

Caesar On Film

By Douglas Barbour

Now that nearly a decade has passed since this movie first appeared, an estimation of its value may be attempted. It is a product of Hollywood, and yet it seems to transcend, for the most part, such a sterile designation. It is, in fact, a very moving drama, a superior film.

It is not an adventurous movie, cinematically. The use of the camera is generally straight forward, and there is nothing of the avant-garde about it. Certain clichés, associated with Hollywood movie about ancient Rome, creep in from time to time (the ambush for the bottle at Philippi is an example). On the other hand, the closeups, and the photography of inside scenes generally, is simple, and seldom obscures the actors' faces or their words. In this play, where what is said is so important to the understanding of the whole, such simplicity can only be praised. Thus the scenes of confrontation between Brutus and Cassius focus all attention on the two persons, and allow us to follow the exchanges, with their shifting emotional climates, to the exclusion of unnecessary background filler. Again the power of the scene of Antony's famous speech is increased by the very real size of the Roman crowds. In fact, this movie shows us once again, as did Olivier's history plays, that Shakespeare's history plays seem almost to have been written with these plays in mind. Most crowd scenes in the movies made from these plays can only emphasize the social background against which the stories of individuals are played; a greater sense of the importance of the conflicts is made manifest. Thus the very first scene of the movie seems to increase the sense of the oppressiveness of Caesar's power, especially when at the end of their adjurations to the crowd, Flavius and Marullus are silently removed by some legionnaires. A scene such as this one indicated the intelligence that was brought to bear by the director. And with such scenes in one's memory, it was much easier to forgive the technical clichés, especially as they often worked within their limitations as clichés.

ACTING ACCLAIMED

However, it remains true that this movie is not a great one because it pioneers new techniques of dealing with Shakespeare. On the other hand, it does not let its source down. The acting, for example, is of a very high order, and this is true of even the minor roles which is surprising in a Hollywood movie.

The choice of the leads was also surprisingly apt. Louis Calhern's Caesar was perhaps a bit too pompous, and not quite enough sure of himself, but the script certainly allows for such an interpretation. James Mason does not impress one immediately as a good Brutus, but his very quiet performance grows with each scene until it seems to clutch the elusive truth of Brutus' character and figure it forth on the screen. He understates Brutus, perhaps, but in the end this proves most effective, and we seem to understand Brutus' faults better for the gentleness with which the character is presented.

The choice of John Gielgud for Cassius was a happy one. Here one of our finest contemporary Shakespearean actors was given a role of great depth and subtlety. I sometimes wonder if Cassius isn't the role of the play. Certainly, in this movie version, where we are given a chance to follow him through Rome, and on to the battlefield, it became a full and demanding part. Gielgud filled it admirably. Cassius' passion, his military common-sense, and above all, his love for a Brutus he knew to be so very different from himself, shone through.

STROKE OF GENIUS

The choice of Marlon Brando as Antony was actually a stroke of genius. Not merely because Brando proved he could handle Shakespeare, and speak it coherently, but also because he looked like Antony should look: broad-shouldered, sensuous, bold, witty, and yet honourable in his own special way. It is fitting that he should speak the final speech over Brutus, just as it is fitting that he should see no worth in Cassius. He has the blindnesses which attach to his type of character. Brando brought these out. He also shadowed the later Antony, the one who would finally lose the empire to the cold and calculating Augustus, although at the time of this play he is in control.

His handling of the "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech, finally, is honest and telling. He makes it sound new and solid, which is very difficult to do. Once again, the fact that he is given a whole populace to move probably helps; another advantage of a movie.

So finally it can be said that this movie does real justice to Shakespeare's play. It cut very neatly to the spirit of the play. Especially the latter, and myself continually gain new insights into the play as it is acted before me. Any director might do that; this one certainly did. Surely that is praise enough.

STEP IN WRONG DIRECTION

Not long ago an advertisement appeared in the Halifax newspapers in which a so-called "Strong Supporter" urged the women of this province to sign a Declaration of Canadian women. This declaration is one of the most insidious and outright anti-democratic documents I have ever seen. Its first sentence says: "We women of Canada urge you, our Parliamentary representatives, to make the CBC answerable to the Canadian people". In effect the whole declaration asks for the power to control programming of the CBC through our Parliamentary Representatives. What this woman wants to practice, then, is a most dangerous, because most ignorant, form of censorship. There are many ways to attack this declaration, but perhaps the strongest will be to examine its main feature, then point out the implications that such legislation would have for an already chaotic society.

NOT PRIVATE POSSESSION

"The CBC is not the private possession of a few." Too much of our tax money, apparently, is spent "to finance this, a public corporation, whose policy-makers, have so far been outside the control of both Parliament and taxpayers." The statement is basically true, but already we see where the argument will lead. The freedom of the press, or the freedom of speech, common, is not sacred to this lady; "We want to control the CBC" is what this petition is really saying.

Next we are informed that a nation's strength depends upon the character of its people, and that communications media have "unparalleled power" to mold individual character. Of this we cannot be absolutely sure. However, this woman, in her superior knowledge, assures us that Television and radio can build a "clean, strong and free society," that are being used instead "to undermine the faith in God and respect for law and authority, to destroy sound home life, and the knowledge of right and wrong." We are to understand that there is a certain diabolical plot afoot to "pervert these revered slubbed heads which have made us the great people we are today. Domine, Dirige nos. So they asked Parliament "to end the domination of a minority who misuse the CBC to spread propaganda perversion, pornography, free love, blasphemy, dope, violence, and crime." One question that arises is: which are the programs that do this? Is one of them Festival, which has presented Cheston's The Three Sisters, Bruch's Galileo, and classical symphonies? Or perhaps CBC's documentary shows, the latest of which, "This Hour Has Seven Days, has lately caused a scandal by exposing (mind you!) the ignorant and perverted mind of an American Nazi? Perhaps it's NIEL Hockey or CFL Football?

Shakespeare's Plays At Hyland

By DAVID GIFFIN

The Gazette would like to extend thanks to the management of the Hyland Theatre for courtesies extended to its reviewers, and for making available to the people of Halifax such films as the recent Shakespearean series.

SHAKESPEARE AS PATRIOT

As Stratford this summer I came upon a collection of James Agee's film reviews, written during the 1940's when Agee was film critic for TIME and THE NATION. One of the films he

devoted a great deal of time and space to was Lawrence Olivier's production of HENRY V, made toward the end of World War II. The memory is a bit hazy, but

it seems that Olivier was given leave from the Navy to make the picture as a sort of morale booster. This is apparent from the film, which concentrates on the war in France (the latter half of Shakespeare's play).

The movie was originally photographed in ordinary 35 mm for the simple reason that the wide-screen process hadn't been devised. The picture shown at the Hyland, however, had been reprinted on wide-screen film, with the regrettable result that in many of the sequences the head of the speaker has been cut off at mouth-level. This becomes more than a little annoying in a movie which depends rather largely on the dialogue.

The movie, made on a limited budget, illustrates well that low-budget production is not synonymous with poor production. With the exception of the Battle of Agincourt sequences, the entire film was made on the sound stage. Although most of the painted backdrops are amateur in the extreme, the sets themselves are more than adequate, and particularly the mock-up of the original Globe theatre.

I must admit there's some violence there. Then there's QUEST, which included such "dangerous" shows as the dramas about minorities like the Canadian Indian and the American Negro both of which groups are, all responsible women know, misdirected by the Communists, in their search for dignity and true liberty. Well!

DECLARATION FOR FREEDOM

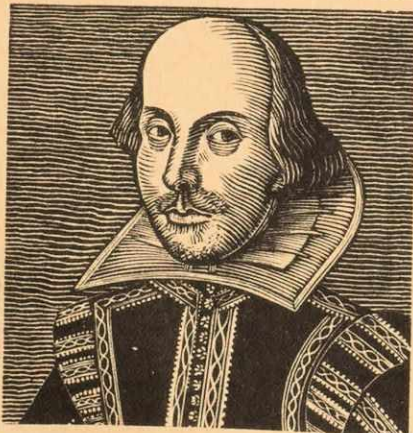
"We will not tolerate being told that if we don't like these programs we can turn off the set. That is not freedom of choice. It is a form of thought control." Now the rhetoric really begins. This declaration is a call to freedom. But for whom? For, the lady goes on, and I have to quote this whole paragraph to demonstrate how insidiously this declaration uses the clichés of free nation in order to enslave:

"Those who kill the conscience of a nation dig the grave of freedom and prepare the ground for dictatorship. It begins when God-given standards are mocked and their proponents are belittled, bullied, or silenced altogether. Such censorship was exercised in Hitler's Germany, and in Stalin's Russia. We do not want it here. We demand that you guarantee freedom of speech for all." Brave! Such stirring words! Let us strip them of emotion, and see if there is anything left. There is, and it's frightening, for we do not want dictatorship here we want a true democracy, but (and I shall try not to get too emotional myself) real democracy provides for freedom for all; to think to speak, and to write. There was no other way. Christians may be right, but as long as they do not allow for the possibility that another answer may be valid, then each of us, Christian or otherwise, lives in the shadow of the inquisition. We are not citizens of a democratic society, but victims of tyranny all

the more dangerous because it believes that what it is doing is for our good. The signature to this petition are not demanding "Freedom of Speech for all" They are asking that they may control the CBC, that they may restrict its programming to what they wish the rest of us to see; they wish to "misuse the CBC" to spread propaganda in the in-

spired language of the petition. How many people realize that the CBC is the one network in Canada that goes everywhere and provides for everyone's wants at some time or another in its schedule? The CBC carries religious broadcasts at least as often as anything these women could call "atheistic" broadcasts. Besides what right have these women to

of the major worries of the Normandy invasion was the might of the German armour. Henry's men are fearful of the French armour. The French themselves place their confidence in their "armour and horse", as the Dau-



phin's speech on the eve of Agincourt illustrates. We are shown one of the French knights being lowered into his saddle by block and tackle before the battle. Then, just as the battle is about to begin, a brief shot is intercut to show that the field is wet and marshy after a heavy rain. The significance is clear: heavy armour cannot operate in wet ground. This is one of the factors which saved the Normandy invasion from disaster.

The charge of the French knights, followed in a beautifully long and smooth tracking shot, is easily the most visually exciting sequence in the picture. Dis-

ELEMENTS OF PROPAGANDA

Most of the film concentrates on Henry's campaign in France. In preparing the script, those passages were chosen which had most relevance to the allied invasion of 1944. For example, one

organized and in no military formation, the mass of horsemen picks up momentum like a giant boulder rolling down hill, and being as unwieldy, falls into chaos beneath the storm of English arrows. In a well-staged single combat, Henry unhorses the Lord High Constable of France, whose breastplate we next see being worn by the cowardly Pistol.

There are several noticeable "propaganda touches" in the film. The quarrel between Captain Fluellen and MacMorris, for example, gives more than a hint of

the critical point, it might be useful to point out that in a Richard Burton close-up, it is the lips and not the eyes which rivet the viewer's gaze. This is perhaps a significant measure of the two actors' relative stature.

DECLARATION OF CANADIAN WOMEN

"As an English woman and a teacher newly settled in this province, it is my belief that the responsible women of Nova Scotia should have the opportunity to give their support to this declaration which is to be presented shortly to parliament.

"Since it has been printed in many newspapers throughout Canada, I feel it my responsibility to present it and so insure maximum publicity and support from this province.

"Many thousands of women throughout Canada have already signed the declaration and we hope in this way to reach the people who are concerned, not only with provincial matters but with welfare of the nation as a whole.

"Women who wish to support this action are invited to sign below, cut out the declaration and mail to:

MISS ELIZABETH TWEEDIE,
General Delivery,
Saint John, N.B.

(Signed:) A STRONG SUPPORTER

We women of Canada urge you, our Parliamentary representatives, to make the CBC answerable to the Canadian people.

The CBC is not the private possession of a few. Last year \$86,000,000 of our money went to finance this public corporation whose policy-makers have so far been outside the control of both Parliament and taxpayers.

The future of our country depends on the strength of its homes and the character of the men and women those homes produce.

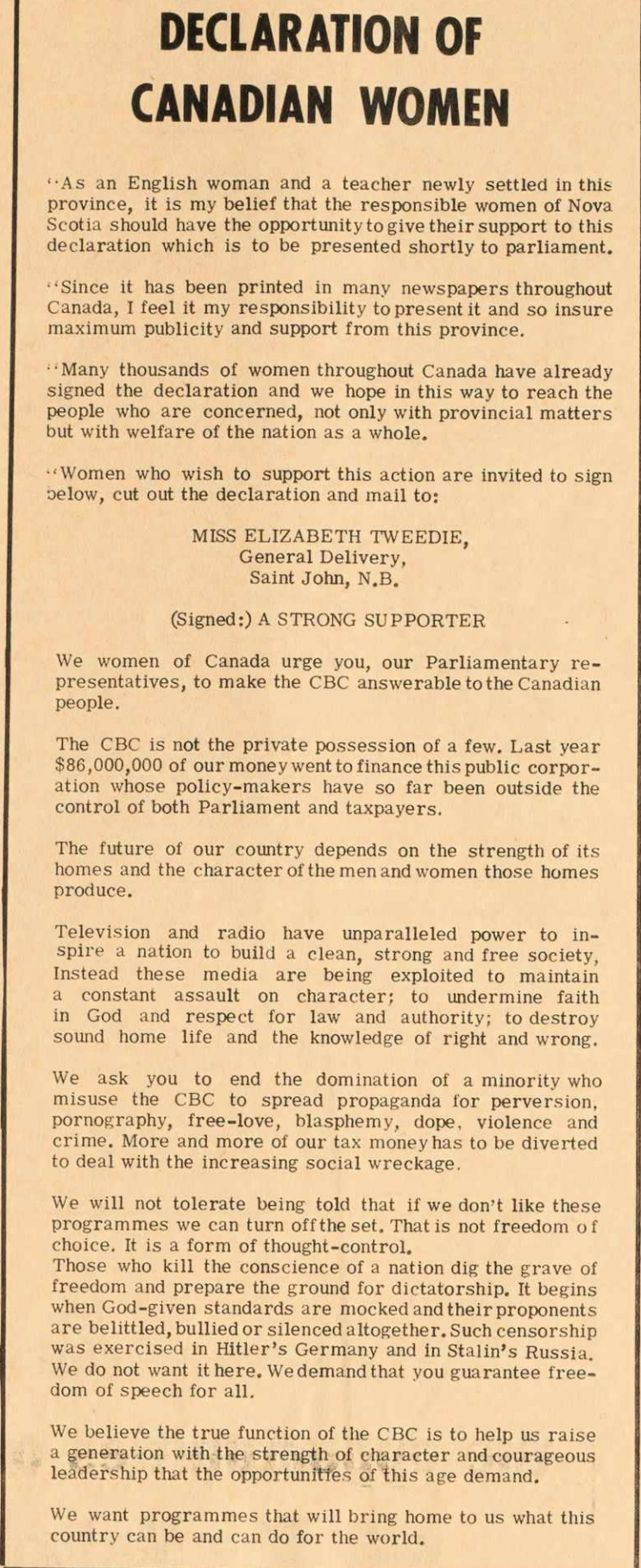
Television and radio have unparalleled power to inspire a nation to build a clean, strong and free society. Instead these media are being exploited to maintain a constant assault on character; to undermine faith in God and respect for law and authority; to destroy sound home life and the knowledge of right and wrong.

We ask you to end the domination of a minority who misuse the CBC to spread propaganda for perversion, pornography, free-love, blasphemy, dope, violence and crime. More and more of our tax money has to be diverted to deal with the increasing social wreckage.

We will not tolerate being told that if we don't like these programmes we can turn off the set. That is not freedom of choice. It is a form of thought-control. Those who kill the conscience of a nation dig the grave of freedom and prepare the ground for dictatorship. It begins when God-given standards are mocked and their proponents are belittled, bullied or silenced altogether. Such censorship was exercised in Hitler's Germany and in Stalin's Russia. We do not want it here. We demand that you guarantee freedom of speech for all.

We believe the true function of the CBC is to help us raise a generation with the strength of character and courageous leadership that the opportunities of this age demand.

We want programmes that will bring home to us what this country can be and can do for the world.



Audience-Control-Of C.B.C. Programs

By DOUGLAS BARBOUR Gazette Literary Editor

say that atheists are bad or evil? Many atheists are better men than the majority of Christians. To say this is not to say that Christianity is wrong; it is to affirm Christ's example to every man: We must find our own way, and this can be done only in a free country.

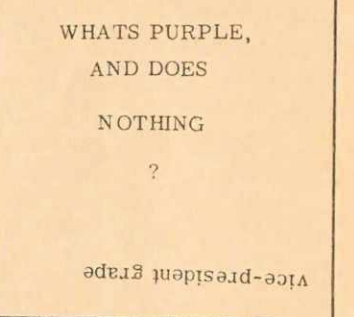
PEOPLE ASSUME CONTROL?

If this declaration ever took effect, however, what would happen? If the CBC is answerable to the Canadian people, then the people's representatives must assume control. Our MPs are elected to run this country, and they often do a poor enough job of that. If they had to run the CBC, too, they would have no time for the ordinary affairs of government. Our society would slowly crumble while a bunch of red-eyed MPs argued whether or not Howdy Doo was good children's fare. Actually what would happen is that the programming that has made the CBC the most respected network in North America would be cut entirely, and only the most innocuous public programming would be allowed. The westerns, comedies, (Life with Father: does this inculcate proper values, if it does, I don't want them.) Thrillers, etc., would proliferate. An intelligent viewer would be forced to sell his TV set. Government officials are not trained to con-

trol programming. And besides, the will of the Almighty vote would push them to cutting everything of value, everything that makes one think (something the women do not want to do, it seems,) in order to satisfy Miss Grundy.

Perhaps the saddest and yet most frightening thing about this declaration is its sincerity. The person who drafted this remarkable document is what I would call "tyrant manquée". She, poor devil says she wants freedom for all (the freedom to be able to enjoy every program on the CBC— which is no freedom, for surely others have varying tastes from hers. Indeed the only noble freedom is the freedom to watch those programs which you prefer.) What she really means is that everyone should watch only those programs she likes. She says she doesn't want censorship or dictatorship. What she really means is that she wants total control, that she wants to be dictator and censor. She probably doesn't realize this, and has rationalized away the knowledge by appealing to her Christian faith, but her rhetoric gives her away. Any true Christian would question her motives, I am sure, for Christianity, cannot, if truly practiced, advocate the control of other minds: It believes too much in the sanctity of the individual for that. But I feel sorry for this woman for her power drive must be

great, and yet it must be stopped: She would bring back the Inquisition, I am sure, so that she could prove, to her own satisfaction, that no one even thought differently from her. She is an oracle of conformity. She is dangerous. "We believe the true function of the CBC is to help us raise a generation with the strength of character and courageous leadership that the opportunities of this age demand. "Fine. So do I. And the CBC can only do so by giving the members of this generation a chance to use their own minds, to make choices, to think. It can only do this by providing even more of this same independent and provocative programming that it has in the past. It can only do that if it is allowed to remain an autonomous organization untouched by diunal and profane political motivations.



A thought or two on "getting things done"

(On the occasion of N.B. Tel's latest Long Distance Rate Reduction)



In business, 'getting things done' usually means— getting a decision. And that requires questions and answers, a discussion— in short, communication. So, if you need to communicate with someone out of town, what do you do? You can go there. You can write. You can telegraph. Best of all, you can phone. You're there instantly, with your voice, your whole personality, in the most friendly, rewarding way to communicate! If a conversation, a discussion or answers to your questions are what's called for, then, indeed, you should phone. There's so much time to be saved— which is money— and so much more to be gained: a Long Distance call is so immediate, so personal— and so efficient! Long Distance is worth a thought or two, don't you agree, when you want to 'get things done'!

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