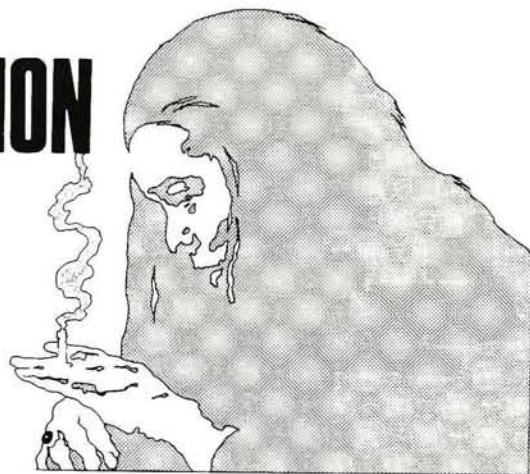




KATHLEEN SHANNON

Laurinda Hartt

Working Mothers Series



As the *En tant que femmes* program indicates, women are playing an increasingly active role in filmmaking at the Film Board, increased activity that extends beyond this one Société Nouvelle-based program.

Within the English-language Challenge for Change, Kathleen Shannon is presently involved in completing the last four in her group of 12 films collectively called, *Working Mothers*. Eight of the films have been completed; all are in colour and range in length from seven to fifteen minutes. Each film deals with a working mother in a different life situation: from university professor in *Tiger on a Tight Leash*, and nurse in *Luckily I Need Little Sleep*, to a mother on welfare in *Would I Ever Like to Work*; from the mother of a nuclear family in *They Appreciate You More*, to members of a commune in *Extensions of the Family*. (See list for all the titles.)

Kathleen Shannon explains, "While I was doing my research it had struck me that working mothers had a lot in common, so my intention was to show the similarities by interviewing people of obviously different age, different economic situation, different background, where it becomes clear that the problems at the core are really the same."

Originally making one hour-long film, Kathleen Shannon soon discovered that, as she took the film apart, the impact increased until she realized that the material was most effective in short segments. "That way I wasn't building in how people should interpret the material by how things were juxtaposed. My films are a kind of channel, a means of getting reality across, rather than building a new reality out of raw materials the way very cinematic films are made. We hope that people can integrate their own experience into their interpretation of the films to see where their own lives are represented in each film. We're hoping that people can move beyond seeing a particular film and wanting to know "what's happening to her now", to seeing how that particular person, captured in the film at a particular time and in a particular place, provides something to learn from, a place to start identifying one's problems as the first step towards a solution." (*Pot Pourri*, June, 1974)

Distribution began this spring, concentrating on people who were then planning university and community college curricula, and on "hard-to-reach" people such as those mothers working either exclusively outside of their homes or those working exclusively at home. The second wave of distribution will come in the fall when the last four films will be finished. An innovative method of distribution will include a great deal of supportive material automatically accompanying each film so that people can "take off on their own" as well as employ the film in a structured workshop-type setting.

Of the four remaining films, Kathleen Shannon will make three and produce the fourth — *The Spring and Fall of Nina Polanski* — to be made by two other women. "For a while last year," she adds, "it looked to me as if making these films could become a way of life, because people keep suggesting more. Maybe it's a matter now of us finding other funding to

make more films. Maybe we need to use another format. Or maybe this is just about enough of this kind of film. I don't know. Maybe it will come clear in the fall when the other four we're working on now are finished. Ideally, I'd like to make another three films to complete this group: The middle-aged woman going back to work or going to work for the first time, the parent single by choice, and maybe one about alternative lifestyles." (*Pot Pourri*, June, 1974)

Her reaction to the possible formation of a woman's unit for 1975? She feels that a women's unit in English production at the Board would be justified because "the credibility of women's films would come about a lot better if women worked together for awhile. . . . We've been working each on our own for such a long time. And I think we could develop really different kinds of documentaries. I think that could happen. I think it could be very fine." (*Pot Pourri*, June, 1974)

Barbara Greene, a former freelance writer-researcher-producer became involved with the Film Board when others encouraged her to pursue a means of expressing what she *really* wanted to say about things she cared about. "I haven't done many films," she says, "I'm a novice. But I've wanted to make films for the last nine or ten years." For the NFB series, *West*, shown on CBC this year, Barbara Greene directed a half-hour film, *Ruth and Harriet, Two Women of the Peace*, about the contrasting lives of two women living on the Peace River frontier.

"The film itself doesn't do what it should do. If I'd been sure of myself as a filmmaker, and had more time to work on it I think I would have made it richer, tougher. I would have made it more real. You would have seen more parts of their personalities. It would have been a bit more interesting. A little bit more dynamic, a bit more total." (From *Pot Pourri*, June, 1974) Despite her reservations, the film is an insightful and haunting work that establishes Barbara Greene's talents as a filmmaker who is capable of doing far more than just the "one or two lovely things in film" that she hopes to create in the future.

Within yet another branch of the NFB — the Media-Research Division — Dina Lieberman has made a videotape "film" (now transferred to 16mm black and white film and soon available c/o Dina Lieberman at Media-Research, NFB, Montreal) entitled *Still a Woman*. About breast-cancer, the film "started out as a woman's film, a woman's problem, but I feel now that it's a people's film. . . . I see it very much as something going much further culturally, even internationally. Obviously it's not just a Canadian thing. I mean . . . for me the fundamental issue was this incredible emphasis on breasts. And also the larger issue of how anyone really begins to cope with their lives again after a tremendous traumatic experience." (From *Pot Pourri*, June, 1974)

She has since done a freelance project on day-care, sponsored by the Montreal Family Services Association, and is presently working on a film on computer dating.

If you have only
one place to go
and two ways to get there:

Why not go first class?

NO CLASS

1. Hello, who do you wish to see.
2. You need this film tomorrow — Can't promise anything.
3. Sorry, I can't book screening time til Friday.
4. Friday (11:02 a.m.). Sorry your time is up, the soap company are looking at a demo.

FIRST CLASS

1. Hi George, how're you doing. Let me get Tom.
2. Sure it'll be ready around 10:00.
3. Shit man, you can screen it at our place at 10:15. (If it runs into noon and your client likes it — we'll buy the wine & cheese lunch).
4. "Hey, thats fine, let's do a transfer, record and mix while we're hot".

Susie, get me O'Neill at Mirrophonic.

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