

# NAKED CAME POLONSKY: *From Commune to Rip-off*

By JOE POLONSKY

There is one point in *Commune*, a participatory play presented by Richard Schechner and the Performance Group at York last week-end, where a distraught actress looking over the rest of the cast acting out a rape-orgy-violence-type scene, yells out "This is disgusting." So, at last, after 60 minutes of theatrical and philosophical clichés, a profound insight into an otherwise barren production is made. But how could this be? Richard Schechner, as anyone who has seen *Dionysus in 69* can tell you, is one of the gurus of modern participatory theatre. And this was no home towncast he brought with him. These were the heavies from New York City. And if you can't trust the heavies from New York City to put on a good play, who can you trust?

I guess the first thing that can be said about this participatory work is that it was not. Any scrap of audience participation that was thrown at the masses to keep them happy because "they were involved" was totally extraneous to the meaning or unfolding of the play. About the only "meaningful" instance of audience participation was a scene in which members of the audience were invited to the middle of the stage to pretend that they were the victims at My Lai. So, about forty people merrily waltzed into the centre of the floor, giggling to themselves on how much fun it was to be part of the My Lai Massacre. Although I do believe I heard one young lady say that if she had her druthers, she would rather portray a starving refugee in India.

I do not think *Commune* was so much a work, as much

as a collage of leftover Hair. Therefore one of the themes of the play tended to be that the United States of America has some faults. The United States is apparently not your run of the mill Garden of Eden. So this brings us to Charles Manson and his merry men. The play seemed to be depicting the lives and myths involved in the Manson murder case. The Manson family believed that they were the chosen people. They were to reconceive America. They believed that by killing the pigs, Sharon Tate and her friends, they would be providing the spark that would set off the great American Revolution. It was the Manson mission to save America from her sins. America would be reborn.

Charles Manson, besides being one of the most macabre, is undeniably one of the most fascinating individuals in modern American history. And yet the Performance Group managed to reduce his story to a string of baked over Yippie tripe. And I can catch that for free on the Walter Cronkite Show.

So it was in this condescending mood of being fed up with the hip trip that I half-heartedly went off to see the film *Rip-Off*. But I did feel that I had some obligation as it was a Canadian film, it did have a Canadian setting, it did use Canadian actors, was paid for by, I think, Canadian funds, and was directed by Don Shebib, the most prominent of Canadian directors. Well *Rip-Off* is an unqualified winner. It is very funny, very touching, very believable, and essentially very Canadian.

*Rip-Off* is the story of four very average boys in a Toronto high school who are bored to tears. They are

nice boys, who have nice liberal parents and have nice liberal teachers. But the boys were born just too damn late to be of any good. "Everything has already been discovered"! So in their Easter vacation of their graduating year, the four of them head up to the Northern wilds near Timmins to set up a commune; a commune which has already made the front page of the high school newspaper. But as befits the Canadian experience of roughing it in the bush, the boys, unlike those of the more pretentious film *Summer of 42*, do not form that indelible harmony with nature; but are instead estranged from the tough cold environment, and it soon conquers them.

What is most noticeable and most commendable about *Rip-Off* is its lack of confrontation or real hostility, the kind that pervaded films like *Easy Rider* and *Joe*. The film instead is mildly ironic, often slapstick, but never vengeful. And so it captures the kinds of tensions and frustrations which capture the Canadian imagination. We do not hate our middle class parents, and they do not hate us. They did not send us off to war, so we did not have to refuse to go. We were not daily reminded of Canada the Beautiful, so we do not have to tell our parents that Canada is ugly. Rather our concerns run more along the lines of what the hell are we going to do with that long tedious summer vacation.

*Rip-Off* is certainly not a gutsy film. It is not terribly exciting nor terribly romantic. But with its excellent cast and even direction, it leaves you with that unmistakable feeling, that you have been there before.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT



An original Canadian recipe

### Preset:

1/ dial for Channel 19  
(medium cool)

### Add:

Cup selected programming  
for young minds.

1/2 Cup Polka-Dot Door, Guess What,  
1/2 Cup Magic Roundabout, Sesame Street,  
1/2 Cup Sterogers' Neighbourhood

2/3 Cup selected programming  
for homemakers

1/2 Cup World in Your Kitchen,  
1/2 Cup Home Base, Shopping Around,  
1/2 Cup French Chef (Julia Child),  
1/2 Cup Joyce Chen Cooks

1/4 Tablespoons selected viewing  
for varying tastes.

1/2 Cup Showcase, What Matters, The Great  
1/2 Cup Star, The Lost Peace, Karate Doh,  
1/2 Cup Spectacles: The Drama as Meaning,  
1/2 Cup Landmarks, Castle Zarembo

Blend these ingredients well.

Stir over an enquiring mind.

Serves over 2,000,000.

Channel 19 brings you a taste  
of the fall starting  
September 11 at 8.30 a.m.



# NOTICE TO ALL VOTERS



ONTARIO

## RE: PROXY VOTING

THESE ARE FOUR SEPARATE AND DISTINCT CLASSES OF VOTERS WHO MAY VOTE BY PROXY AT THE PENDING PROVINCIAL ELECTION:

1. Members of the Canadian Forces who are absent from their ordinary residence and unable to vote in person.
2. Persons employed in the business of transportation by railway, air, water or motor vehicle, who will be absent from their ordinary residence and unable to vote in person, e.g., airline pilots, railway men, mariners, long distance bus drivers or truck drivers.
3. Persons who will be absent from their regular residence and unable to vote at the Advance Poll or Polling Day by reason of attending an educational institution.
4. Persons certified as being physically unable to attend the poll in person.

The procedure is simple. A proxy appointment form may be obtained from ANY Returning Officer, completed by the person appointing the proxy and mailed to the proxy voter. The proxy voter will have it certified by the Returning Officer in the electoral district where he and the person appointing him are both on the lists of voters. On Polling Day the voting proxy will present the certified proxy appointment form to the Deputy Returning Officer.

### SECTION 133 OF THE ELECTION ACT PROVIDES —

"133. Every person who, at an election,  
(a) Not being qualified to vote, votes; or  
(b) Being qualified to vote, votes more than once; or  
(c) Votes in an electoral district or polling subdivision other than the one in which he is entitled to vote by this act,  
Is guilty of a corrupt practise and is liable to a fine of not more than \$1,000, or to imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or to both."

RODERICK LEWIS, Q.C.  
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER,  
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.