

IN PROGRESS

Utilities

Bucking the elements

The script calls for two inches of snow on the ground, and the stuff that the snow-making machines are spraying out this cold December night on Toronto's Dupont Street isn't melting. It glistens under the tower-mounted brutes which illuminate a full half-block. The electricians on the towers shout out the time left on their bulbs to the gaffer below - "Four minutes, sir." The set is dominated by the huge Mercury crane from William F. White's, fresh up from the U.S. and still wearing California license plates. A few handwarmers are passed around democratically. One of the cops on duty mutters to his partner, "I'd rather be doing *Little House on the Prairie* out there in the California sun."

The setting is perfect for Robert Cooper's *Utilities*, a comedy-adventure-romance about one man's fight against the utility companies, starring Bob Hays of *Airplane* fame, and Brooke Adams, who starred in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Days of Heaven*.

"The cold doesn't bother this crew," says unit publicist Pru Emery. "They did *Silence of the North* in Kenora."

Filming stops while a cold lens is warmed with a small light. Director of photography Richard Leiterman explains that Panavision won't winterize their prime lenses. "They've got a heater case for the zoom lenses, but they say it's not necessary for the primes." Leiterman disagrees. "Here we have to do a fast pull focus as Bob Hays walks towards camera around the front of his jeep, and then away from camera again, and the lens is just too cold for the focus puller to do it smoothly."

Leiterman points out that this same grip crew worked with him on *Silence of the North* and *Ticket to Heaven*, and first a.d. Tony Lucibello adds that most of his crew "just came off *Misdeal*. We've worked together many times before - we sort of grew up together in the business."

The experience of the crew in working together before seems to have made a difference in keeping *Utilities* on schedule through some difficult shooting requirements. "Principal photography is scheduled to finish by December 19," says Associate Producer Michael Hadley, "and at six weeks into an eight week shooting schedule we're all starting to feel the stagecoach ride. We have over forty different locations, and on the

average we've been moving two or three times a day."

"We've had a large cast," says Lucibello, "about 140 speaking parts. A lot of extras were upgraded into bit parts. We've used over 2,000 extras, a lot of them ACTRA members, so we've got some happy ACTRA members."

"We had a major scene where the utility company was coming in to shut off somebody's gas in the midst of a big protest," says Hadley. "The confrontation had to be built on a number of angles on the protestors and the gas company personnel. It's really incredible the amount of coverage Harvey Hart (the director) is getting in the time schedule. It's not being shot like television."

Sitting in his Winnebago between takes, star Bob Hays balances a can of cashews on his knee and says, "I like to keep things relaxed, and I find the Canadian crew more enthusiastic to work with than most of those in the U.S. - except perhaps the non-union crews there."

Back outside it's time for the close-ups, and the temperature is dropping. Happily it's a two-camera set-up, and it's "A marker, B marker" and finished in two takes. In less than an hour the street is empty and back to normal - but with just a little more snow on the ground than in the rest of the city.

Ron Squire ●

UTILITIES

p.c. Robert Cooper Films 1, Inc. (1980) p. Robert Cooper exec. in charge of p. Chris Dalton co-p. Rob Lockwood assoc p. Michael Hadley creative consult. Sydney Newman p.'s exec. asst. Marlee Novak co-p.'s asst. Jennifer Coyne d. Harvey Hart p. man. John Danyliw consult p. man. Gwen Iveson p. co-ord. Judith Rubin loc./unit man. Barbara Kelly asst. loc. Lin Gibson p. acct. Hannelore Biesinger bookkeeper Rachelle Charron a.d. Tony Lucibello (1st), Erika Zborowsky (2nd), David Coatsworth (2nd), David Hart (3rd) p. design. Bill Beeton art d. Alicia Keywan art. dept. p. man. Fred Geringer asst. art d./droughtsman Alfred art dept. trainee Gary Myers asst. to p. design. Howard Rothschild, Nancy Ing set dec. Gerry Holmes, Don McQueen (asst.) propmaster Wilf Culley, John Fisher (asst.) props buyer Gus Meunier 3rd props Chris Biden ward. design Lynda Kemp ward. mistress Madeleine Stewart, Gail Filman (asst.) make-up Bill Morgan, Beverly Carr (asst.) hair Paul LeBlanc, Adriaan Hofman (asst.) d.o.p. Richard Leiterman cam. op. Bob Saad cam. asst. Jock Martin (1st), Paul "Rocket" Randla (2nd) key grip Michael Kohne 2nd grip Bob DaPrato key rigging grip James Kohne, Wayne Collins (2nd) gaffer Ray Boyle best boy William "Bing" McKibb 3rd elect. James "Mac" MacCamor rigging gaf. Malcolm Kendel rigging best boy Gary Denault genny op. Peter Dawes sp.eff. Wayne Beauchamp, Henry Piersig (asst.) sd. mix Bruce Carwardine boom Glen Gauthier sd. assts. Marc Chiasson, Gord Ainsley sc. superv. Penny Hynam unit pub. Pru Emery stills Shin Sugino stunt co-ord. Bobby Hannah transp. co-ord. Pat Brennan transp. capt. Nick Sweetman drivers Martin Freedman, Craig Kohne, Harry Ross, Peter Beaumont, Peter Urbanski, Michael Jones, Gord Inson construc. superv. Robert Theodore hd. carp. Bill Privett, Alf Sutton hd. painter Michael Papp carp. shop Kleinberg casting Canadian Casting/Stuart Aikens casting (extras) Peter Lavender asst. locations Julie Chandler (Chicago) l.p. Robert Hays, Brooke Adams, John Marley, Helen Burns, Jane Mallet, James Blendick, Ben Gordon, Don Lamont, Shelby Gregory, Margaret Pacsu, J.P. Linton, Lee Broker, Alex Diakun, Jan Rubes, Rita Tuckett, Beth Amos, Dennis Strong, Dennis Simpson, Helene Winston, Robert McCormick.

Porky's

Hot sun, cold chili

The off-duty extras are trying to catch a few minutes sleep, bundled up against the cold, on the beach or in the back seats of prop cars. It's 3:00 a.m. sometime in 1954 and the location is Deadbeats hamburger hangout on the beach of Hollywood, Florida. Inside, the on-duty extras sit, sneaking bites of their assembly-line prop hamburgers, as a towel is tied ceremoniously into a bib around director Bob Clark's neck. Work stops and he has everyone's attention. As Blanche McDermaid readies her stop watch and the camera is 'unofficially' turned on, Bob plunges face first into a bowl of cold chili.

Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty seconds and he comes up for air. Everyone cheers, Jack Rowand grabs a few stills, and the energy level returns to the crew - which is perhaps a bit weary after almost three weeks of long nights shooting. Meat (Tony Ganios), the actor who will be doing the same action for many takes and many camera angles, now sits down behind the chili bowl. Reg Morris, the director of photography, fine tunes the 'basher' sitting on top of



● No soft touch—*Utilities*' cop Brooke Adams puts Robert Hays in his place.