

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS



Angèle Knight as Catou Brunet in **The Mystery of the Million Dollar Hockey Puck**

new comedy team. Millette (Belletête) has Peter Lorre's alligator eyes and the same nasal drawl, "No rough stuff when we grab the kids, Napoleon." Kurt Schiegl, whose bald head and large nose I vaguely recognize from some shaving cream commercial, plays the lumpish Napoleon.

There is something satisfyingly palatable about this film yet, in the end, it lacks Crunch. The problem might be one of pacing, certainly strong elements of action and comedy are present in the script.

The important thing is, the film was made. A maturing film industry in Canada cannot ignore the fact that young Canadians, now developing a cinematic aesthetic from American films and television, will one day be called upon to support our national cinema.

Joan Irving

Beyond Shelter

d. Ronald H. Blumer, **ph.** John Geeza and Erik Block, **additional footage,** Bill Ewing, **ed.** Ron Blumer **sd.** Julian Olson, **narration:** Budd Knapp, **exec. p.** Gilbert Rosenberg, M.D., **p.c.** Maimonides Hospital and Home, 1975, **color:** 16mm **running time** 25 minutes, **dist.** McGill University Film Library.

Ron Blumer's **Beyond Shelter** is educational in the best sense of the word; not only does it teach, it raises questions and goes on inside one's head long after the film has stopped. Subtitled "Ideas from Denmark on Housing for the Elderly", it is an intense and provocative film whose impact is to underline the indifference with which older people are treated in North America. Although the film takes us to Denmark and shows us a variety of housing, it is centered around questions of concern and apathy rather than around questions of architecture.

The opening black and white scenes of Maimonides Hospital (a chronic care facility in Montreal) are eloquent and beautifully done. The antiseptic hallways shine as the camera moves silently across old faces full of character but now subdued with age and helplessness. In 'recreation rooms' the wheelchairs are gathered around the television but little note is taken. No one speaks to anyone else. The air seems heavy with drugs, distress and monotony. When the camera begins to follow an elderly patient shuffling quickly down a long and empty corri-

dor, Blumer has us where he wants us; we know the woman is trying to escape rather than to go for a walk. And we are at once reassured and surprised at our cynicism when she is turned around by an aid and taken back to her room.

What would we become if *those people* should be out among us? It comes as no surprise when the medical director of the hospital tells us that though Maimonides is the best chronic facility for the aging in Montreal, he wouldn't want to see his mother institutionalized there. The institution itself seems to have made the patients different from the people outside the walls.

The camera moves on to Denmark, this time in color, showing lively street scenes, old folks sitting together on park benches or walking down the street. We see and learn a lot. As a Copenhagen city planner explains a new public housing project geared to make life easy and stimulating for the aged, the emotional tension of the film relaxes. Here are apartments for the aged, built in a low lying complex which includes a grocery store, a laundry and a day-care center for children. There is a communal dining room for those who wish to eat together but each apartment is equipped with its own kitchen. A constant-care wing is there for those people who become ill, and so they are cared for without being uprooted from their neighbors. People exchange services and keep one another company because of the diversity within the living structures: those who are less ill help the others, neighbors do each other a good turn. There is an acceptance that life means change, and that people are resourceful, regardless of age.

The film deals with attitudes. There are scenes in which the elderly themselves tell about being able to look out the window and to see the children. They even complain sometimes about the noise and fuss which the children cause. The film teaches too. There is a marvellous apartment built for the handicapped wheelchair person, complete with adjustable counters, wheel-in showers and emergency cords to alert the support staff in the building. Although the capital cost of

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building such units is high, the reduction in service staff is great, and the apartments are within the possibilities of Denmark's budget.

The North American approach to the aged has been institutional: build a nursing home, build a hospital, categorize and regroup. The cumulative effect of this approach has been to separate older people from the larger society, to set them aside, to reduce them to onlookers. They then become 'hangers-on', and soon they become *other*. It is this approach which comes under attack in **Beyond Shelter**. While in Denmark there seems to be life and joy once shelter is assured, in Canada there seems to be only sparkling corridors and apathy. The care may be adequate, but is anyone concerned?

Some spectators will say that the film is unfair. The patients shown at Maimonides are, after all, severely handicapped, often senile and incontinent. No one in Denmark seems so poorly off, and one can't help wondering if the situation of the chronic patient there is much better than here.

But it is not the film's role to be fair. To say that Canada is not doing a good job in housing the elderly, to say that the public attitude is one of negligence and indifference is justified. To document the destitution of the elderly is to understand the mockery in the phrase 'golden age'. Blumer knows this, and he builds his case strongly in **Beyond Shelter**.

Connie Tadros

A Matter of Choice

d. Allan Goldstein, research/interviewer, Howard Hutton, narr. Christine Johnston, ph. James Roby, asst. ph. Scott Crowe, ed. Rudy Buttignol, sd. David Hopper, sd. ed. Peter Maynard, sd. re-rec. Roger Viner, animation Chris Terry, Owen Burgess, m. Bruce Pennycook played by Jon Goldsmith, Gene Martynec, Bruce Pennycook, p. Jason Paikowsky, p.c. Tetra Media Productions, color.

Informing and being entertaining is never easy, and it is to the credit of the team that produced **A Matter of Choice** that they have attempted to tackle as complex a subject as nuclear

energy development in such a lyrical, painless way.

Using a Goderich homemaker, an Elliot Lake miner and the Chief of the Whitefish Indian Band on Manitoulin Island, in addition to Ontario farmers and others, the production team of Tetra Media has tried to give the viewer the "people" view of a major new source of energy.

Obviously there are compelling reasons to examine the question of nuclear development. As energy needs increase, organizations such as Ontario Hydro look to nuclear energy as a possible source of power, without, as this film points out, considering fully the effects of this development.

A Matter of Choice tries to deal with this question. It does this by staying away from "experts" because, as researcher-interviewer Howard Hutton puts it, it was felt that some of the complicated technical questions involved would confuse the issues. "The basic problems remain the same," says Hutton.

And so the film takes us on a tour of the after effects of embarking on nuclear development in Ontario. We are initiated into the process and effects of nuclear development with some well done animation. We listen to the Ontario farmer complain of the damage to his farmland, to the housewife concerned for the safety and future of her children. We hear of the sudden effects of an influx of workers and families into a small Ontario community.

Probably the strongest part of the film is when we meet the Elliott Lake miner who like many others has suffered the effects of unprotected work conditions. In a raspy voice that itself is a witness to the years of sweat and toil suffered by this miner we have a glimpse of the raw emotion that this subject can instill. "Cancer," he says, "is something I can't change." All he can hope for, he says, is that others will be warned.

It is just this involvement - this soul, this emotion - that is missing from much of the film. Perhaps to the uninitiated the film is a surprise, an awakening to the evils of unrestrained expansion. Even so, it is an awakening troubled by a lack of substance. We know there is a problem, but we aren't given enough information to go further.

The presentation of many of the interviewees is disturbing in itself. Comments faded in underneath each other present us with an interesting technique but gives the impression

that what they're saying isn't important.

Great original music, fine color photography and sound that has an unusual presence for a documentary should have hurtled this low budget (\$25,000) film into the envious position of a solid tool for discussion. As a companion to a more substantive related film, as is presently being considered by Challenge for Change, the film should come off well.

The reason it doesn't seem to come off as well as it could is the filmmaker's hesitancy to offer any solution, or at the very least, to make it abundantly clear that we absolutely have to do something about the problem.

Ending a film with a shot of a girl proposing a moratorium on nuclear development to a citizen's meeting, asking "Will anybody second the motion?" is not the note upon which we will stride to battle.

Wojtek Gwiazda

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