The script calls for two inches of snow on the ground, and the stuff that the snow-making machines are spraying out this cold December night on Toronto's Dupont Street isn't melting. It glints under the tower-mounted brutes which illuminate a full half-block. The electricians on the towers shoot out the time left on their bulbs to the gaffer below: "Four minutes, sir." The set is dominated by the huge Mercury crane from William F. White's, fresh up from the U.S. and still wearing California license plates. A few handwarmers are passed around democratically. One of the cops on duty mutters to his partner, "I'd rather be doing Little House on the Prairie out there in the California sun."

The setting is perfect for Robert Cooper's Utilities, a comedy-adventure-romance about one man's fight against the utility companies, starring Bob Hays of Airplane fame, and Brooke Adams, who starred in Invasion of the Body Snatchers and Days of Heaven.

"The cold doesn't bother this crew," says unit publicist Pru Emery. "They did Silence of the North in Kenora."

Filming stops while a cold lens is warmed with a small light. Director of photography Richard Leiterman explains that Panavision won't winterize their prime lenses. "They've got a heavier case for the zoom lenses, but they say it's not necessary for the primes." Leiterman disagrees. "Here we have to do a fast pull focus as Bob Hays walks towards camera around the front of his jeep, and then away from camera again, and the lens is just too cold for the focus puller to do it smoothly."

Leiterman points out that this same grip crew worked with him on Silence of the North and Ticket to Heaven, and first a.d. Tony Lucchello adds that most of his crew "just came off M*A*S*H. We've worked together many times before - we sort of grow up together in the business."

The experience of the crew in working together before seems to have made a difference in keeping Utilities on schedule through some difficult shooting requirements. "Principal photography is scheduled to finish by December 18," says Associate Producer Michael Hadley, "and at six weeks into an eight-week shooting schedule we're all starting to feel the stagecoach ride. We have over forty different locations, and on the average we've been moving two or three times a day."

"We've had a large cast," says Lucchello, "about 140 speaking parts. A lot of extras were upgraded into bit parts. We've used over 2,000 extras, a lot of them ACTRA members, so we've got some happy ACTRA members."

"We had a major scene where the utility company was coming in to shut off somebody's gas in the midst of a big protest," says Hadley. "The confrontation had to be built on a number of angles on the protesters and the gas company personnel. It's really incredible the amount of coverage Harvey Hart (the director) is getting in the time schedule. It's not being shot like television."

Sitting in his Winnebago between takes, star Bob Hays balances a can of cold chili on his knee and says, "I like to keep things relaxed, and I find the Canadian crew more enthusiastic to work with than most of those in the U.S. - except perhaps the non-union crews there."

Back outside it's time for the close-ups, and the temperature is dropping. Happily it's a two-camera set-up, and if's a fast set, and the energy level returns to the "You're the best set ever."}

Utilities

**Bucking the elements**

The off-duty extras are trying to catch a few minutes sleep, bundled up against the cold, on the beach or in the back seats of their cars, if it's 3:00 a.m. Students, workmen, company personnel, if it's really incredible the amount of coverage Harvey Hart (the director) is getting in the time schedule. It's not being shot like television.

Porky's

**Hot sun, cold chili**

The off-duty extras are trying to catch a few minutes sleep, bundled up against the cold, on the beach or in the back seats of their cars, if it's 3:00 a.m. Students, workmen, company personnel, if it's really incredible the amount of coverage Harvey Hart (the director) is getting in the time schedule. It's not being shot like television.