

# The World is Watching takes a hard look at the American media machine

by **Dragos Ruiu**

"Just 10 more seconds..." is the correspondent's plea to ABC news. This is a quote from Peter Raymont's innovative film, *The World is Watching*. It examines the way American media covers world news.

In the movie, Raymont simultaneously chronicles the two sides of an unfolding news story about Nicaragua. One film crew covers ABC news editors in New York, while another records the other side of the conversations with the reporter in Managua. It's a constant race, with the reporters struggling to cover the story in the time allotted to them.

The story concerns Contra raids, and the peace plan initiative to be announced by president Daniel Ortega. But Ortega's speech won't make the deadline — "Ortega has to understand that the spotlight is there. And if they do something after 7 o'clock at night, it'll be a much smaller light bulb that will be put on it tomorrow," said Bill Lord, executive producer at ABC Nightly News.

Raymont, a Canadian filmmaker who has been working with the NFB since 1971, conceived the idea for the movie in

1984 when he visited Nicaragua on a three week trip. "I realized that it was a different reality from what was being portrayed by the media," he said in a phone interview from his Toronto office.

The movie was designed to illustrate how the picture given by the media was distorted by the way news coverage works. In the words of Jon Snow, a correspondent for Britain's ITN news who was interviewed in the film, "The problem is that once you produce an image instantly, explaining what it actually means is a very, very difficult job."

The deadlines and pressures faced by the editorial staff are shown in candid footage of the ABC news-room. "Peter Jennings let us in, and gave us complete freedom... he was very open, very friendly," said Raymont.

Raymont rounds out his portrayal of the news world with frank interviews of journalists for other media franchises. "In photography nobody messes with my work. In print journalism you have a real problem with resident geniuses in New York or in Washington changing your stuff to fit their perceptions, not your perceptions," said Bill Gentile, a

Newsweek photographer.

Raymont picked "senior people, who could speak openly without being in danger of losing their jobs." But getting them to let down their guard, "took a bit of time. We had to win their trust,"

said Raymont.

Raymont, who has made 30 documentaries in his 17 year career, has won several prizes with the film. His next project will be a feature length film which will probably be shot in southern Alberta.

*The World is Watching* will be shown in SUB Theatre Thursday, March 2, and will be followed by a panel discussion with Raymont, George Oake of the *Edmonton Journal*, and Tim Spelliscy from ITV.

## Disabled victims of assault

by **Shelby Cook**

"About 47 percent of all disabled females have been targets of sexual assault at some point," said a University of Alberta professor.

Richard Sobsey, an associate professor of educational psychology, and Connie Varnhagen, a professor in the department of psychology, completed a Canada wide study for Health and Welfare Canada concerning disabled people and sexual assault.

The study, which began in October, 1987, and concluded in February, 1988 revealed "the situation (of abuse) is compounded. Often the events are repeated," said Sobsey.

These victims are different, added Sobsey, because their of-

fenders usually have some form of control or authority over their lives. If the event happens in a caring institution, such as a hospital, then this leads to disillusionment and bitterness for these people.

Sobsey said a low conviction rate is another hurdle to overcome. Women may not report the event, out of fear of their attackers or losing their essential services and ending up in an institution. All of this results in no charges laid.

Regulations in the court system stop conviction of offenders and testimonies from victims. Mentally disabled are not always considered reliable witnesses to their own assault. Physically disabled may have problems communicating, enough to hamper testimony, re-

gardless of intellectual capacity.

Sobsey said a recent example is a case in Nova Scotia where a mentally disabled fifteen year old girl was the target. The attacker confessed because he was afraid of the girl's father. The girl was unable to testify in court due to her disability.

The study raises awareness of the problem, and now the researchers are looking for changes to prevent the problems and increase services for victims, said Sobsey.

"There have been no incidents (of assault) on the U of A campus," said Sobsey.

The University of Alberta will host an international conference, Sexual Assault and Abuse of People with Disabilities, on May 25 and 26.

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