

SCAN LINES

by Joyce Nelson

"Fabulous" Fiftieth

Service, closing down regional centres of production, and other "painful draconian measures".

In following the coverage of this situation – not just the words used by the press, but the language of the key players – it's hard not to recognize some extraordinarily telling imagery at work. All the cuts and axings and slicings conjure up some horrifying axe-murder from a Stephen King novel. On the other hand, the talk of reductions and "nothing left to trim" and "not an ounce of fat left" suggest a kind of imposed anorexia nervosa at work. And perhaps there we have an accurate image for the CBC: fifty-year-old downer starved to a skeleton and mer-

cilessly ripped and slashed in the process.

With that image in mind, it was strange indeed to watch CBC's **Fabulous 50th** – the telecast aired on Sunday, November 2nd, in "celebration" of the fact of having dragged its bleeding and starved skeleton to the steps of this anniversary. Perhaps not surprisingly, the production seemed somewhat hallucinatory: floating post-cards of interviews soaring into and out of the foreground, while a strange mix of video-clips danced behind in the background, usually making little sense with words of the interviewees and sometimes contradicting them outright. What seemed a more surprising aspect of this hallucination was its rather odd optimism

about the place and role of the CBC, as though it were not now facing possibly the worst moment of its history. Bypassing a significant opportunity to actually spell out for viewers the real situation and conditions, the production seemed too content to evoke a sense that everything is "fabulous", not to worry about dear old mum. The very thinness of the production, however, as well as its hallucinatory qualities, tended to undermine the contrived well-being.

In a way, all this is exacerbated by the current press focus on the "misplaced" \$57 million that the CBC somehow "lost" in its switch to computerized accounting. Playing on themes of mismanagement and ineptness, this focus tends to overlook a larger question that seems far more important than computer-error. It would be much more interesting to know what happened to the \$600 million or so that has been cut from the CBC by Parliament over the last few years. There's a bit of accounting, and accounting-for, that deserves real attention.

The 50th Anniversary of the CBC occurs in the midst of extraordinarily debilitating conditions which call into question the very life of the Corporation. Already long reeling from previous budgetary axings – federal cutbacks of \$153 million just in the last two years – the CBC is currently preparing for yet another \$65 million shortfall in its operating budget: the result of rising inflation, as well as Finance Minister Mirabel Wilson's order that all government departments and agencies reduce salary budgets by two percent. Nor is the CBC expected to get any substantial increase in its annual grant from Parliament.

Recognizing the impossibility of the situation, both Pierre Juneau and Denis Harvey, head of English television, have said that the cuts would now have to come in terms of programs, that "there is not an ounce of fat left" anywhere else. The possibilities include "slicing one or two hours of Canadian programming a week", axing the stereo FM radio network, shutting down the Northern

A recent screening at the National Film Board office in Toronto organized by Gerry Flahive, the super energetic and newly-appointed Ontario Publicity Co-ordinator, revealed a fistful of interesting stuff, and all from regions other than Ontario...

SHIPBUILDER

A young girl's voice relates the strange story of Tom Sukanen, an immigrant from Finland back in the '20s, who built a ship on the Prairies, 17 miles from the nearest water – the South Saskatchewan River. He devised his own equipment and tools, and planned to haul the ship overland to Hudson's Bay. The hull weighed around 20 tons and, on a good day, he made 20 yards. For more than two years he headed towards the river. He then left the ship on the Prairies and went to the river bank to work on the boiler. People started saying he was strange – starving, and working himself to death. He was eventually taken to an asylum, and within a year he was dead. The hull of his ship can still be seen rusting on the Prairies.

An interestingly spare re-creation which preserves a tiny episode in Canada's past – with the question of Why? remaining unanswered. The little girl's narration, as one who remembered the eccentric shipbuilder, is a charming touch.

exec. p. Michael Scott. d. Stephen Surjik. p./cam. Charles Konowal. sc. Ken Mitchell. ed. Norman Sawchyn. sd.ed. Carol Wenaus. mus. Marcelle Nokony. Greg Zuck. Narr. Kristjana Gunnars. A Prairie Region production with the assistance of CBC/Saskatchewan. 6 min. Col.

THE LAST DAYS OF OKAK

The ship Harmony visited Okak, the Inuit settlement, twice a year with supplies, and took away fish and fur. When it arrived in November 1918 it was, as usual, like a holiday. Five days after the Harmony left, the Spanish flu started.

Women who were children then, still have vivid recollections of the deadly epidemic and how members of their families perished. The terri-

ble nightmare when the dead outnumbered the living; when the dogs, crazy with hunger, fought for the corpses; when houses had to be burned, and a hundred dogs were shot. Most of the people who had left for the hunting camp were also stricken with flu and, out of 36, only 18 were left to bury. A little girl who survived in a shack, today talks of being protected by a dog who kept the others from attacking her.

Three hundred and fifty-three people died in Okak, and it was abandoned in the summer of 1919. People still come to the bay to fish and visit the site where relatives died – and the rhubarb patch still survives and thrives. A present-day Inuit brass band plays "Now thank we all our God" over the end credits.

A chilling document that brings this forgotten settlement back to the present-day by a skillful use of archival stills, and of voice-over narration based on diaries and writings at the time of the epidemic. Authenticity is reinforced by survivors recalling the horrors, and glimpses of the desolate area as it is today.

exec. p. Barrie Cowling. p. Kent Martin. d. Anne Budsell. Nigel Markham. sc. Anne Budsell. photos/ed. Nigel Markham. sd. Jim Rillie. sd.ed. Eric Emery. Narr. Waldo Scharwey, Fran Williams. An Atlantic Region production, with assistance of The Canada Council Explorations Program, Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative and Newfoundland & Labrador Arts Council. 24 mins. Col.

STREET KIDS

It's estimated that 200 juvenile prostitutes work the Vancouver streets, both male and female. At a group home, they find some approximation of normality for a short while, and discuss – haltingly in most cases – their anger, frustration, and the desire to lead another sort of life.

The endlessly patient and supportive child-care workers listen to the sad litanies. Young men beaten by fathers and stepfathers and leaving home in the early teens; young girls sexually abused as small children by fathers, experiencing disagreements with mothers and unhappiness at school. Attempted suicide at 14, pregnant at 15, "The tricks are goofy." Life on the street doesn't seem much better, though it may bring in money, most of that goes for endless cigarettes and drugs.

The way out is difficult, and usually hampered by poor education and a chronic lack of self-esteem and general knowhow. "It took me a year to apply for a social security number..." A social worker points out that it is little by little, and it isn't going to happen overnight.

The gritty, non-glamorous netherworld of teen prostitution is well captured by the black-and-white photography. Unsensational, devoid of patronizing attitudes and never preachy, this small film is a good kicking-off point for straightforward discussion of a sad, serious problem in today's world.

d. Peg Campbell. cam. Moira Simpson. ed. Haida Paul. p. Jennifer Torrance. exec. p. John Taylor. A Pacific Region production. 21 min. b&w

GET A JOB

Doo-wop, doo-wop, da-da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da – and it's into the saga of Bob Dog, a young animal in search of a job. At home in the Tacky Arms, his wife is leaving him to pursue her own career – just like a soap opera, with bags of emotion and an organ thrumming in background. Bob D. is dog-tired and, lulled to sleep in front of the television, he dreams of getting work. To various musical beats of the '40s and later – Presley, Carmen Miranda, the Andrews Sisters, plus a singing frog (a steal from Warner Bros. "One Froggy

Evening"?) – his odyssey unfolds. Mailing the résumé, telephone follow-up, dressing neatly for a series of interviews, bucking the vicious competition, not aggressive enough, too aggressive with a Mr. Pig executive – and so it goes.

A wonderful tribute to the early animated styles of Disney, crammed full of movement, stylishly coloured, with loud and brash original music that fits right in. Oh, yes – Bob Dog does get a job, but *how* is a tad too cynical for this reviewer's taste. But, coming right at the end of a highly entertaining presentation of a "message", it does little harm to the film as a whole.

p. Derek Mazur, Michael Scott, Brad Caslor. exec.p. Michael Scott. d./anim. Brad Caslor. sc./lyrics Brad Caslor, Derek Mazur, Jay Brazeau. mus. Jay Brazeau. add.anim. Cordell Barker. Voice of Bob Dog, Al Simons. A Prairie Region production. 10 mins. 16mm.

CARRIED AWAY

A man walks through a sombre, rocky, black-and-white photograph of a landscape. A coloured animated butterfly entices him on and then transforms itself into spectacles (the rose-coloured variety). Fantastic things happen – the man is in the centre of a rainbow, twirling it about his fingers like a long ribbon, bubbles turn into balloons, and meteors shower vivid confetti particles. In an animated setting, a menacing face glowers in a cloud, but the man stands firm in his cloak of many colours. A blinding flash! – and he floats out towards the woman in the yellow cloud, his spectacles fall... and turn into a coloured butterfly.

The animator is the man braving the vicissitudes of the creative process, the ups and downs, the bright and the grey moments. An inventive, though slight, little film with a light touch that's presented with stylish style.

exec.p. Michael Scott. p. Vonnice von Helmolt, Michael Scott. d. Vonnice von Helmolt. co-d./anim. Alan Pakarnyk. mus. Randolph Peters. ed./sd.ed. Ken Rodeck. A Prairie Region production. 5 mins. 35mm/16mm/VHS/Beta/3/4.