

• By combining their forces the women in *A Wives' Tale* take on the world



formation which is rooted in personal experience — she speaks of "our labour" as the source of Inco's profit. Over footage of the strike she brings the film home: "The strike has now been going on for six months... We, as wives of the strikers... our history is a forgotten one." Roll credits: *A Wives' Tale*... Tracking shot: railway tracks, music, old pictures, old footage, women's voices recounting their history, their arrival in Sudbury as pioneers, as miner's wives and daughters and mothers, always spoken in the first person; the story of one woman and of many — as paid workers during the war who joined the first union in 1944, who were laid off when the war was over and returned to their customary unpaid work at home; as wives of miners who spoke out against the hardships of the strike of '58 and were then blamed for the poor contract the miners accepted soon after. Cut now to present-day footage, the Wives of '78, haunted by the shame of twenty years ago, an undesired shame which recurs throughout the film — if we speak out now and they take a bad contract we'll be blamed... But we're speaking out against the settlement... They're afraid we'll turn out to be smarter than them... They're afraid of us... They don't trust us... our own husbands. Nervous, shy, brassy, tough as old sinew, organizing, collecting money, phoning, speaking, arguing, cooking, washing, cleaning, bright as new pennies, learning new skills, learning the value of skills they already have. Balancing the family bank account means they can balance the group's account very well thank you — but the union insists that cheques be signed by a union officer. And the women agree, after an argument. But one of the women who gives in later pipes up and informs her pontificating husband that he is a male chauvinist pig. She explains to the camera that she grew up in a family where father was boss — she thought it was natural and right. Now she's having second thoughts.

In a written statement accompanying the film's Toronto opening, the filmmakers refer to the Wives' insistence that "we record their lows as well as their highs, their tensions and conflicts — all that would keep them 'real,' even on the big screen, and far away from being 'heroines.'"

"A québécois film, still and always an act of faith."

"Briefly, *A Wives' Tale*, 73 coloured minutes where the sound and image belong to women."

"It is a different cinema, why hesitate to name it? It is a militant film, a feminist film, a tale of women."

— The filmmakers.

Barbara Halpern Martineau •

A Wives' Tale won this year's Quebec Critics' Award and was recently nominated for a Genie as best theatrical documentary.

A Wives' Tale

d. Sophie Bissonnette, Martin Duckworth, Joyce Rock in collaboration with Joan Kuyek d.o.p. Martin Duckworth, Len Gilday (asst.), Jean-Charles Tremblay (asst.) sd. Joyce Rock, Glen Hodgins (asst.), Aeryn Weismann (asst.) ed. Michel Arcand, Sophie Bissonnette sd.ed. Pascale Laverrière, Liette Aubin sd.mix Jean-Pierre Joutel neg.ed. Dagmar Gueissaz song lyrics/text Sophie Bissonnette, Joyce Rock narration Marika Boies, Rita Lafontaine, Claudia Pharand, Giselle Trépanier mus. David Burt, André Paiement, Rachel Paiement, Rachel Paiement (arrangement) musicians David Burt, Michel Dasté, John Doerr, Rachel Paiement song "Une sorcière comme les autres", written by Anne Sylvestre, sung by Pauline Julien titles Lise Nantel, Josette Trépanier post-p. Pierre Comte p. sec. Camille Dubuc, Michele Vincelle p. man. Nicole Rodrigue-Lamothe p. Arthur Lamothe p.c. Les Ateliers Audio-visuels du Québec, with participation of the Institut québécois du cinéma, and Radio-Québec funds & services Conseil des Arts du Canada, Development Education Centre, National Film Board col. 16mm running time 73 minutes dist. Les Films du Crépuscule Inc. (Québec), DEC Films.

Albert Kish's

The Image Makers

The National Film Board of Canada is as familiar and delectable to most Canadians as apple pie is to our southern neighbours. It has also been nearly as pervasive for four decades, both reflecting and creating Canadian cultural images.

The Image Makers, The National Film Board: The First Forty Years, directed and edited by Albert Kish, is this unique institution's hour-long birthday film. With over 10,000 titles to choose from,

Kish has shouldered a positively herculean task — to tell the Board's story with shots from 60 films. Exclusion was the major challenge.

The Image Makers is a shortened and reworked version of the narration-free compilation film aired a little over a year ago on the CBC. At that time, fragments from the films themselves, while edited and arranged with Kish's masterful touch, were supposed to represent what the present film refers to as 'the collective memory of a nation'. This new version, with narration by Kish and Marjorie Morton (and no less skillfully edited), now has verbal cohesion, as the late John Grierson, founder of the Board, speaks the inspirational opening and closing words about the organization's purpose: "To bring Canada alive to itself and to the rest of the world." What follows is an epicurean film buffet.

A select group of filmmakers comments periodically on the Board's past. Tom Daly and Guy Glover recall how, during World War II, they and other young Canadian filmmakers learned technique from Grierson's experienced and imported non-Canadian colleagues. Kish shows plenty of 'shot and shell' but inexplicably misses the propaganda message hammered out repeatedly in the wartime shorts — that there would be a brave new world based on internationalism, not nationalism, in the wake of victory. Postwar Canada spurred rabid nationalism and lent support to the United Nations idea.

Kish asks Glover if the Film Board 'invented' Canada. For the balance of the film, this unstated premise is his focal point. Perhaps 'invent' is the wrong word. By projecting Canada and its people literally and figuratively, by creating a sense of oneness out of diversity, and by finding excitement in shared commonality, or the unusual in familiar situations, the Board compensated for the overwhelming physical and cultural limitations that militate against 'Canadian-ness'.

In a superb visual blending, Kish demonstrates how, from the beginnings, Canadian films have revealed Canada's faraway-ness. He believes that the Board's vision of Canada is one of pockets of immigrants, urban and rural, in the context of geographical isolation. Taken as a total composition, the core of his film convincingly portrays what might be called Canadian exotica in everyday life. It might have been appropriate if Kish had speculated about national mythology in this context.

As for the Board's non-commercial approach to film, one amusing sequence has millionaire media-mogul Geoff Stirling ranting and raving at an exasperated Mike Rubbo about how wasteful and

uncommercial Film Board shooting is. It is common knowledge that the Board throws away 19 of every 20 feet shot. It is expensive exploration. But, that one remaining foot may reveal the subject for what it is rather than for what the director thinks it should be; a fact that is essential to an understanding of how the Film Board's documentary tradition tries to reveal the truth behind the image.

There are many filmmakers who doubtlessly feel hurt because their work did not appear in *The Image Makers*. The French Unit, for example, receives only cursory mention. If exploration, propagation and celebration of Quebec culture are that unit's *raison d'être*, the English audience surely deserves a few more glimpses of the other Canada.

Also, films about Canadian authors, artists and politicians go unmentioned, as do the few but significant feature films. With several Oscars and worldwide renown, the animation unit could also argue for more screen time. Every claim for recognition is justified. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. The Board's 1981 catalogue alone has over 2000 titles in it.

The Image Makers salutes all NFB filmmakers, past and present, each of whom can identify with founder Grierson's inspirational benediction — that the Board is here to bring Canada alive to itself and the world, to declare the excellences and strengths of Canada in respect to creating the present and future.

There is some irony in light of this film tribute. Since 1939 the National Film Board has been telling the world about Canada — North America's best kept secret. Recent government budget slashing has brought the Board to its knees. As a key guardian and promoter of Canadian culture, the NFB deserves a larger perspective. It earns priceless national and international prestige for a paltry .00069 percent of annual government expenditure. Perhaps *The Image Makers* will convince those who hold the purse strings to 'praise the Board and pass the hat'.

Gary Evans •

The Image Makers

d./ed. Albert Kish photog. Andreas Poullison, Barry Perles, Douglas Kiefer, Eric Chamberlain commentary written by Albert Kish, Marjorie Morton narrated by Richard Gilbert original mus. Keith Tedman loc. sd. Claude Hazanavicius, Jean-Guy Normandin sd. ed. Bernard Bordeleau re-rec. Jean-Pierre Joutel, Adrian Croll library services Antoinette Lapointe p. co-ord. Grace Avrith studio admin. Louise Spence assoc. p. Donna Dudinsky p. Adam Symansky exec. p. Peter Katadotis Lp... more than 400 directors, producers, cameramen, editors, writers, composers and film technicians since 1939. p.c. National Film Board, 1980 running time 58 min. 25 sec. col. 16mm.

• A glimpse of the good old days. Here, NFB cameraman Lawrence Cherry

