as such, a betrayal of the content and direction of the drama that has gone before. It would have taken little to fix the scene: begin with Lee, hands bound and involved with an apparently consensual SM caresses with Anouk. Bring on Frank: invite him in the scene by way of seduction. Let Lee feel her breasts, pull her closer for help. Then bring out the knife and run the melodrama. Played that way, the scene would have held the dramatic tension and avoided the question of the earlier scenes, but to do so would have required some understanding of SM as practised by real people and some sympathy for those involved in consensual sex. Carmody seems to possess neither.

Indeed, he seems inclined to laugh at the sexually different. Jackie Burroughs' cameo, as a middle-aged woman all dressed and ready to serve, little girl with a policeman and some ice cream, seems structured for laughs at her expense (we know Hingle is the wrong man). But Burrough's playing the scene with such delight and an utter lack of condescension that the shabbiness of its intentions is at once eclipsed and highlighted.

Much the same occurs with the character of Eric (Jim Bailey), Lee's best friend. He needs to be sexually non-threatening for her, but he's written as a mincing fluty queen with a wholly unnecessary fondness for at-home drag - a typical gay caricature - so that when the script demands he develop a sexual interest in Anouk, the result is total unbelievability. Despite this, Bailey manages to inject some sympathy and intelligence into the part, and to feel like every other major cast member. Laure and Hingle are competent pros and they give it all to good effect. Newcomer Shannon Tweed handles Lee's trepidation and low-key hysteria well enough to suggest that she may grow into a good actress. Watching them work provides the main pleasure, sexual or otherwise, of the film.

Co-producer, with Andre Link, John Dunning, is quoted in the press kit to the effect that what interested them in The Surrogate was the idea. If they allowed themselves at the same time to become attracted to a talented writer and director, The Surrogate seems to have a fine addition to a badly neglected genre.

Andrew Dowler

THE SURROGATE

D/P: Don Carmody

Early in this two-part historical drama, telecast by CBC Nov. 21-22, an aide rushes into the office of Defence Sam Hughes' office and announces: “Gentlemen, we are at war.” “Thank God!” says Hughes heartily, “let us pray.” From there onwards, as Great War begins, Hughes meets his abiding passion, his raison d'etre as the drama carefully examines the complex personality of this military hero. Sam Hughes' War is an excellent vehicle for Gordon Pinsent's talents. His Sam Hughes is a fully realized creation: by turns blustering and pensive, vulnerable and whimping with a gritty self-pity, courageous and stubbornly nationalistic, paranoid and even pathetically feminine, a character so remarkable in his role as the must be a landmark in his career. But what makes this production work is the subtle edge of irony; an irony, that runs true through the drama, carefully, quietly undermining any simplistic notion of official heroism that such Great Wars give rise to.

Partly, this ironic edge is the result of focusing on the lives of top officers and politicians working safely behind the scenes of war's grim theatre, rather than detailing the drama of soldiers at the front: scenes that quiet . . . heroic. The boardrooms and offices and Cabinet meetings and Parliamentary arena and private luncheons of these war-time, international bureaucrats is excruciating to watch, in order to maintain the war effort, and run the melodrama.

To a degree, Sam Hughes' War becomes somewhat mired in the slough of these interrelationships. It is hard to keep track of all the players, hard to follow all the career-interests being advanced, especially when the British contingent of bureaucrats, officers, and politicians becomes included. But the primary relationship is that between Sam Hughes and the Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden. Pinsent's volatile Hughes and Dunning's dopey Borden play off each other very interestingly, leading up to a crisis of opposing wills that threatens the friendship, their political party, and the Canadian war effort.

But the essentially refined politesse of these personal political intrigues is contrasted by the occasional, brief scene at the front, where the real hero is the commander of the inferior equipment, the misery and mud of the trenches, the arrogance of the officers, the terrible anonymity of the ranks, and the occasional half-dozen corpses lie caught in the barbed-wire while two commanding officers stroll past the dead soldiers, a nonentity in an empty panorama.

In another brief scene, Prime Minister Borden visits the wounded at the front. He stoops down to comfort a soldier whose eyes are bandaged saying: “Your noble sacrifice will not have been in vain.” The nurse replies tersely that the
Tom Shandel’s Walls

Ought one to give a violent sociopath an even break?

The question remains very much open as the humanitarian social worker Joan Tremblay (Andree Pelletier) lumps to her inevitable, bloody, stop-action death at the end of Walls. A low-budget 16mm film based on the famous 1975 hostage-taking by Andy Bruce at the now defunct B.C. Penitentiary. The sociopath in this case is Danny Baker (Winston Rekert), who has been doing stretches of time in “the hole” (solitary confinement) and who, after a brief reprieve to ordinary cell life, possible only because of the exertions of Joan and a humanitarian lawyer (Alan Katz), becomes fighting mad when returned there. It is then that he plots and executes his escape attempt, with three other prisoners holding Joan and five other prison staff hostage.

Rekert turns in a good performance as Danny, an intelligent, we are impressed by his reading “The Waste Land” in solitary—easy with a bursker in the next cell and, we suspect, misguidedly sincere if brutal drug addict. He is at Western Penitentiary because he slit a guard’s belly back East in order to be transferred to this maximum-security institution near his mother, who is hospitalized nearby. Can we say that his heart was in the right place? Danny tells Joan that it is inhumane treatment that has forced him to use violence to get what he wants. This is not hard to believe; scenes of life in the hole show it to be what it no doubt is: a psychic torture. Given his surroundings and the soul-destroying treatment he receives from his guards, it is no wonder that Danny is violent. The question is, how far can he be trusted with more freedom?

Walls can provide no answer, only the suggestion that the solution lies far beyond the penitentiary precincts, in reform of our notions of crime and punishment; the question of what the true function of prison is, whether to punish, deter, or correct, has always been in debate. In the meantime prisons remain an uneasy mixture of the three, a pis aller until we make up our minds, and they are controlled in practice by the wardens and guards who operate them. Just how cruel the guards are is known only to the prisoners, and it is on this point that the effectiveness of Walls depends. Unfortunately, some of the film’s drama is dissipated in the uncertainty of a single issue: whether the guards did in fact plant drugs in the prisoners’ cells in order to have a pretext to send them back to the hole.

The question is important because the answer would tell us whether it is the guards’ cruelty or Danny’s inability to cooperate that sends him back to solitary and galvanizes him to plot a desperate escape. We hear only in passing, as a throwaway when Joan is talking to another prison official, that the drugs were planted, and there is doubt that she may have been deceived by Danny, to whom she has been growing more attached as the focus of her cause. And so, just whose fault is Danny’s final catastrophic eruption? We don’t know, and our lack of knowledge precludes any moral dilemma in Walls as Winston Rekert holds Andree Pelletier hostage.

Joyce Nelson


REVIEWS

Walls

man can’t hear him—hearing is gone as well.

Through the use of such brief moments from the front, the production subtly but effectively punctures the pomposity of bureaucrats using the war to advance their own political or military careers. This ironic edge keeps an interesting tension at work in the drama—a tension that is especially effective in the portrayal of Sam Hughes. For example, in a shot clearly alluding to the movie Patton, Hughes stands in front of the British/Canadian flag, giving a rousing speech about making the Canadian army “500,000 strong.” After a slight delay, there is a polite sprinkle of applause for his rousing words. Such non-verbal signifiers recur throughout—a tension that is especially effective in the portrayal of Sam Hughes.

The achievement of Sam Hughes’s War is that it is able to maintain the creative tension among its various levels of meaning.

I would have liked the role of Max Atkin (James Rankin) to have been more expanded, more clearly defined. As Canada’s first press publicist for the war effort, Atkin’s political maneuverings and insights into the use of film and print for propaganda purposes were clearly pivotal not only for the mobilization...