

## FILM REVIEWS

Huron and Georgian Bay, probing many 19th-Century wrecks interned there. But it is also more than a film about shipwrecks. Stoneman documents the contemporary aquatic action and projects the sense of underwater adventure which make these waters a central Canadian boating and diving Mecca. Land sequences at the jump-off point of Tobermory clip along merrily to the music of Walter Carlos (*Clockwork Orange*), while the sepulchral voice of Chris Wiggins (CTV's *Swiss Family Robinson*) presages the dramatic re-creation of past events and underwater sequences.

**Where Shipwrecks Abound** is a something-for-everybody film – necessary, obviously, as TV fare. Nowhere is there a hint of the shallowness, however, that can haunt be-all productions. Stoneman is sincere and empathetic with his subject in all its dimensions. (The proverbially mandatory three to five second slung-assed bikini shot is a personal objection only.)

Problems associated with this motion picture, if they can properly be described as problems in the usual sense at all, are those inherent in any underwater production. There is a spiritually exhilarating but physically limiting and ungrateful world down under. Tenacity and stamina are the chief demands on director and crew. Added to the usual problems with which every director must cope, they make the normal difficulties with the creative component of a film pall in comparison. High summer can find a swimmer refreshed by 18°C surface water, but down below ten plus metres – and down the filmmaker eventually needs to go, if he wants the best there is – the water is a mind-numbing 2°C or 5°C at best. Most critically, vision is peripherally limited by suspended particles in the water, despite intense lighting. Establishing shots are out of the question, and a measure of the film becomes the way in which the director works within and manipulates the fabric of the physical environment.

Stoneman provides his audience with a verbal and topside frame of reference for each wreck, then clarifies and sets it by using great sound and archival still clips of the ships as they once flew before wind and storm. Underwater, the camera moves in brief, wholly acceptable, crab-like dollys, as a man might work his way forward hand-over-hand on board a ship battling incoming seas. For a

change of pace, he has the camera aggressively probe, or alternately float mystically over the memory bones of this long past era. Still again, he indulges the audience in the wonder of underwater life for its own sake, pulling off a number of sequences to satisfy the appetite of even a veteran diver, and does it as a compliment rather than an intrusion to the greater subject matter.

It is a film of many elements this **Shipwrecks**: contemporary, historic/re-created drama and storyteller/

still, very fluid / above and below the surface/ living and dead/ fact and folklore (Jim Bearden wrote two memorable sea shanties to complement the theme)/ documentary and entertainment, yet it holds...well.... exceptionally well. It is a film whose time has come. Happily, someone had the courage and creativity to tie it all together and make the film. Happily too, it was made here in Canada.

Edward Lynas

## Flora: Scenes from a Leadership Convention

**d:** Peter Raymont, **sc:** Peter Raymont, **ph:** Douglas Kiefer, **ed:** Peter Raymont, **sd. ed.:** Les Halman, **sd. rec.:** Jacques Drouin, **exec. p.:** Arthur Hammond, Roman Kroitor, **p:** Mike McKennirey, **p.c.:** National Film Board, **col:** 16mm, **dist:** NFB, **narr:** Peter Raymont, **running time:** 58 minutes, 33 seconds.

With the television media entering the inner sanctum of the Canadian House of Commons, Canadians are becoming more aware of the nature of their hallowed political institutions. **Flora**, the National Film Board's

candid look at convention politics, and a woman's struggle to become leader of the Conservative Party, further expands our awareness of the Canadian political process.

The title of the film is deceiving. It is, in part, about Flora MacDonald's attempt to become the first woman leader of the Conservative Party, but it is also a behind-the-scenes investigation of convention politics, from its idealism to its wheeling and dealing. Actually, the film might have been more aptly called "A portrait of 'Fast' Eddie Goodman." Eddie is the party's chief fund raiser and a Flora supporter. He is seen addressing a group of campaign workers, and he reassures them that they are running an honest and frugal campaign by stating that "we're not here to buy it." Juxtaposed to this is a scene where Eddie is meeting with the campaign staff, and he reassures them



## Do It With Joy

d: Nicholas Kendall, ph: Nicholas Kendall, ed: Robert Seright, sd: Robert Seright, m: Simon Kendall, p: Nicholas Kendall, p-man: Doug Cowell, col: 16mm, running time: 54 minutes.

Occasionally a film appears to grow directly out of an actual experience or milieu. Much of the strength of Flaherty's films, for instance, depend on a viewer's apprehension of that filmmaker's enthusiastic response toward a human lifestyle, evolving out of his direct contact with it. **Do It With Joy**, Nicholas Kendall's documentary about a reforestation project in the Nass River Valley of northern British Columbia, depends on a similar apprehension for its strength.

Foregrounded throughout the fifty-four minutes of this film, are the giant stands of spruce and Douglas fir, indigenous to the Canadian northwest. These provide mute testimony to the huge clearing of their numbers by repeated inclusion in a camera angled ostensibly to capture only the vast acreages emptied by loggers and ready for reforestation. Despite this observation, there is no hazy attempt at anthropomorphic metaphor, and the filmmaker's sensibility is less that of pointing an accusing finger at a logging industry, than it is to show the process of reforestation and, referentially, the reaction to the life-generating process of the planters themselves.

that he can get co-operation from a certain individual because "I've done everything for his brother - that guy owes me something", making his previous promise empty rhetoric. He seems to be everywhere there is a crisis. Eddie appears on the scene during a development that might take votes away from Flora. Premier William Davis and his cabinet had decided to remain neutral and not show public support for any of the candidates. A rumor circulates on the floor of the convention that Roy McMurtry, a member of the Davis cabinet, is showing open support for Brian Mulroney. Eddie quickly locates Roy McMurtry and persuades him to put his Mulroney badge back in his pocket.

Flora sees Eddie as a morale booster, but Eddie is incapable of boosting Flora's morale when she places a disappointing 6th after the first ballot. A tight close-up on Flora shows a shocked and disillusioned woman. Again, Eddie becomes a key figure in the drama by assuming the role of persuader. He tries to persuade Flora to give her support to Joe Clark since she would need at least 300 votes to be in contention. With the second ballot Flora receives 234 votes, and she finally concedes her support to Joe. Flora's response to the political necessity of the decision "You are continually accepting compromise."

Using what I would call an eavesdropping style of cinematography, director Peter Raymont sensitively captures the human responses to political gamesmanship. The personal drama of political defeat is caught in a close-up of a dejected campaign worker with his head buried in his hands responding to a question about what he thought of politics by saying, "I don't know if I like politicking very much." This was the response of one of Flora's workers who represented one of a group of idealists on her team. Her team wanted to bring about a renaissance in Canadian politics by getting a woman elected as party leader, and couldn't comprehend the defeat since Flora had such popular appeal. A tangible proof of this appeal was evident when she asked for individual donations of one dollar to support her campaign and she received more money than was given to the Conservative Party in the previous year.

Peter Raymont's intimate and revealing camera work and editing is reminiscent of Richard Leacock's filmic style in the classic political

documentary **Primary** that recorded the Kennedy-Humphrey primary that led to John Kennedy's being elected to the U.S. presidency. Both Raymont and Leacock use the language of film creatively to frame the truth as they see it. Both films show the politician's tendency to use contradictory rhetoric - that is, making promises that sometimes conflict with previous promises. In **Flora** the politician is Eddie Goodman, and in **Primary** the politician is Senator Hubert Humphreys. Both films allow the audience to be in the middle of the action with the camera in the crowd on the floor of the convention in **Flora**, or in the crowd engulfing a charismatic Kennedy in **Primary**.

Although the film's title does not reveal the main theme of the film - a study of convention politics, it most certainly concerns itself with Flora's valiant struggle to gain the leadership of the Conservative Party. In a scene from the film, Flora is talking to a group of supporters about women and leadership. She explains why women tend to shy away from positions of leadership by stating that, "women do not perceive themselves as leaders, but, as more leadership positions are given to women, that myth will explode." Flora, by her own example, is doing her part to explode that myth.

Robert Hookey



A communal meal under a plastic tent after tree planting