

Lights, Camera, Action!

By DAN MERKUR

There is a scene in McCabe and Mrs. Miller, in which McCabe, played by Warren Beatty, sees a rider approaching the mountain mining town of which he owns the mines, bar, whore house and is first citizen. He knows there are killers out after him. He approaches the man on horseback with gunhand ready for conflict. He walks slowly, menacing. There is a while when no one knows what is to happen.

Then the rider says, "I don't want no trouble, mister."
 "What are you here for then?"
 "I heard you got a whore house here. I ain't seen a woman in months."
 "Well come on, then, I'll show you the place," says McCabe.

Later there is a scene in the brothel where the cowboy comes down the stairs and asks, "Who's next?"
 "Well, which one do you like?" asks one of the ladies.

"Hell, I'm going to have all of you before I'm through."
 One of the whores giggles and whispers to one of her girl friends, motioning with her fingers to show the cowboy has a tiny tool. He feels like hell.

But when he leaves, the five whores stand at the door and kiss him tenderly, asking him to return. He's been a good man.

Well, he wanders over to the general store. He has to cross a footbridge across a chasm with a river below to get to it. On the bridge is a gunfighter target practising. He asks the gunfighter, a young angry kid with a gun, to hold up while he crosses, because he doesn't want to get shot.

"Why do you want to come across?"
 "I want to buy some socks. I plumb wore mine out in the whore house over there. You been there? It's really good." And he smiles.

The gunfighter is having none of this. "Let me see the socks."

"Oh, come on, you're joshing. Let me come across."

"You're wearing a gun."

"Hell, I ain't getting shot over a pair of socks."

"What's the matter? Your gun no good?"

"The gun's alright. I just can't shoot."

"Well let me see it. Maybe I can fix it for you."

"Alright," says the affable cowpuncher, half turning his back as he reaches into his holster with his left hand to hand it across. The gunhappy killer draws rapidly and murders him, just to work his meanness out of him for the moment.

Berton's last spike a historical success

By CARL STIEREN

In his latest book, Pierre Berton has not only written an account of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway from 1881 to 1885; he has sketched out a social and economic history of the CPR boom years in Western Canada. The book begins disappointingly with an over-dramatized portrayal of the driving of the last spike, but recovers with a detailed account of the deals in land and politics that followed the rails west. However, there is an omission. The fact that the railway was completed five years later than was promised by the federal government when British Columbia entered Confederation — a fact that John Lorne McDougall, an author more favourably disposed to the CPR, does not hide.

The tales of what the railway did to the expanding frontier in northern Ontario, the North West Territories, and British Columbia are fascinating. Winnipeg was transformed into a modern city; the towns of Brandon, Regina, and Moose Jaw appeared almost overnight; and settlers, speculators, and squatters rushed ahead of End of Track to claim land where they guessed (often wrongly) that the railroad would go through. In 1883, in spring and summer alone, 88,000 immigrants bound for the North West Territories arrived in Canada. Most of these immigrants were lured, as Berton points out, by the exaggerated claims of George Stephen's pamphlets which were circulated in Europe. Many of the immigrants filled the coffers of Sir Hugh Allan with their steamship fares to Canada. The author does not omit the fact that both George Stephen and Sir Hugh Allan were major shareholders of the CPR.

A group of townspeople look on, horrified. This vignette, a tiny, throw-away subplot is indeed the metaphor for the major action of the film, the love story between McCabe and Mrs. Miller, played by Julie Harris, the opium-addicted hard-nosed madam of McCabe's whore house. McCabe is a nice guy, essentially, out to carve himself a hunk of property, because his motto, as he keeps saying when things are rough and he has to bolster his courage, is, "Money and pain. Money and pain." That's the only reality he knows: pain inside, and money to help him stay alive, to buy drink and women to help salve the pain. He's a tender man who just wishes once Mrs. Miller would be nice to him without asking for money. That's all the love he wants.

Made by Robert Altman, the brilliant director of MASH and Brewster McCloud, McCabe and Mrs. Miller is a grim, realistic, tender, loving, hard-boiled accurate portrait of the

The profits of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company — made after numerous government grants, loans, and dividend guarantees, and finally after a first mortgage on all the property of the CPR — went to a select few. The author mentions that one block of 200,000 shares of stock was sold at twenty-five cents to the dollar to George Stephen and others, who then earned an effective interest of almost twelve per cent (p. 257). Then there was the political misuse of the railway, almost as great as the economic scandals: Pierre Berton quotes letters to John A. Macdonald from William Van Horne, in which he says that all CPR workers loyal to the Tories were transported to the polls, while those opposed were sent far away on election day (p. 266).

The Second Riel Rebellion, in 1885, is unfortunately treated as a side effect to the building of the CPR; in fact, the real causes of the Rebellion were the economic exploitation and political mistreatment of the Metis and the Indians by land speculators, settlers, and by the federal government. Though pages are devoted to describing the transport of troops by the CPR from Toronto to Fort Qu'Appelle, the Rebellion itself is covered as if it were secondary to the construction of the CPR in historical importance.

Fortunately, Berton does not come to the cold economic judgment of Harold Adams Innis in his *History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* — that all in all, the CPR was profitable.

The Last Spike: The Great Railway, 1881-1885 by Pierre Berton, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, \$10.00, 478pp.

finding of a western town, at the time in North American history when men killed just out of spite and got away with it. The photography is magnificent, the acting superb, the direction first-rate. The story line is tragic and consequently beautiful. I enjoyed it very very much. If you like westerns, you'll love this. If you don't, you still might like it. It transcends just being another oater.

In Lecture Hall 2, Room L, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 23, there will be a preview screening of Bless the Beasts and Children a new film Stanley Kramer (High Noon, The Wild One, Caine Mutiny, Inherit the Wind, Ship of Fools, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner). Mr. Kramer will be present to answer questions, following the screening, which will be free.

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