

some 20 years researching World War I air aces. He has interviewed over 400 pilots and observers, talked by telephone to another 170, has copies of 58 diaries and 74 privately printed biographies, 6,000 photographs, hundreds of letters, 300 flying log books and copies of squadron records and combat reports.

Another is a veteran who has examined records in England, France and Germany and spoken with a large number of people properly involved. Others are authors or well known members of the media.

Honourable senators, it is not just a matter of "hero-bashing," though we Canadians are notorious for it; it is disgraceful in itself to destroy a hero's legend. However, I must admit that that would not be enough reason to demand that the film be withdrawn. However, if, as in a court of law, credibility is the key to arriving at a verdict, then I ask you to consider the difference between the facts stated in the film and the actual facts found in military records.

Just for starters, at the very beginning of the film, it was stated, and I quote:

On Christmas Day, 1914, the opposing forces crossed the trenches and joined each other for a smoke, exchanged gifts, then they came back to killing each other. It is during this period that Bishop finds himself and his horse mixed in the awful French muck—

In actual fact, Bishop did not go to France at all during his time in the army.

This point, in itself, is insignificant, but, combined with the whole story which contains so much misinformation and so many inaccuracies, the credibility of the film has to be seriously questioned. The Manitoba Branch of the Royal Military College Club of Canada prepared a critique of the film and listed 34 such discrepancies of fact—that is, what the film stated and what happened historically, according to military records.

Although I would be very eager to read to you all those 34 discrepancies, with the evidence that has been accumulated, I will not take up honourable senators' time in that way. I have copies of the critique for those who are interested.

On the issue of credibility, the film, selectively, chooses its facts and mixes them with fiction to advance its theme. I quote François Macerola, the Government Film Commissioner of the National Film Board, who said:

The filmmaker . . . did indeed take liberties with the chronology of events in telling Bishop's story, but it must be understood that the film has a substantial fictional element and that dramatic devices are used—including many scenes from the Billy Bishop play.

In a moment, I will deal with this quote with reference to a documentary.

The most glaring example of the film's credibility is the way in which Bishop's mechanic, Walter Bourne, is presented. In the film, Mr. Bourne is the key figure in discrediting Billy Bishop's claims, "proving," as they said, that Bishop lied and

[Senator Molson,]

was mistakenly presented with the Victoria Cross. In actual fact, the dialogue scripted for the actor who portrayed Mr. Bourne consisted of hearsay and selective facts accumulated from various sources. There is no evidence that the real Mr. Bourne ever made the statements attributed to him. In fact, Billy Bishop's son, Arthur, who wrote about his father's life in a book called *The Courage of the Early Morning*, wrote the following:

Bourne as usual turned his attention to the plane as soon as he saw Bishop was unhurt. He took in the innumerable holes and slashes in the wings, fuselage, and tail and uttered an incredulous whistle. "Beats me how the thing stayed in one piece, Sir."

Walter Bourne was so fond of Billy Bishop that, in 1942, when Bishop was critically ill, he wrote:

Get well soon, Sir. Train us men and we will beat them as we did in the old days. Here is good luck—I am enclosing something which has travelled with me all these years. Remember the time your gun jammed (April 30, 1917 in the attack against the Gothas) and you had to get away. Well, Sir, here is the bullet that might have ended your career. You can see the mark on it where I gripped it in the vice to get it free.

I will comment that it is hard to believe that that is the man who says that Bishop was a liar.

The film, "The Kid Who Couldn't Miss," is being circulated by the Canadian government as a documentary. Strangely enough, at the same time, the National Film Board and the Ministry of Communications, which is ultimately responsible for the National Film Board, are trying to claim that it is not a documentary. However, consider these points:

1. The film was shown at a Canadian embassy party in Washington to celebrate Canadian documentary films.
2. In a letter signed by the former Minister of Communications, he states that the "film is not a documentary as such, rather more of a film essay—". In the same letter, he goes on to boast that the film "—was recognized further as the best documentary of its kind at the Nineteenth Chicago Film Festival and won the prestigious Silver Hugo Award;" and
3. The film was selected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as part of their outstanding documentary series in October 1984 in Hollywood.

I do not know how one can marry those statements.

Since so many critical facts in the film have been discounted by meticulous researchers and historians, by what stretch of the imagination can the National Film Board distribute the film as a documentary? It is obvious that a film distributed by the National Film Board of Canada would carry with it the authority of the government. Within the country, it is one thing; in foreign lands, it is extremely important. Frankly, I think it is dishonest.

As I stated earlier, it is shameful that the Canadian government endorses and circulates a documentary that harms our