about trying to raise the money for my first film. Film school doesn't teach you how to raise money. I spent about six months sending out letters to everybody with no results. It was really depressing and discouraging. Eventually the money came through the Canada Council, the National Film Board, and the B.C. Cultural Fund. We also made some money selling some of our footage to CBC and CTV television. It has taken five years to pay off all the people who worked on the film, through sales and rentals. Now I am successful, I have a track record, it isn't so hard to get the money for my films - although it still isn't easy. I think the way most people make their films is to take on the thing themselves, and hope it is marketable later on.
Although at the time it seemed to me I was having an unusually difficult time in raising the money for LITTLE MOUNTAIN, in retrospect I see that the troubles I experienced were normal, especially the piecemeal way the funding came together. I made the film with support from the National Film Board, the Canada Council, the Capital Cost Allowance, and the filmmakers' co-operative. In other words, I used almost every avenue available in terms of public or government support for filmmaking. But with the passage of time, even I am tempted to dismiss the entire fundraising process as relatively easy, which is something I think filmmakers do too often. The truth is there are not many sources of funds for documentary films, even fewer for independent documentary films, and less still for independent documentaries on social or political issues. The maker of the farmworker's film:

We doggedly badgered the Film Board, literally biting ankles, to get help with processing, our sound mix, negative cutting. I was able to get bits and pieces of hard cash from CUSO, the World Council of Churches, and an organization called PLURA, the Protestant, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches committee for social concerns. We had a deferred loan from our distributor. In summary, we got our resources to make the film through the sympathy of our skilled friends, some speculative effort on the part of ourselves as producers, and grabbing bit-by-piece the hard cash and resources where we could get them.

The funding behind a film on women supporting their striking husbands:

One of the ways we raised money for the film was through benefit evenings. That worked because we were dealing with an issue that a lot of people were concerned about. Our arrangement was that we could raise money for the film as long as it didn't compete with the money that
was being raised for the strike. The longer the strike went on, the more people were impressed with it - so we raised money from people who had already given to the strike, and were excited about the idea of recording what was going on. The rest of the money came from phone calls, to friends of friends. Sometimes television cameramen would give us some of their extra film. Of course we had no salaries. There was something like two hundred people and organizations that gave to the film.

Although the labour movement is often looked to by political filmmakers as a source of funding, unions do not usually contribute production money for anything other than their own sponsored films. One filmmaker has an explanation for this:

I deal mostly with unions and government agencies that are so little attuned to film as a way of communication that it's almost a disadvantage that your project is a film. They are mostly interested in the topic. With unions and progressive groups, being a filmmaker is not a bonus point, so you have to convince them how many people they'll be able to reach with it, without insulting them and telling them they know nothing and should stop living in the dark ages in terms of communication. Unions have no sense of media. The amount of money wasted on pamphlets and millions of little things, or huge books nobody has the time to read - they spend a fortune on billboards, and newspapers, but somehow they never count that as money. But they get upset at five thousand dollars for a film. But what the film can do for them, the cost-benefit, is much better. The reason they don't like film is because they don't control it. But when they control something one hundred per cent it's just a disaster. Most of the films sponsored by unions are disasters, because they have no sense of filmmaking, no sense of how to use media. And they themselves are unhappy with these films.

It appears that each union has its own political agenda, and it is difficult for an outsider to the union to find a place on that agenda. Even so, my experience with the union movement was not significantly worse than my experience with fundraising from the NDP. I have come to the conclusion that substantial
financial support from organizations with explicit political aims will only be given to those they can be sure of controlling.

The main sources of support for independent filmmakers are the National Film Board of Canada, and the Canada Council. These two institutions have a profound effect on the independent community. The National Film Board provides assistance to independents through its Program of Assistance to Films and Filmmakers in the Private Sector (PAFFPS). Under this program, the NFB has provided film stock, processing, work printing, sound transfer, equipment, and many other services to independents. This help has come through the NFB headquarters in Montreal, and also from the regional NFB offices. In some regions, notably the Atlantic Provinces, Montreal, and Winnipeg, the NFB has provided services to local filmmakers' co-operatives. Often these services are performed at the NFB labs in Montreal. The PAFFPS program should not be confused with the hiring of independents or free-lancers to work on NFB productions, over which the NFB retains creative and financial control. The PAFFPS program, often termed an "assist", means that independent filmmakers retain editorial control over their own films.

Even though the Film Board is the main source of support for documentary filmmakers, as an institution the NFB comes under some heavy criticism from the independent community. The PAFFPS program has many problems attached to it. Application
procedures are unclear, and eligibility for assistance is determined on an ad hoc basis by NFB staff; it can take months for a decision to be made. Support under PAFFPS is offered under the condition that it may be withdrawn at any time. Projects assisted under PAFFPS are given low-priority for Technical Services within the NFB headquarters in Montreal - again, it can take months before a filmmaker gets his or her material back. While some would say that beggars can't be choosers, many independents resent being in the position of begging in order to get their work done, and can not understand why the NFB does not allocate more staff and resources to this program. At the same time, the NFB is one of the few sources of money for independent films. The end result is a love/hate relationship which is similar to the feeling poor cousins have for their well-off kin. It is sometimes difficult to be grateful for charity:

I hate the NFB. It's sheer jealousy. Simple as that. They have so much there that I don't have access to. Maybe I just envy them. Still, they help. On our last film, they gave us negative-cutting, equipment, and almost ten thousand dollars of inside services. But it's their attitude, the one that says we don't give a damn about people outside the NFB. Once, we were refused a camera on the grounds that our cameraman, who has about twenty years experience as a cinematographer, was not qualified. It really irks. The women's studio, Studio D, is the only place within the Film Board that tries to be responsible to the independent sector. I have only good things to say of Studio D.

Films assisted under the PAPPFS program can become co-productions with the NFB, or even full NFB productions. Except for exceptional circumstances, this only takes place when the films are not past a rough-cut, and editorial changes can
still be made. In a "buy-out", the amount of the NFB investment in the film through the PAFFPS program is subtracted from the amount the film would have cost if the NFB had made it from the start. Because of financial need, a buy-out can occur even if the filmmaker would prefer to remain independent, and retain not only the distribution rights, but the credit for having produced the film. A buy-out is often the only way filmmakers can finish their films, since many of them have huge debts that need to be paid, deferred salaries owing to crews, and their own livelihood to consider. Only a few connected with the film will know the background to its production; many independents are bitter that the NFB can get a good film and the glory that comes with it, without having to risk anything up front. A buy-out does nothing to advance the cause of independent filmmaking - even if the filmmaker manages to retain co-producer status, it is the NFB logo that the audience notices. But the rigours of being an independent are such that it would take absolute conviction and devotion to the cause of independent film to refuse an offer to be paid for all the work put in, to have debts settled, and the film given at least adequate distribution.

Chapter Five will address more fully the question of government funding for independent films, and Appendix One contains a further discussion of the National Film Board and the PAFFPS program.

The other major source of funding for independent films is the Canada Council. The Council provides support to filmmakers
through three programs: the Arts Awards Service; Explorations; and Media Arts. Although documentaries are funded through the Council, there is a wide-spread perception among filmmakers that this rarely happens. The feeling seems to be that the existence of the NFB and the PAFFPS program prejudices juries against providing support for documentaries, and that juries prefer to support experimental or short dramatic films that have no other source of funding. Many documentary filmmakers do not bother to apply to the Council:

I think the Canada Council is very arbitrary in its support for documentary filmmakers. It's very hit and miss. I think experimental filmmakers - people who do documentaries on Buddhism - have a better chance. The Council is slanted towards that. And the jury rotates - it's just a lottery. The Film Board, and just scrabbling around has been a better source for me than the Canada Council.

I don't want to apply there again. The last time they said my proposal seemed like a very linear documentary, they weren't interested. I was devastated. I spent so much time on that proposal, I felt I deserved the grant. I'd rather go without money than go back there. It's so personal to me, having them all look at it and criticize it, and decide if it's worth funding - judging the lives of those women [the subjects of the film].

Others feel differently. It is apparent the Council is valued according to the experience filmmakers have with it:

I have nothing against the Canada Council. I still think it is the only place that does decent funding. It impresses me. They give you the cheque, and say, we trust you to do a good job with it. Just send a little report on how you spent the money. I think that's perfect. At the Canada Council, you're respected, seen as an artist, and that's how it should be. You have the freedom to take risks. It's the only place where you can pursue ideas that might not work out, but you will have learned a lot. My experience of dealing with the Council has been a huge relief, and it should be an example to other funders.
Appendix Two provides a full discussion of Council programs, and of the jury system of the Council.

Conclusion

My experience in producing LITTLE MOUNTAIN was characterized by a gradual loss of innocence, as the framework by which I understood filmmaking changed and shifted. My present understanding of the process is not simply a matter of increased knowledge of who to approach for funding, and how to do it. Rather, it is an appreciation of the difficulty involved, the time and determination that will be needed, and the compromises that will have to be made along the way.

When I parted from Mainland Media, I had reached the conclusion that their approach to fundraising differed from mine as a result of the difference in our respective relationships to the subjects of our films. At that time, my first commitment was towards reaching social change through political or community organizing. I saw film as one way of joining in that struggle. Having gone through the filmmaking process and experienced the attendant pressures, I have more sympathy for the position of Mainland Media. They too were far from experienced producers, and like filmmakers everywhere, were in search of a source of money that would allow them to continue on with their own projects. At first, LITTLE MOUNTAIN represented to them just such a source of funds. As Executive Producers, they could receive money from my efforts, and keep involved in filmmaking
at the same time. When LITTLE MOUNTAIN showed signs of being just as difficult to fundraise for as their own projects, the film became for them just one more drain on their time and resources. My experience is reflected in the words of a documentary filmmaker:

The trouble with other producers — they are either producer-filmmakers, who take you on because they need the money, but then they want to get involved in your topic, because they are filmmakers, too. Or else they don't have enough time to produce your film properly because their main interest is their own films. Then there are producers who get off on producing, but they might not know much about filmmaking. That can be a problem because you always have to justify what you are doing in terms of the budget. And you never know if they are interested in what they are producing, or if it is just for their cut. Even the best of producers don't have the personal, emotional interest that I have because I'm the one making the film. They can't put in as much energy and imagination and be as hard-working. And I don't expect them to. I used to lament that the wonderful producer who would do everything for me didn't exist. Maybe they do exist in dominant filmmaking if they know their product can turn a big profit — that might be enough motivation. But there is no profit motivation for the producer of my kind of film. The only reason I put so much energy into producing is precisely because it is my project, and I want to make sure it gets done. There are variations in these possibilities, and there are better people and worse people. But right now, I've set up my own production company.

My appreciation of Mainland Media's position is enhanced by having experienced how few resources there are for independent filmmaking, and how difficult it is to live as a filmmaker. Under current circumstances, it takes total dedication, not to mention alternate sources of income, to work only on films where the subject and the funding for it are "politically correct" — or even just progressive. Still, many independents producing political films would be wary of working for "the State".
(experiencing it somewhat more directly in the person of an Executive Producer) and prefer to scrub up the money in various and sundry ways and make the film as they judge it should be made. And yet because the fundraising process inevitably becomes central to the success of the film, it is more and more difficult for the filmmaker to hold onto the commitment to the original idea. The temptation to change is great. I would now question if it is possible to be truly independent. Even if editorial control remains entirely with the filmmaker, he or she is still going to be faced with the realities of the market structure, in just such a way that I faced it. Because (1) I wanted to pay off the debt of making the film by ensuring that the film was rentable and saleable; and (2) I knew that an educational market was the one most likely to use the film, I made sure that the final product was within the standards of that market. For example, I took out all gratuitous swearing. I made sure the film was not too long to be used within a classroom period (it is actually cut to the length required by commercial television for a half-hour film - just in case). I do not feel I gave up my commitment to the concept of the film, but in the final analysis I was not unguided by market considerations, which in this case I will call a professional commitment. Having invested so much into the film, I wanted it to receive the widest possible audience that it could without damaging the original intent of the idea behind it.
Different filmmakers have different priorities for the kinds of films they will work on, and filmmakers who will only work on films they feel are congruent with their political and social beliefs are at a disadvantage when it comes to sharing in the available financial resources. (Something not uncommon in most professions.) For example, a recent issue of Cinema Canada carried an open letter from documentary filmmakers Laura Sky and Cathy Gulkin. In it they discuss their unhappiness with an unnamed Toronto filmmaker for contracting with Litton Systems (the manufacturer of the Cruise Missile Guidance System) to produce a promotional film. They frame the debate by asking filmmakers "Why have we chosen to do the work we do?":

Among the criteria by which we choose the projects we want to work on and those we reject, one could state, on the positive side, that a project: provides us with an income and/or the project will be profitable; is something valuable to be communicated and the project challenges our creativity; will entertain its audience; will make people think; will provide valuable and productive work.¹

While conceding that economic insecurity often makes it difficult to make a decision based on the content or quality of a project, they point out that some projects come in direct conflict with ethical values. For example, they would not work on pornographic films because "even though we need to make a living, we would find it intolerable to derive an income from something that so contradicted our value system." Similarly, on

films that support the nuclear industry, they would use their criteria to ask "Can work that promotes the arms race and nuclear terror be assessed as a valuable contribution to the communities in which we live and work?" They conclude their letter by asking at what point their freedom to work and express themselves creatively begins to interfere with the quality of other peoples lives, and suggest that "those of us who work in the media have such incredible power over the hearts and minds of our audiences that we must take special care with the responsibility of our individual choices."

Thus for some filmmakers, the question of commitment to filmmaking as a profession and commitment to the content of the film takes on an added dimension, that of personal ethics in the choice of subject matter. Another filmmaker expresses the dilemma in personal terms:

I still have the strengths of my convictions - they get me through this film. I just want to ensure that it not be as painful an experience as the last film I did. Because somewhere in that film, the pain shows. Although in other ways, you'd never guess to see it that it took two years and raised so many debates. Now, I try to divide up my social life, and my film life. It doesn't mean the conviction isn't there, it's just less anxious. I see it in a positive sense, the conviction is there, it's just organizing it properly. Because you can get burned-out very easily, and it can take another two years to get enough energy to start on another project. And if you know you're going to spend two years of your life on it, you're careful in choosing your topic, one that moves you enough. I just tell myself, if you want to get it done, you'll have to get it done this way. What's the other choice? But that's why it has to be worth it to you, when you ask yourself that question, "Do I want to make this? And am I willing to do what is necessary to make it?". If you're not sure, than you'd better re-think it, or make a shorter film, or something that's to the measure of your interest.
Somewhere along the line, learning takes place. I hope my experience in making LITTLE MOUNTAIN, and the insights I have gained into the nature of filmmaking, will aid me in avoiding some of the problems of pre-production in my future work. I have learned that the pre-production of an independent film is a complex activity, and that the success of this activity depends on a double commitment, a commitment to filmmaking as a profession and a commitment to the concept behind the film being made. I understand that to engage in political filmmaking will be to engage in a series of conflicts and compromises as I strive to keep those commitments intact. Most of all, I have learned I am not isolated in these problems.

The outstanding problem of pre-production for most independent filmmakers is fundraising. In the remaining chapter, some possible solutions to this problem will be explored.
V. THE FUTURE FOR INDEPENDENT FILM

The previous chapter contended that independent filmmakers who make political documentaries have a more difficult time raising funds than do other independent filmmakers. These difficulties will not be ameliorated without changing the structure of funding and distribution of film in Canada. It is worth improving the conditions under which such films are made. Independent films permit a fuller examination of political and social issues than is possible through films which are sponsored by state or corporate interests. The government does put aside money for filmmaking, and in this chapter, some potential policy changes related to government funding for film will be discussed.

The National Film Board

The National Film Board is the major source of funding for independent filmmakers, especially for those who make political documentaries. As of November 1984, the new Conservative government has already announced budget cuts to the National Film Board, and it is difficult to predict what changes are in store for the NFB. As far as independent filmmakers are concerned, some changes are necessary to improve the assistance they receive from this federal agency. The National Film Board is currently working on a five-year plan, and it is the ideal
time for NFB help to such filmmakers to be extended.

The National Film Board has had to defend itself from the attacks of the film industry over the past years, beginning with the recommendations of the Applebaum-Hébert Committee that the NFB be disbanded, and followed by the Liberal government's National Film and Video Policy. The NFB must have wondered why independent documentary filmmakers did not give them more support in their battle. The answer lies in the mixed feelings that many independents have towards the Board. Although many political filmmakers have a soft spot for the NFB as a public institution, their personal experience with the Board results in a certain ambiguity towards it. In an attempt to placate "the private sector", the Board has catered to the mainstream film industry through feature co-productions and television series. The fact that the private sector is a diverse one, and that independent documentary filmmakers are the Board's natural allies is something the NFB has virtually ignored, perhaps on the grounds that these independents have no real political clout in film policy circles. Neither the PAFFPS program nor the support that is given by the NFB to filmmakers' co-ops across the country was featured in any of the briefs the NFB has produced in its own defence over the past few years.

The problems with the Program for Assistance to Films and Filmmakers in the Private Sector (PAFFPS) have been discussed in Chapter Four and are further elaborated in Appendix One. Improvements to this program would not have to be expensive, but
they would require NFB management to take the PAFFPS program seriously, and advise their staff accordingly. The first step would be to clarify the amount of services available, the application procedures, and the decision making process. The second step would be to ensure this support is firmly in place once it is offered to a filmmaker. The length of time it takes for PAFFPS films to get through the NFB technical services is another problem. One solution would be to establish a PAFFPS staff position at the Montreal Headquarters of the NFB. This person would be responsible for co-ordinating and supervising the progress of all the material received from PAFFPS filmmakers. These suggestions could also be taken to heart by the regional Film Board offices. In "the Regions", the PAFFPS services often include cash and servicing through local labs, rather than using the NFB labs in Montreal. This is far better for filmmakers, who are likely to regard their work as somewhat urgent.

The NFB has made little effort to meet with the non-profit distributors of Canadian independent film. These distributors suffer from the competition the NFB provides with its free-loan libraries and under-priced print sales. This competition further increases the difficulty that independent filmmakers experience in getting their work shown, and the NFB should recognize this and take steps to deal with it.

The National Film Board, through its regional studios, supplies some services and cash to various filmmakers'
co-operatives across the country. There is no pattern for this. It is up to each co-op to lobby the Executive Producer at the nearest NFB studio for assistance, and as a result each co-op receives a different level of support from the NFB with some receiving no support at all. NFB assistance to co-ops should be regularized, and renewed on an annual basis.

The Canada Council

The response of federal bodies to the cries for assistance from the independent film sector is to point to the arts councils. Certainly it is the arts councils that have been the funding support behind some of the most innovative work in film and video throughout Canada. And it is the Canada Council that has almost single-handedly supported the main organizations of the independent community - the production co-ops, the independent distributors, the cinematheques, the artist-run galleries, the festivals and public exhibitions of independent work. Yet the total money available to film and video through the Canada Council is declining. During the period from 1974-1981, the rate of inflation was 74%. Even though the total Arts budget of the Council increased by 95%, the total funding to film and video through the Council increased by only 52.5%. The increase to actual film production was only 28%. The most a filmmaker can receive through the Canada Council for a film production is forty thousand dollars - a sum that is not often granted. And as noted, documentaries are not as well received by
film juries as experimental, animated, or dramatic films seem to be.

The main suggestion for improvement would of course be to increase the budget for the Media Arts section of the Council. Another possibility would be the creation of separate juries for different categories of film production, so that documentary films would compete with other documentary films for funding. Unfortunately, the recently announced cuts to the Canada Council's budget makes it unlikely that either of these two suggestions will be implemented in the near future.

The Capital Cost Allowance

The Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) is available to investors in Canadian film. Under the CCA, an investor in a certified Canadian production can deduct the capital cost of the investment from their taxable income. Formerly 100% in one year, the tax write-off was reduced to 100% over two years in order to curb abuse of this investment. Cutting the write-off to 50% a year was considered to be a way to discourage the fly-by-night producer, while still allowing serious producers to benefit from a government-sponsored incentive to investors.

Neither the original policy, nor its revision, responded to the needs of low-budget independents. The possibility for investment return on documentaries or other short films is never very great. It was difficult for the makers of these films to interest investors under the 100% deduction, and well-nigh
impossible under the 100% over two years. The CCA is really only of benefit to high-budget productions, where (a) the amount invested can make a sizable dent in the investor's taxable income; (b) the producers are credible enough for a financial institution to purchase the promissory notes of investors who take advantage of income tax regulations and make a five percent downpayment of their total investment; and (c) the film is of a sufficiently commercial nature that it is likely to receive either theatrical distribution or a television "window", and therefore recoup its costs, paying off investors.

As it stands, this type of government assistance to film is mainly used by those members of the film industry who have the budgets to hire the lawyers and accountants to search out the loopholes and fill out the forms. It would have been, and still is, possible for the government to establish a system that would reward those who engage in the production of low-budget Canadian films. No system of forms could be more complicated than the one currently used, so the administrative aspects should not be a deterrent to change. The film certification procedures are such that a short documentary film has to go through the same certification procedure as an international feature co-production. This could be changed to make it easier for low-budget filmmakers to complete the necessary paperwork without requiring legal advice. If the government decided that it was worthwhile to help Canadian social and political documentaries benefit from the CCA, they could develop a set of
criteria for films not oriented directly for commercial use. For example, people investing in such films could be eligible for a 150% write-off in one year.

**Telefilm Canada**

The role of Telefilm Canada is to assure the financial viability and economic development of Canada's private film and video industry. This agency has seemingly never recognized the independent film community, or the possibility that there might be private sector filmmakers whose work speaks to social and cultural concerns. Telefilm Canada, in its previous incarnation as the Canadian Film Development Corporation, has not shown a significant interest in documentary filmmaking. The bottom line for Telefilm Canada in its decision to aid films has been based on the expectation of profit. But films that speak to regional, minority, or social and cultural concerns cannot be expected to make fortunes in the market-place, and thus these films are rarely financed by Telefilm Canada. Telefilm does not put any money into the organizations or events of the independent film community. And yet Telefilm Canada represents a large proportion of the public monies put towards film in this country, and it is through this agency that "promising" Canadian filmmakers are supposed to develop and grow. It is interesting that of all the federal agencies that support film, Telefilm was the only one to escape the November 1984 budget cuts. Even if Telefilm Canada is designed to support the "mainstream" of the Canadian film
industry, it should be required to set aside a portion of its budget for the independent film community and for the production of independent films. This money could be considered as an aid to training and development.

The Broadcast Fund

Access to exhibition is a major problem for all Canadians involved in any kind of film or video production. The government strategy to increase the presence of Canadian programming on television was to establish the Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund. The Broadcast Fund was initiated as part of the government's 1983 Broadcasting Strategy, and is administered by Telefilm Canada. The rules and regulations of the Fund are complex, but simply put, under the Broadcast Fund, up to one-third of the financing of a certified Canadian production will be provided by Telefilm Canada, as long as the producers have an agreement with a television broadcaster that the program will be aired in "prime time" within twenty-four months of its completion, and as long as Telefilm Canada is satisfied with the other elements of the "package". The eligible categories for assistance are drama, children's programming, and variety.

As of November 1984, the Broadcast Fund has not really altered the situation of independent filmmakers. It does not fund documentaries, or animation, unless they fit under the Children's Programming category. And many independents do not fit Telefilm Canada's notion of the ideal producer. A
requirement has always been that projects assisted through Telefilm both show themselves to be viable in a commercial marketplace, and have a team of producers and executive producers with a "track record." Since a track record as a documentary producer does not count in these circles, it makes it very difficult for filmmakers to develop their projects without relinquishing control to a "senior" producer. Many of Canada's senior producers are those whose work has not been outstanding in terms of cultural relevance, and whose sense of film often differs significantly from the filmmaker's. It tends to develop a uniformity of product, which while perhaps commercially successful, does not greatly contribute to the development of a distinctly Canadian cinema, a supposed goal of Telefilm.

There have been a few regional independents who have received aid from Telefilm for their productions, but these are exceptions to the rule. What is needed is a specific program for low-budget features, which would allow filmmakers to control their own projects. The low-budget would make it possible for the film to recover its cost in Canada, and at least some of the films produced with Telefilm money would enjoy the distinction of not being primarily oriented to the American market.

Another problem with the Broadcast Fund is that it allows Canada's broadcasters to have the determining say on whether a production is eligible for assistance from the Fund. Broadcasters, rarely noted for their sensitivity to Canadian
programming in the past, have become the arbiters of taste for the new fashions in Canadian content. Although there is no doubt that the Broadcast Fund will lead to an increase in the number of Canadian productions on television, it does raise uncomfortable questions about the nature and quality of those productions.

The government has determined Canada needs Canadian drama and variety. The broadcasters, including the CBC, must adhere to the tastes of the network advertising sponsors. This latter group is unlikely to be any more creative or innovative as a result of the Broadcast Fund, and it is unlikely that many of the productions produced through the Broadcast Fund will break away from the formula producing that is the current fare on broadcast television.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Assuming the private broadcasters will never change, there is still hope that independent films might be shown on Canada's public broadcast system. To date, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has not been a source of production money, nor exhibition, for most independents:

It is very difficult to make a television sale. The CBC won't show anything that is at all controversial unless it meets their rules for balance. I'm very cynical about the CBC and their dealings with independent producers. I make a film, I bust my ass to do it, often at risk to myself and the crew, and I have to meet with some jerk producer who hardly has the time to look at me, let alone at my work.

The CBC is ridiculous. It took a year to get them to air
our last documentary. They said we had unobjective, slanted reporting, and they couldn't air such a bad documentary. This was right after we had just won best Quebec film of the year. They finally played it with a person at the beginning, as a disclaimer, warning that the film about to be shown had a very emotional, personal point of view.

The only current forum for independent work on Canadian television is the CBC program, Canadian Reflections. This program runs between three and four o'clock on weekdays. It will not show films of a controversial nature, and specifically proscribed are films that deal with religion or politics—automatically disqualifying a number of independent films. Further, Canadian Reflections has a very low budget, and most films chosen for this program must be able to double as network "fill". The result is that the only program where independent filmmakers could gain national exposure is structured to give a small audience the blandest selection of independent work possible. If a filmmaker wants to make a sale to Canadian Reflections, the content and style of the film is pre-determined. This further discourages filmmakers who wish to make a living from their films from work of an innovative nature. Canadian Reflections was recently scheduled to be replaced with re-runs from the American television program Dallas. This plan was dropped due to the efforts of an ad hoc group of filmmakers, The Toronto Independent Film Caucus.

The Canadian Broadcast Corporation, because it is publicly funded, is the natural place for social and political documentarists to expect their work to be shown. The CBC should have a program spot in prime time for independent documentary
films. Because these films would be independently produced, the CBC would not be held responsible by Parliament or any other watchdog for the political or other beliefs presented on the program.

Conclusion

What is at issue here? Apart from the misfortune the individual film and video makers face, the lack of funding for the independent sector raises questions about the subjects which can be depicted on film, the ways in which they can be portrayed, and who is able to see them. Funding is available for commercial film and video productions which have the stamp of approval from Canada's broadcasters, and from the state/corporate interests of Telefilm Canada. But there is little funding available for films that explore issues of importance to society, and explore them from a viewpoint that is not tied to financial interests.

What sorts of film productions should governments be funding? The National Film Board was founded to explain Canada to Canadians, and does a reasonably good job of it. But the NFB is a government agency, accountable to Parliament, and as such it faces limitations in the subjects its films can address. In fact, making a political film through a government agency may be a distinct disadvantage. The National Film Board's reputation for fine films has been somewhat tarnished when films produced through the NFB have been pulled from distribution due to
political pressure. Total responsibility for films on controversial issues should not be left to a government body whose past head, Sidney Newman, once declared:

No matter how much I personally believe in the freedom of the artist or filmmaker to express his own views when he makes a film for us, he must understand that the National Film Board was created by the Parliament of Canada and is paid for by the tax-payer...Can we in all honesty think that the Film Board, financed by taxpayers who have representatives in Parliament, [can] make a film in which the ultimate conclusion is that our society is entirely corrupt and needs total change? ... When they knock the Film Board, they are not merely defending the freedom of the highly politicized filmmaker - but they are also inadvertently knocking the dozens of others whose work has no overt political flavour and which gives pleasure and indeed hope to our audiences of millions in Canada and abroad. It's the totality of the Film Board I am duty bound to uphold and protect.  

One can sympathize with the pressure on the Film Board. But these pressures only re-affirm the need for a strong, healthy independent film sector to raise the cultural questions and social problems that other filmmakers may be structurally unable to pose. As long as funding for independent production is piecemeal and haphazard, only a few will be produced each year. And with such films denied access to television audiences, it is only in the regions, and in the community, that such films will be seen and the issues they raise discussed. In spite of the energy which is already being channelled into actual film

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¹ For example, "On Est Au Coton", a film on textile workers in Quebec, or "No Act of God", a film on nuclear power plants.

production, it seems it will be up to the independent film community to find the additional resources to organize and lobby for increased support for its contribution to Canadian cultural life.
APPENDIX ONE

The National Film Board of Canada

The headquarters of the National Film Board are located in the outskirts of Montreal — a Metro and a bus ride away from downtown. It looks like a big gray factory, except for the pieces of modern architecture tacked on here and there. Uniformed commissionaires guard the front entrance; each visitor must sign in, and can only sign out if the signature on their admission slip testifies they have indeed been where they said they were going. In spite of what visiting filmmakers may think, the security is not for the protection of the busy executives. Rather, it is for the expensive film equipment which is in evidence throughout the building — not to mention the films themselves.

Upstairs, the walls are covered with plaques and framed certificates, trophies of the innumerable national and international awards the NFB has garnered over the past forty-odd years. In the large cafeteria, famous filmmakers mingle with the not-so-famous, and lowly technicians stand in line with upper management. The outstanding feature of the cafeteria, however, is the bureaucracy surrounding the purchase of food — each order slip must be filled out in duplicate.

This bureaucracy, the government approach to filmmaking, is at the root of the current struggle between the National Film
Board and "private sector" filmmakers. The struggle is a political and an ideological one. Government aid to the NFB is unfair competition, claims the private sector; the money should be channelled to them instead. Underlying their arguments is the notion of private sector efficiency, and vague rumblings about government propaganda.

But the private sector is a diverse one, not unified in its political or creative approach to film. There are many within the private sector who find themselves more comfortable with the NFB approach to filmmaking, however bureaucratic, than with the makers of such Canadian classics as "Porky's II". For the Film Board, whatever its shortcomings, has consistently demonstrated a concern for and an interest in Canadian social and political life. Many filmmakers know from experience that there is little commercial market for documentary or animated films. As much as they would like government support themselves, they do not wish to see the end of the National Film Board. These filmmakers, officially within the private sector, make films they too consider to be in the public interest.

The Film Board has a certain respect for such filmmakers, and makes some effort to help them. This is done through the Program to Assist Filmmakers and Films in the Private Sector - the PAFFPS Program. PAFFPS is officially a recent arrival on the scene, but makes concrete what has been going on for years. It grew out of Challenge for Change, the controversial NFB program of the mid-sixties to early seventies. The aim of Challenge for
Change was to "encourage experimental approaches to the use of film and television in the fostering of social change." This involved making films for, and often with, community groups and socially-disadvantaged people. The effect was to take the filmmaking process outside the concrete headquarters, and put the Film Board and its equipment and services within the reach of independent filmmakers who also worked on films relating to social change. The contact led to many requests for the use of Film Board facilities to help the independents finish their films. Often this request was for laboratory services - the NFB in Montreal has a massive lab which runs twenty-four hours a day. It was possible to assist these filmmakers under the table, slipping in their film with a Film Board production, lending equipment, allowing the use of editing facilities from midnight to dawn. The help was concealed; consequently, there was nothing for the Film Board to show when it had to defend its existence against the outcry of the film industry lobby. In 1979, the PAFFPS program was officially inaugurated, making legal the aid that was given covertly. Money was budgeted, and assisted films were shown on the books. Guidelines were set up to regulate the rules for application, and the services provided.

The guidelines serve to protect the program against film industry criticism. Private sector labs and equipment houses watch closely any assistance provided to non-NFB films; they

\[1\] D.B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda, An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada*, (Ottawa: The Canadian Film Institute, '981), p. 159.
complain the NFB is taking away their business. In a recession, this is a highly political charge to be made against a government agency, and the NFB is particularly vulnerable to criticism, following the Applebaum-Hébert recommendations that the NFB drop out of film production altogether.

The PAFFPS program does not divert huge sums of money from the private sector; most of the films assisted by the NFB are low-budget, independently produced social or political documentaries. The filmmakers responsible make them on a shoe-string; without the help of the NFB many of these films would not get made. For example, almost fifty per cent of PAFFPS films receive initial funding through the Canada Council, and many filmmakers apply to use the NFB editing facilities in order to make a rough-cut of their film. They then apply to the Council for completion funds.

The services available through PAFFPS depend on the number and scale of Film Board films that need the services. They always have first priority. An independent will wait a long time for lab services towards the end of the fiscal year; that is the time when every Studio rushes to finish off its own productions. Almost any service can be provided — but whether it will be depends on the state of fiscal crisis the NFB is in. The plan has been to put three per cent of the budget allocated to English Production towards the PAFFPS program, although it appears this goal has never been achieved. The PAFFPS money is not allotted to the Studios on a percentage basis, but through
the central budget. Projects are approved until all the money for the year is gone. Independents are usually required to pay for what are termed "external" costs. These are costs the NFB would have to pay cash for, such as film stock. Sometimes external costs are paid by the Studio, but more often they are charged to the filmmaker. An Executive Producer can also give real money to a PAFFPS film, from their Studio budget - if they believe in the project enough.

Filmmakers approaching the NFB for assistance under this program would first get their project approved, a budget drawn up, and a contract signed. Getting a project approved is an anarchic procedure. Filmmakers who want to apply to PAFFPS approach the Head of English Production, or the Executive Producer of the Studio that seems most likely to be interested. Filmmakers who live in Montreal have an edge, as they know the Board, and people within it. They usually have the contacts to get the ear of the appropriate Studio Head. Enterprising souls from outside Montreal phone and inquire, and if they are persistent enough, can also find their way into the structure. Assistance is given out on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as the film is eligible for PAFFPS. There is no system of appeal. In the past, the NFB had someone on staff who acted as a gate-keeper for these requests, sorting out the eligible films, and directing them to the appropriate studio. Now the system is amorphous.
Within the Film Board, the PAFFPS program causes all sorts of trauma to technical service people. They complain that independents do not fill out their camera reports in the approved NFB style, and that slates are not made correctly. Film negative poses another problem. NFB staff do not like to log it and store it in their vaults. They would prefer to store it separately, and leave it up to the PAFFPS filmmaker to deal with it. The problem with a PAFFPS film is that there is no one in the building whose main concern is the film. A film needs someone to shepherd it through the various stages — receiving it, logging it, taking it to the lab, screening the rushes, getting the sound transfer done, synching the workprint, checking that everything is correct. It is time-consuming, and for NFB productions, the Producer or Director will assume these functions. But for a PAFFPS film, unless the independent lives in Montreal, it is essential to build a support structure at the Board to keep tabs on the film.

The current head of English Production claims to be a strong advocate of the PAFFPS program. Yet there have been no extensions to the program over the past years. Rather, the amount and types of assistance available to filmmakers has been slowly cut down. One of the biggest complaints of independent filmmakers assisted under the PAFFPS program is the low priority their films receive. Films assisted by PAFFPS are marked NOT AN NFB PRODUCTION, which, as one Executive Producer admitted, "has a negative effect on their progress through the place." On
hearing of this remark, a filmmaker remarked, "Yes indeed, somewhat like wearing a yellow star." It can take months for a filmmaker to get back material sent to the NFB labs. It is the biggest drawback to the program. There are tales of Vancouver filmmakers who flew to Montreal to rescue their film, and of others who moved temporarily to Montreal, working in the basement of the NFB to synch the film themselves.

Support for the PAFFPS program seems to be genuine. According to one Film Board higher-up:

There is a lot of good work done under the PAFFPS program. The best way to help people make a film is to let them struggle with a film they want to make, and which is theirs. Under the PAFFPS program the NFB has no rights to the film, no editorial or creative control of any kind. We could provide that kind of advice, but most independents working under the program are quite competent. And for those who make political films, they don't trust the judgement of NFB insiders on editing decisions.

For the NFB Executive Producers, the administration of the PAFFPS program is a mixed blessing. Dealing with the numerous requests is time-consuming, and regarded by some Studio heads as a burden. Others find it is the best thing they do, and perform the requirements with enthusiasm and grace. The PAFFPS program can put them in contact with some of the most interesting filmmakers working independently in Canada, and thereby add to the Producer's grasp of the national film community. Sometimes the independent productions go on to glory, and their Studio will receive at least partial credit. On the other hand, as a Producer said, the PAFFPS program is often "an exercise in being inadequate" - many fine ideas and promising filmmakers come by
their desk, but the money is gone. There is nothing for the filmmaker to do except wait for next year's budget, and hope that the PAFFPS program, and even the Film Board, is still in existence.

The problem with the PAFFPS program, apart from the low-priority that assisted films receive, is the tenuousness of the contract with the Board. Filmmakers have no rights, and if changes in the NFB necessitate cutbacks, the assistance can be terminated with no recourse. This can be devastating to the low-budget film - how can most filmmakers come up with the ten or more thousand dollars that an assist can represent? In 1982, the majority of English Production's share of lab services were given to a massive co-production with the private sector. This production became so large that the services offered under the PAFFPS program were cut-back. The result is that the NFB has a high profile production, but small NFB films and the assisted films were lost, or curtailed.

The Film Board is in a bind. Large-scale productions that are shown on television for large ratings give them the ammunition to fight charges that they are moribund, and no longer producing films that are relevant to the Canadian public. These films are often co-productions with large independents, and this kind of co-operation placates their attacks on the NFB. Independent filmmakers and their assist program may suffer, but they are not much of a threat. Big-time independent producers have a powerful lobby, and they also have the ear of the
Many Executive Producers feel the program should be given more status:

The PAFFPS program should go on. Film is so expensive that unless there is help, it is next to impossible to make a relevant cultural film - unless there is a mass market for it. If the idea is good, I like to help those filmmakers who can't get outside funding. If they have the film stock, and have worked to raise other money, it's worth helping that kind of commitment.

An Executive Producer admits her Studio cannot keep up with the number of requests:

The biggest problem with PAFFPS is the lack of money to respond to filmmakers' requests, and also the lack of staff to supervise the projects. Responding to requests is a haphazard matter, it depends on many factors. The trick is to assess if we are capable of being capable. Due to the nature of film production, it's hard to know in advance just how much money will be available, and when. Acceptance of a request for assistance can depend on what day the proposal is received. And sometimes, because of what they are asking for, one filmmaker can be helped while another is not. A committee wouldn't help. A filmmaker's needs are often urgent, and we can't keep holding on to their proposals until we have a meeting. We do it randomly. It's not fair. But if we set up criteria, and defined the program more rigorously, we would only make it equally hard for everyone.
APPENDIX TWO

The Canada Council

The Canada Council was established in 1957, the result of the report of the Massey-Lévesque commission. The mandate of the Council is to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in the arts."\(^1\) The work of the Canada Council is to provide a wide range of grants and services to artists and arts organizations. Approximately three thousand of these grants are awarded each year.

The Council has three sources of revenue. Eighty-five percent of its funds come from an annual appropriation from Parliament. The second source is income from an endowment fund provided by Parliament in 1957. The rest comes from various private bequests and donations.

The Canada Council itself is a board of public trustees, consisting of twenty-one citizens of Canada, all appointed by the government. They meet in Ottawa four times a year for two or three days at a time, and have the final authority for everything the Council does.

The staff of the Canada Council, the permanent employees, carry out all the detailed preparation of case work. This includes the Touring section, the Explorations program, the Arts Awards service, and the disciplinary sections of Dance, Theatre, \(^1\) The Canada Council Act, 1957, amended 1977.
Music, Writing, Visual Arts, and Media Arts. Each of these divisions has a Head of Section, one or more professional colleagues (Officers and Assistant Officers) and back-up clerical staff.

Attached to the Council are the Disciplinary Advisory Committee and the Arts Advisory Board, both descendants of the Arts Advisory Panel, which was dissolved in 1983. The Disciplinary Advisory Committee advises Council staff on matters relating to the six disciplines. The forty-two members on this Committee serve for a year, and have four annual meetings.

The Arts Advisory Board advises the Council itself on general issues and on Council policies. The Board consists of twelve persons, two from each of the six disciplines. One of the two also sits on the Disciplinary Advisory Committee. The Arts Advisory Board meets twice a year.2

The other main component of the Canada Council is the jury system. Several hundred artists serve each year as jury members or individual assessors, adjudicating grant applications from individuals and arts organizations. The jurors and assessors are chosen off a list put together by the Arts Advisory Board. It is the responsibility for the officer of the Discipline to choose a jury appropriate to the range of applications received. Juries are not permanent, and change composition for each competition. The names of jury members are not made public before a competition, but are published in the Annual report. Jury

members are eligible to apply for Council support, though not of course in the competition they will be judging.

Juries are an important part of the Council system. Although there have been many complaints about jury composition, and of cliques and elites forming and favouring the "old guard" in their discipline, it is generally felt that the principle of peer evaluation is a good one. The jury system, along with the Arts Advisory Board and the Disciplinary Advisory Committee, prevents the Section Heads and Officers, who inevitably end up with a large amount of power and policy input, from exercising this power unfairly.

The Canada Council provides aid to filmmakers through three separate sections: Media Arts, Explorations, and the Arts Awards Service. Each section has an autonomous budget, separate staff and officers, and a specific mandate to perform. They are similar in that they all require application forms which call for a skill at least equal to filmmaking to complete.

The Arts Awards Service offers aid to individual artists. Arts Grants A are intended to provide free time for personal creative activity for senior artists who have made a significant contribution over a number of years to their discipline, and who are still active in their profession. In filmmaking, the grants can be used for script research, writing, experimentation with new technologies - almost anything except actual film production.
Arts Grants B are intended to help artists improve their skills, or allow them to work on personal creative projects. B grants are often used by filmmakers in different craft areas, to allow them to take specialized training. They can also be used for formal education in film.

Short-term grants are intended to help defray living expenses of artists for a maximum of three months, to enable them to work on a specific project.

Filmmakers can apply once a year for the A grants, twice a year for the B grants, and every six to eight weeks for the short-term grants. Other forms of assistance under the Arts Awards Service include Project Cost grants and Travel grants.

Applications are screened administratively for errors or omissions by Council Staff, and then are referred to juries of from three to six members, or to an individual assessor. All grants A and B are evaluated by juries. Short-term, Project Cost, and Travel grants are evaluated by either a jury or an individual assessor. The success rate for applicants is 1:3 for short-term, travel, and project cost grants, and 1:4 for A and B grants. This is a ratio that must be met, so if five applications are received, only one of them can be approved. If there are no applications deemed worth approving, the money is held over for another competition.

More than sixty-five percent of the applications in script-writing and research are for documentary films. This is partly because fiction and feature films are usually directed to
to the Canadian Film Development Corporation (now Telefilm Canada).

Another area where aid to filmmakers is available is the Explorations program. Explorations is a unique program at the Canada Council, and in the arts-council world in general. It is intended to support imaginative cultural projects, and does not limit its applicants to professional artists. Individuals, groups, and organizations can apply for funding through Explorations. Professional artists who wish to work in other disciplines are also eligible to apply.

Explorations is also different in the structure of its jury system. It is the only Canada Council program to have regional selection committees, with members from the region who remain on the jury over several competitions. Each jury meets three times a year, and the regional jury is selected by the Canada Council officer in charge of that particular region. The regional committees decide which projects they wish to fund. The list of choices is then taken by the chair of the regional committee to a national committee meeting. Here all the choices are reviewed, and the final decisions made. The majority of the regional decisions are respected, but there is the possibility that information brought forward at the national level will make a difference - and often each region has a low-priority project at the bottom of their list. Some trade-offs are made between the regions in order to fund the maximum number of projects, and often these lower-priority regional projects are not funded at
the national level.

As with most Council juries, the Explorations regional committees are not given information on the amount of money requested by an applicant until the list of projects is chosen. At this point, the financial request is unveiled. The amount may be changed by the jury, but this is done with caution, as past experience has shown it is quite possible to "fund an applicant into bankruptcy."

When Explorations receives an application for a film project, the applicant is checked to see if they are truly eligible for Explorations, or if their request should be passed on to a film production jury. This is usually determined by the past experience of the applicant, and often the Explorations Officers make this decision in conjunction with the Officers from the Film section.

Film requests pose a problem for the Exploration program. Film projects often have large budgets, and funding one film can mean the elimination of several smaller projects. Jurors are advised to look at film applications carefully. Often, films are partially funded, with money given to research, or post-production costs. Occasionally, Explorations will fund the production of a film, and the filmmaker will apply to the Film Section for finishing costs, once a rough-cut of the film is completed.

It is generally agreed that documentary films do not have a good chance in the Film Section, which tends to be more
interested in art or experimental film. Some producers get around this by using experienced film crews with an inexperienced director (applications are usually made in the name of the director), and thus render the project eligible for Explorations rather than the Film Section.

The Explorations program allows many new and innovative projects to take place. Although it is grass-roots in its approach, it also allows professional artists who wish to challenge the status-quo of their own disciplines to apply. The competition is very stiff, and the success rate for Explorations is 1:8.

The Film Office of the Canada Council has been providing aid to filmmakers since 1968. There seems to be in the Canada Council Annual Reports at that time an anxiety to separate the Council's aid to film from anything that might be happening at the NFB or CBC. This emphasis on cinema as art, and on experimental film has been retained to this day.

Aid for film production in the Council came about as a result of money given specifically to the film section (and also to publishing) through the Secretary of State. This was seen by many as a break-down of the arms-length relationship between Council and Government - officially, the government is to have no say in the way Council spends its money. It has been


suggested that this money was given to Council to relieve the newly-created CFDC of its legislative responsibility to support short films and documentaries. The main interest of the CFDC was in feature fiction films, and the money to Council was a way of allowing some attention to be paid to the independent sector of the film community.

In 1983, the Council announced the formation of a new Media Arts section. This section took from Visual Arts the responsibility of film and video, and added on the new area of Integrated Media. Although it is hoped that the integrity of the film section (and its budget) will be retained, and perhaps even grow within the Media Arts section, there are those who worry that this move will serve mainly to encourage filmmakers to move out of the film medium, and into other media forms that are less expensive than film.

Filmmakers who have directed at least one film or have established a professional reputation in the visual or video arts can apply to the Council's film office for a grant of up to forty thousand dollars for a single production. A production grant can be used to cover such costs as equipment rental, film stock, remuneration of actors and technicians, editing, post-production, etc. The stated objective of the Council's program of film production grants is "to foster and promote the development of film as a medium of personal artistic expression. The grants are intended to support experimentation with form, content, or technical process, within a wide range of genres:
The Council insists that the filmmaker have total editorial control over the proposed project. Films that are co-produced or sponsored by another government agency, such as the CBC, CFDC, or National Film Board are not eligible, although films which have received an NFB assist are eligible. There is no problem granting money to films which have financial assistance from other sources, for example, films which have raised money through the use of the Capital Cost allowance. Instructional projects, pilots for commercial or educational television, and industrial films are not eligible. In the case of dramatic, feature-length films "eligibility is limited to low-budget works of an innovative or experimental nature, whose funding sources do not interfere with the filmmaker's artistic control. Projects involving conventional or commercial approaches to filmmaking are not a priority of the program."6

Grants are not to be applied to costs already incurred on a film. There may be as many as eighty applicants applying at one time, and each application will be assessed by the jury, normally composed of five people. Once it is agreed that a production is worth funding, then the budget submitted with the application is assessed. The jury can decide how much to give. Sometimes, they approve enough money to allow the filmmaker to

5 The Canada Council, Instructions to Applicants for Film Production Grants, May 1982.

6 The Canada Council, Instructions to Applicants for Film Production Grants, May 1982.
complete a rough-cut, and then invite the filmmaker to apply for completion funds when that stage is reached. A filmmaker rarely receives the maximum grant of forty thousand dollars.

In adjudicating applications, the criteria taken into consideration by the jury are the artistic merit of the applicant's previous work, and the perceived quality of the proposed project. Priority is given to projects and applicants who demonstrate an original, innovative, and experimental approach to filmmaking. The three main reasons for rejecting applications are: lack of talent, usually voiced as lack of support material; the project is not good enough, even if the talent is there; the project is good, but judged to be too ambitious for the experience of the applicant.

Grant holders are expected to complete the particular project for which they received funding under the terms and conditions of the grant. Major changes in a project must be brought to the attention of the Film Officer for consideration and approval before they are carried out. If, prior to completing the film, a grant holder relinquishes all rights in the production to a sponsor, he or she must refund the amount of the grant to the Council.

Most grants are paid in installments. A progress report and financial statement, including copies of receipts, must be submitted before further installments can be made. A final report and financial statement must be submitted upon completion of the film. Grant holders are required to acknowledge the
assistance of the Canada Council in their film credits.

It is widely perceived among documentary filmmakers, and apparently, especially among Vancouver documentary filmmakers, that the Canada Council will rarely provide funds for documentaries. Many documentary filmmakers do not even bother to apply. According to a Film Officer, documentary proposals are welcomed, although:

The jury does look for an experimental approach — something other than talking heads and male narration, Film Board circa 1962. It is important that the filmmakers are close to the subject. There are many documentarists who don't care. The Council was bombarded with requests in the Year of the Handicapped, and the Year of the Child, by filmmakers who never seemed to take a particular interest in those subjects before.

According to this Film Officer, if the documentary subject could be considered a "critical, social intervention" the jury will use a different set of criteria, realizing that cinema verité can require a different kind of filmmaking, where high production standards are difficult to attain due to low-budgets and trying conditions. Often, juries will want to fund a controversial film, because they feel Council money will allow the filmmaker to remain truly independent, and less subject to pressures other funding agencies might exert.
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