

ARTS

Harbouring War in our midst

BY JENN BECK

The power behind the film, "No Harbour For War" lies in its conviction that we are all symbolically implicated in the actions of our community. By focusing on Halifax, and specifically on the harbour, the guise of a "sleepy" city is dispelled and we are forced to confront the militarism which insidiously pervades all aspects of our culture.

The film, produced locally and independently by Chuck Lapp and Bill McKiggan, chronicles the military history of Halifax from its beginnings as a fortress town. It pinpoints the episodes of the most frantic activity, and delineates a continuing thread of horror as Halifax comes alive from war to war. The Halifax explosion is recalled vividly, portrayed less as the lamentable accident of the popular media and more as the direct result of the military presence in the harbour.

Betty Peterson of the Metro Peace Action Center says, "Everyone realizes that Halifax is the naval bastion of Canada, and it is the historical aspect of [the film] that will really bring it home to all Canadians."

"Everyone will be interested in one city's experiences during peace and war, but the primary aspect will not be for them to examine their own community, but to realize that all communities face the same issues." Bill McKiggan concurs, "That's why we called it 'No Harbour For War,' to stimulate discussion in communities across the country, not merely those with harbours."

The film clearly shows the polarization between "big business" and the citizenry during the Gulf war. Several speakers at rallies in the film define cowardice as the refuge of the decision-makers, whereas the truly brave are the men and women who shipped out to the Persian Gulf.

Before the Gulf war, the harbour was a haven for NATO and American warships, with a high increase in harbour traffic throughout the 1980's. At no time did

these vessels have to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons on board, nor did they have to assume liability for any accident that may have occurred due to the alleged weaponry.

At one point in the film, we are introduced to a Portsmouth, New Hampshire dock worker who testified in court against the Navy, saying that he and his co-workers were exposed to dangerous amounts of radiation from the nuclear arsenals on board the docked ships. Members of the workforce have since died from cancer related diseases.

"It's an issue of safety and an issue of war," McKiggan says. "The Department of National Defense

Rita MacNeil. We have tattoos, airshows, and US Marines being made honorary Nova Scotians and performing alongside children's choirs and gymnastic groups.

As Betty Peterson says, "To spend the great portion of our cultural dollars on glorifying destruction is very wrong. Morally, we cannot afford this expense and energy all for destruction and killing, especially considering the state of social services." No Harbour For War makes us painfully aware of how the military culture has been given ranking status within Scottish, Mi'kmaq, and Black histories in Nova Scotia.

The film is unabashedly one-

sided. As Betty Peterson says, "I'm sick and tired of always giving the other side their say on my time. Their message is continually given, it is the official media line."

"Our film is a positive film about the citizens of Halifax," says McKiggan. "We have a positive hope to change the reality of militarism into its opposite."

No Harbour For War is captivating for Haligonians (if only because we are treated to seeing people we know battling the many faces of Halifax weather). The point that will captivate all Canadians is its message of hope and dedication, "as the people must organize for just and lasting peace."



PHOTO: MARK SIMKINS

Unhappy anniversary

considered Halifax harbour as the locale to build nuclear subs- they just don't care about people."

Also, it is clear that morally we cannot afford complicity with the military and business leaders any longer, and as citizens it is our obligation to stop it. We can't trust the two big superpowers anymore, it's time to be neutral, to get out of NATO, and to stop supporting both sides."

Militarism is every bit as much a part of Nova Scotian culture as

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NO HARBOUR FOR WAR

SATURDAY • JAN. 18/92 • VISION TV
10 P.M. AND 4 A.M. • CHANNEL 35

*No Harbour For War is the sole
Canadian film to examine the
issues underlying both the
outbreak of the Persian Gulf
War and popular opposition to it.*