

poster Émile and his cat are the central motif. He is a boy of approximately six years of age, wearing a "Canadiens" hockey sweater and holding a beer in one hand. Literally abandoned by his mother, a lady of loose morals, he roams the back alleys with his cat and lives on Mae Wests, peanut butter and any booze he can find. A strange figure but also not without precedent in the history of Québécois cinema.

One of the most popular films of the 1950s in Quebec was *La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* (1951). In this story of a mistreated child, the threat to the rural society comes from a process of self-destruction and self-alienation. According to Tremblay-Daviault, this sado-masochistic process issues out of the depths of a society which has been kept in a total state of dispossession on the moral, as well as the economic, political and social planes. Émile in *Le Matou* certainly seems to stand for this part of the Québécois society's past. Therefore, he must die by the end of the film as it is a past which the new Québécois society understandably wants buried. At his funeral Florent's wife goes into labour. But this baby will be born with a silver spoon in her mouth. However, the triumph of Florent's prosperity is still troubled by the shadow of Ratablavsky. After all, the devil cannot die.

Why does *Le Matou* evidently return to the motifs and symbols of Québécois films of the '40s and '50s? Perhaps the answer lies in its targeted audience, that is, that of television and popular commercial cinema. The film was funded, in part, by Telefilm Canada, Radio-Québec and Radio-Canada. Telefilm's Canada's funding of commercially viable films has led to a reliance on the Hollywood model. *Le Matou* is also to be made into a six-part TV mini-series. In such a case it makes sense to use icons familiar to a mass audience. For the same reason, the film uses well-known TV actors in character parts. We are in the realm of the Hollywood film and, therefore, in the realm of a popular genre. As in any genre film, a conflict of values pertinent to the society contemporary with the film is used as the basis for a dramatic conflict. In *Le Matou*, as in most Hollywood films, this conflict is resolved by displacement: Ratablavsky and Slipskin, the two outsiders, take the blame for the destructive aspects of an individualistic capitalism. And so, the hero is able to found a new Québécois society which has somehow integrated the values of capitalism with the human and spiritual values of the traditional peasant culture.

**Mary Alemany-Galway •**

**LE MATOU** d. Jean Beaudin, p. Justine Héroux sc. Lise Lemay-Rousseau from the novel by Yves Beauchemin p. man. Micheline Garant loc. man. Michel Chauvin 1st a.d. Mircille Goulet d.o.p. Claude Agostini cam. Michel Caron sd. Claude Hazanavicius art. d. François Lamontagne set. des. Réal Ouellette set props. Charles Bernier head make-up Louise Mignault head hair Camille Bélanger cost. des. François Laplante cost. Manon Brodcur gaffer John Berric key grip François Dupéré p.c. Cinévidéo Inc., Radio-Québec, SRC, Telefilm Canada, Société générale du cinéma, Intial Groupe, Antenne 2 TV France/Film A2 Cdn. dist. Vivafilm l.p. Serge Dupire, Monique Spaziani, Jean Carmet, Guillaume Lemay-Thivierge, Julien Guiomar, Madeleine Robinson, Miguel Fernandez, Julien Poulin, Alexandra Stewart, Yvan Canucl, Rita Lafontaine.

Sturla Gunnarsson & Robert Collison's  
**Final Offer**

**F**inal Offer: Bob White and the Canadian Auto Workers' Fight For Independence, the 90-minute NFB/CBC co-production broadcast Nov. 26 on prime-time, is one of the most compelling documentaries ever made in this country. The film takes us into the heart of the 1984 Canadian United Auto Workers (UAW) contract negotiation

with General Motors, an intricate process that becomes a riveting two-front battle conducted by Canadian UAW leader Bob White against senior-management of the American UAW and GM. In challenging the most powerful labour union in the U.S. (subsequent to which the Canadian UAW broke away from the American 'international'), as well as the world's largest industrial corporation, Bob White and his inner circle engage in a battle of nerves, bluff, strategy and stubbornness that takes on all the excitement of a political thriller.

The progress of events in this historic confrontation is gripping in itself, but co-directors Sturla Gunnarsson and Robert Collison heighten the tension by using techniques that seem to bring the

viewer right into the centre of the unfolding drama. In part, this is the result of the *cinéma-vérité* style, with its emphasis upon a moving camera, tight close-ups, and editing rhythms that emphasise cuts from one scene of tension almost directly into the next, with virtually no diminishment of the gathering energy. But perhaps even more fascinating, and subtly effective, is their use of a unique voice-over narration which plays the role of taking us right into the mind of Bob White himself. Time and again, the narrator tells us precisely what White is feeling or thinking, and why, during a phone conversation with his UAW adversary, the U.S. union president Owen Beiber; a confrontation with GM head of industrial relations Rod Andrew; a stressful moment at the bargaining table or with his own Canadian inner circle.

This style of voice-over is highly involving, and subtly becomes a means for the viewer's identifying with White as we experience the unfolding of events through his perspective. Coupled with a very clear detailing of exactly what is at issue moment by moment in the two-pronged negotiations process, this intimate voice-over fully includes us so that the impact of each stage in the tense situation hits home viscerally.

The film also has a highly dynamic structure, interweaving scenes of increasing stressfulness at the auto-assembly production line – the noise of the drills and the disturbingly metallic surroundings underline the difficult working conditions where a worker has to wait up to an hour just to be to go to the toilet – with the scenes of strategizing in White's office. Through this structure, we never lose sight of the Canadian workers for whom White is battling. As well, the scenes at the auto plant convey a certain vivid, *macho* dignity (no female workers are seen) which matches the negotiating style of the "tough, but steady" Bob White.

But it is in focusing centrally upon White himself that the film maintains its momentum and its political impact. The man's style, with all his energy, toughness, humour and political commitment, fully informs the film and makes it a story of personal triumph as well as a victory for Canadian labour. *Final Offer* is essentially about taking risks, not just in labour negotiations, but in every endeavour, including filmmaking. The skills of Sturla Gunnarsson, Robert Collison and their crew in terms of courage, talent and risk-taking, fully match those of their subject, the maverick labour leader, Bob White. This production is nothing less than a milestone in Canadian documentary history.

**Joyce Nelson •**

**FINAL OFFER** d. Sturla Gunnarsson sc./co-d. Robert Collison ed. Jeff Warren cam. Leonard Gilday loc.sd. Brian Avery, Ian Hendry mus. Jack Lenz narr. Henry Ramer asst.film ed. Susan Shipton asst.cam. Joel Guthroc add.cam. Rodney Charters add.loc.sd. Wolf Ruck re-rec. Terry Cooke p.asst. Renc Gluck unit admin. Julia Sreny, Sonya Munro p. Sturla Gunnarsson, Robert Collison senior p. John Kramer exec.p. John Spotton. The producers wish to thank: The membership and the leadership of the United Auto Workers Union in Canada, General Motors of Canada Ltd, The Royal York Hotel p.c. The National Film Board of Canada, (Ontario Production Studio), in association with The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.



• Canadian UAW head Bob White and advisors in *Final Offer*: draped in the Canadian flag