

ming, produced Britain's top swim team in 1966 and came to Canada in 1967 to coach the Vancouver Dolphins, a swim club which has won the Canadian team title every year since he arrived. In 1976, after conflicts over recreational versus competitive swimming at the Dolphin's home pool, Snelling accepted a coaching position at the Etobicoke Olympium sports complex near Toronto, taking with him several top Dolphins including Steven Pickell.

In the film one observes the recurring features of body language — in particular the messianic fervor of Snelling's intense brown eyes — which exemplify the coach's emotional involvement in his current goal, which is to make the Etobicoke Olympians club the tops in Canada by 1978.

Snelling's approach to coaching is to push carefully selected athletes such as Pickell consistently to the point of physical and mental collapse, in a training program where practice is also broken down into its most essential elements. The outcome of the program will, in one way or another, be evident at the 1980 Olympics.

In Pickell, one observes a similar intense quality of non-verbal expression as he discusses his goals, but in him, one also senses a little more sense of humor and fun.

Among Pickell's sources of enjoyment are the enormous release and pleasure and well-being that occur at the other side of the intense pain of the workouts and time trials which make up Snelling's "break-down, build-up" training regimen. This is a form of training practiced in a variety of sports. "There's a reason I swim," says Pickell, "it's because of the feeling you get after you've swum eight miles, and been in the water two hours. Your whole body aches, every muscle's sore, your arms feel like lead, you can't lift them up again, your legs are like rubber, they can't do a thing. Your lungs can't hold any more air, they can't do a thing, and yet you take another stroke. That's the ultimate feeling in swimming."

There are also passages in the film which make *Take Your Mark* a companion piece to works of literature such as Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* and Michael Murphy's *Golf in the Kingdom* and Jacob Atabet.

In these, sport becomes a metaphor for "things coming together" within a zen-like "right practice" which leads over time to remarkable powers of mind and body and levels of awareness which have connotations for personal growth that are ultimately unrelated to questions of winning or losing.

In one interview, for example, Pickell refers to the uncanny sharpening of perception which results from years of disciplined devotion to the same pursuit. "You can slow it down in your mind," he comments. "The more experienced you are, the more ability you have to slow down the action... and see it in minute detail, and

see the complexities that you've got to have, the thousands of things that have got to come together to make that thing just flow. I think when you do, it just sort of opens you up to what we are potentially capable of doing."

Altogether, *Take Your Mark* is a thoroughly enjoyable film which is as appealing for followers of the Vince Lombardi "win or die" school of sports competition, as it is for proponents of "swimming for swimming's sake", where the ultimate aim is to be involved in play instead of in beating the world.

Jaen Pill



The kids from the Point: sometimes winners.

THE POINT

d: Robert Duncan, sc: Robert Duncan, ph: Andreas Poulsson, David DeVolpi, Savas Kalogeras, Douglas Kiefer, ed: Les Halman, asst. ed: Sidonie Kerr, sd: Claude Hazanavicius, Richard Nichol, Raymond Marcoux, Jean-Guy Normandin, sd. ed. Bernard Bordeleau, m.d.: Art Phillips, ed. Donald Douglas, Musicians: Gordon Lee, Harold Joyce, exec. p. Roman Kroitor, p: William Weintraub, p.c. National Film Board, col: 16mm, narr: Budd Knapp, running time: 50 minutes, year: 1978.

*"We don't care for all the rest of Canada,
All the rest of Canada,
All the rest of Canada,
We don't care for all the rest of Canada,
We're from Point St. Charles."*

The Point is a film about the Irish. It is a film which might be called racist but, paradoxically, a film which will be loved and applauded by those who star in it: the poor Irish of the dying industrial underbelly of Montreal — Point St. Charles.

The Point is also a film which has caused an enormous amount of con-

FILM REVIEWS

trovery, even before its release. In the minds of both those who love it and hate it, it has become far more than just a film about a particular area of a particular city. It is a travelogue presenting us with an overview of a state of mind, the chronic, hereditary disease known as poverty. In an odd way, this is a courageous film because it does not present a fashionably left of center "running-Capitalist-dogs" view of poverty. Also, it is not an up-reaching fiction, skilfully fashioned to forge the masses into organized revolt. If anything, *The Point* is a film of "constatation" and the poverty in it is ugly, brutal, corrosive and ultimately enfeebling.

It would be wrong, however, to represent this lively film as a modern day, Dickens-like portrait of bleakness. The hour is exciting, full of energy and, in its own way, more emotionally and sociologically true than many a more "worthy" film on the same subject. *The Point* and its people are themselves exciting, and the characters presented on the screen are as alive and fighting as the Point St. Charles working class heroes of David Fennario's plays. For example, it is the first film which I have seen that overtly faces the fact of racial tension between the French and English of Montreal. To anyone growing up in the rougher parts of Montreal, the two solitudes are often bridged with rocks and fists. As the film wryly puts it... "In Canada it is widely believed that all the French in Quebec are poor and all the English are rich. They have heard that story in Point St. Charles, but they have trouble believing it." Nowadays, *The Point* is no longer 100 percent Irish working poor. Not only are the poor of the area no longer exclusively Irish, they are no longer working. Jobs have moved away from this formerly industrial area, replaced by street crime, charred buildings and monthly welfare checks. The cycle of poverty continues and the children learn the ropes quickly.

The Point is not the first voyage that the National Film Board has taken across the tracks. *Things I Cannot Change*, a stinging *cinéma vérité* portrait of a poor family from the same area is the film that inspired the NFB's Challenge for Change program. That film presented a family of nine children

headed by a weakling father in such a devastating light that the family was forced to move out of the area. *Calabogie Fiddler* by Peter Pearson is among the best dramatic films produced by the National Film Board. Set in the rural Ottawa Valley, this film also reinforces our stereotyped image of the drinking, brawling Irish. As with *Things I Cannot Change*, this powerful, energetic — and in many ways too honest — film was very poorly received in the region which it portrayed. Challenge for Change's response to these films was to make films not just about, but for, disadvantaged groups. A film such as *VTR St. Jacques* illustrates a group organizing its way out of economic repression. These films are not portraits, nor do they pretend to be typical of what is going on. Their aim and purpose are not filmic but inspirational.

The Point brings us down from these lofty heights. It gives this area, not to the local social activists fighting for lower rents, but to the nightly arsonists and to the mailmen with their six-million dollars in welfare checks. The film is particularly telling in its view of the kids, the kids "without any dreams" who do not worry about the diminishing job market because, "we're all strong workers down here, ya know." As a former resident who has succeeded in moving out of the area puts it, "they have struck out down here. I see people suffering with alcohol and sickness. I'm not proud of that, but they have a lot of guts to put up with it." And it is this spirit which comes through in the film, the spirit of a neighbourhood which is now almost no more, the spirit of the ancestors who arrived half-starved on the ships a hundred years ago, and finally, the spunk of the young people still ready for a fight, whatever the odds. The film does not leave us with feelings of despair or helplessness, but with a very unromantic view of poverty. The slums are not pretty, the people want out, and the lucky ones make it.

Ronald Blumer

CLASSIFIED

For Sale

16mm NPR camera complete with 12/120 angenieux lens, 2-400 ft mags, power pack and cable. \$7,500.00

16mm ACL camera complete with 2-400 ft mags, 12/120 micro zoom lens, power pack and cable. \$8,000.00

16mm Arroflex "M" camera complete with 2-400 ft mags, 12/120 angenieux zoom lens and power pack . . \$4,000.00

Singer 16mm Arc Light projector Model no. 1040 complete with power supply. \$2,000.00

Call. (416) 864-1113

Freelance Publicist Available

Brian Stein Public Relations, 85 MacPherson Ave., Toronto (416) 362-3873 or 922-5393

ADVERTISING INDEX

Alpha Cine Service Ltd.	9
Arri/Nagra Inc.	5
Bellevue Pathé	51
Brooke Villone Associates	45
Canada Custom Cartridge	7
Canadian Motion Picture Equipment Rentals Ltd.	9
Cinema Productions	7
Cine Audio Ltd.	7
Cine Québec	22
Concordia University	5
Council of Canadian Filmmakers	2
Film Opticals of Canada	11
Jack A. Frost Lighting Equipment	11
Kingsway Film Equipment Ltd.	46
Kodak Canada	44
Magder Studios	7
MS Art Services Ltd.	11
NABET	7
Proparms Ltd.	9
Sonolab	52