

the pick of the crop

The Canadian Film Awards give us the opportunity to take stock and judge the quality of the annual production. In the public mind, the future of the industry is linked with the creation of a feature film industry, and it is not surprising that the features receive the most attention. The following article mentions those in competition.

Overview

This year, 41 films have been pre-selected to be judged by a strong international jury at the Canadian Film Awards: Joseph Losey, Sidney J. Furie, Gordon Pinsent, Luce Guilbeault, Les Wedman and Martin Malina.

Eight of the films are fictional features (cut down from the 17 submitted to the pre-selection jury), and the rest – 33 – are non-fictional features or shorts. Of the 33, 18 come from the National Film Board and 3 from the CBC.

The awards present us with the opportunity to take stock. If this year's pre-selection is any measure, one conclusion is that the public sector is alive and well. No films from the private sector were chosen for either the animation category or for the TV drama category. Nevertheless, no NFB films were selected in the experimental category. (It is interesting to note that in the "Draft Film Policy", p. 22, the author states "There will continue to be a need for the NFB to produce, as in the past... experimental or innovative films.")

The Awards are hype, a chance for a collective party and the honoring of certain members of the industry for a job well done. Nat Taylor, this year's president, is banking everything on an awakening of the public through the national broadcast. He has the co-operation of the Famous Players and Odeon theatre chains which show the CFA poster, hand out the program and run trailers about the televised awards.

Pre-selection

The Awards are as valid as the pre-selection, and the pre-selection jury – unpaid and unfed – sits for a full week, sifting through the 158 films entered to choose the films which will be in competition. The jury consists of one member of the participating organizations: the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, the Canadian League of Composers, the Canadian Society of Cinematographers, the Canadian Film and Television Association, the Motion Picture Theatre As-

sociations of Canada, the Directors Guild of Canada, the Society of Filmmakers, the Motion Picture Distributors Association (sic), the Canadian Film Editors Guild, ACTRA, the Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers and the American Federation of Musicians. This year, neither of the last two associations sent jurors.

As was the case last year, representatives from the East and West were absent. When Mr. Taylor was asked whether or not the CFA should think about including the British Columbia Film Industries Association, for example, the response was, "They can come if they want, but we're not paying their expenses." Why not? How else will highly competent judges from across the country be lured into taking on the job of the pre-selection?

The Schlock

What are the criteria of the pre-selection anyway? In the feature category, the international jury should have had a crack at *Death Weekend*. The features which are pre-selected should be those which have made a major impact in the industry and on the public, or a major artistic impact on the critics. The pre-selection should eliminate only the insignificant films. It's for the international jury to tell us that the films are good or bad.

The pre-selection jury swept *Death Weekend* under the carpet like a shameful thing. Nevertheless, it – along with its less effective cousins *Clown Murders*, *Point of No Return* and *Shadow of the Hawk* – represent a major current in actual feature production. These films are being made because *Shivers* and *Black Christmas* brought money back to the producers. It is not up the pre-selection jury to condemn the makers of schlock; the quality of our films should be judged by that highly competent international jury which is brought to Toronto. The CFA pre-selection should at least offer that jury a fair choice of the kinds of films being made. How else are we to come to terms with film production in Canada?

Connie Tadros

Partners

Director Don Owen

d. Don Owen, **asst. d.** Tony Thatcher, **sc.** Norman Snider and Don Owen. **ph.** Marc Champion, **ed.** George Appleby, **sd.** James McCarthy, **sd. ed.** Ralph Brunjes & Ellen Adams, **sd. re-rec.** David Appleby, **p. designer** Seamus Flannery, **set dec.** Gerry Holmes, **m.** Murray McLauchlan, **cost.** Patti Unger, **choreo.** Frank Ruffo, **l.p.** Denholm Elliott (John Grey), Hollis McLaren (Heather Grey), Michael J. Margotta (Paul Howard), Lee Broker (Philip Rudd), Irena Mayeska (Aunt Margot), Robert Silverman (Hayes), Robert Warner (Gordon), Delroy Lindo (Caleb), Heath Lamberts (Piano Jimmy), **exec. p.** G. Chalmers Adams, **p.** G. Chalmers Adams and Don Owen, **assoc. p.** Robert Linnell, **p.c.** Clearwater Films Ltd., 1975, **color**, 35 mm, **running time** 93 minutes, **dist.** Astral Films (Canada).

Partners is a film about a series of partners: Canada and America are partners of sorts – unequal partners, with the weaker one often expressing reluctance to move to the stronger's rhythm; Heather Grey and Paul Howard are partners – naive and youthful partners in an exuberant and fantastic dance; the Canadian businessman, John Grey, inheritor of Canada Pulp and Paper, is involved in a wary dance of opportunity and consolidation with the president of an American multinational. Don Owen's fourth feature is a sophisticated thriller/romance/fantasy partnered with indigenously Canadian sensibilities – a fine marriage of form and content.

Co-authored by Owen and Norman Snider, the story evolves around Heather Grey, the dilettante heiress of well-managed old Canadian money, and Paul Howard, a free-wheeling, rather sloppy American "freelance entrepreneur", as he calls himself. Heather discovers Paul in the act of stealing key papers on the state of her father's business for a multinational looking to expand into Canada, and – while the first image of Heather is one of detailed precision as she peers through a microscope – her lack of direction allows her to protect Paul from further detection. She thus becomes a partner in a takeover plot – a plot in which even Paul is a disinterested patsy. Perhaps that is too strong an expression; it does not give the flavor of his attractive energy and vivid imagination which Heather from her conservative position finds so appealing and inspiring. But finally

his directionless energy, like his gunshot in the air, inexplicably hits home. With the killing of the bird, Heather is expected to deal with it and in doing so she is strengthened and the ties of the partnership are weakened.

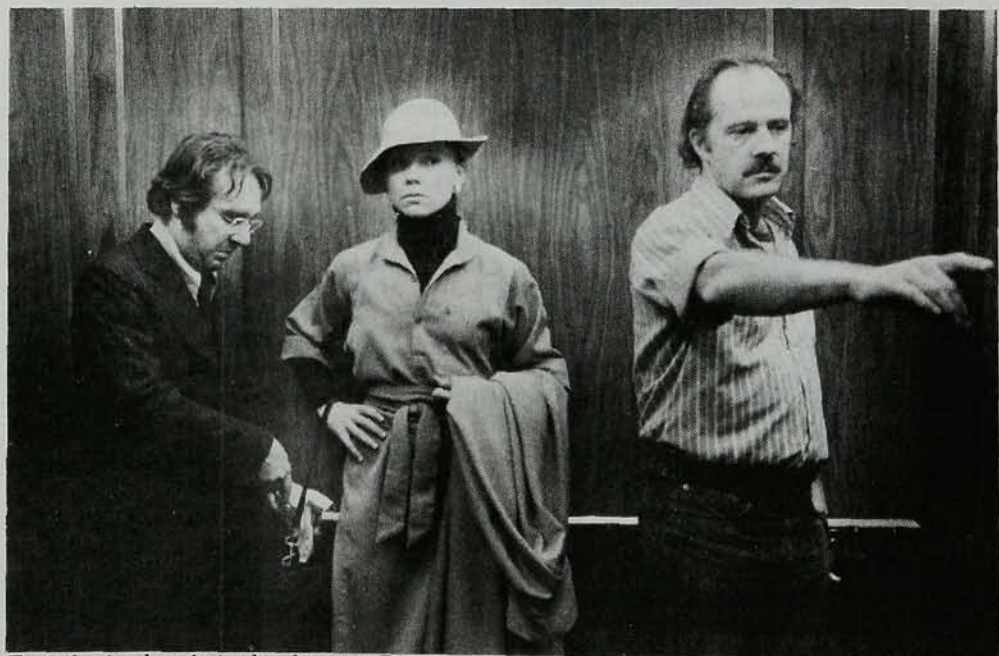
In the male-dominated world of business and male-female partnerships, the character of Heather is a study of growth. Her attraction to Paul's exotic aggressiveness seduces her into becoming a helpmate in a dope-running intrigue; the love scenes, some of the most beautiful I have seen on film in their fluid explicitness, are central to Heather's forgetfulness of her true interests. I spoke of Heather's dilettantism; with Paul, she adopts a cavalier attitude toward her money, her family and its historical position.

While initially Paul has the power to draw her away from her true interests, he, paradoxically, reveals to Heather her need to hold onto and perpetuate them: "You're hooked into this – this history. I'm outside – I want to be inside." Paul's imaginative, on-the-run opportunism pales beside this cool creature of careful breeding – "The thing about people like me" says Heather "is that we really are together." By the middle of the film, Heather has Paul working for the Grey interests – but his actions have produced reverberations which neither can control and, by the end of the film, they have another death between

them and this time it's not a bird. Once again she has the necessary strength and control to deal with it and this time the partnership is dissolved.

I suppose it is rather unfair to criticize Owen for being a filmmaker who deals within the context of the middle class. All his films have evolved around characters whose plights are individual and creative without reference to a larger political context. But with **Partners**, Owen is moving into a subject matter which is simply a question of which national group of capitalists control Canadian resources and this question centres on the *style* of opportunism.

But in this analysis of style, **Partners** is brilliant: John Grey's relaxed manner, his soft British accent, his familiarity with many forms of pleasures – listening to music, talk of duck hunting in Manitoba, the physical exertion and joy in rebuilding his dock – all this is attractive and in direct contrast to the nasal-accented, blue-suited American, Gordon, and his hardnosed henchmen who use threats, guns and have maps of Canada hanging in their hotel rooms. Grey's money is time-worn, the result of land grants given to loyal Sir George Adam Grey in the name of a grateful monarch. And because Canada is a country whose predominant resource is land; because Grey's sensitivity to this resource is a real aspect of his character (he talks passionately about reforestation and "the special privilege of this country – untrammelled nature"); because Grey is involved in the preservation of the past, his opportunism is less pragmatic, less hurried, less brutal – the slow strangle as opposed to sudden death.



Transferring heroin in the elevator: **Partners**

In the final analysis, this difference is theatrical (or cinematic) but unessential. It would, however, be naive to think that Owen did not understand the weakness of his position on Canadian nationalism; the historical flashbacks of the Loyalists fighting off the Americans are set to a reading of Sir Grey's diary: "We were surprised in the clearing by American irregulars and it was difficult to differentiate our militia from the Americans" and even when he could differentiate, he found himself "pursuing Thomas Benton, a good friend these many years." The diary also speaks of the difficulty of knowing at which point the territories were indeed separate. And so, in spite of the differing styles of the Americans and Canadians, those styles are not foreign to each other, both reaching for the same end.

The quality which has struck me most forcibly in **Partners** is its verisimilitude in the midst of a fantastic plot and setting. The sets are gorgeous and generous and even the foot-loose Paul ("I like to keep moving - no address, no bills") lives richly and with expensive taste. The characters too are fantastic and bold, but Owen's skill is in supplying all his characters, large and small, with life-giving details. The three main characters are good, their growth a source of real interest to the viewer, but where Owen reveals his consummate skill is in the minor characters - the dope dealer and three plainclothes police officers waiting to bust him and his contacts, the wonderfully controlled aunt and her interchange with John Grey at the peopled northern garden party, the Pinteresque tea-time conversation - all these people and minor situations add a richness to the film fabric, details and spaces for interesting speculations.



Don Owen, director, and Marc Champion, cinematographer, talk about a shot

Owen has also mastered a symbolic level which is totally integrated into the fast-moving storyline. The first shot of Heather shows her cutting - one wants to say "dissecting" - a

maple leaf and examining it under a microscope; and does the fact that it's bright orange-red, in the last richness of fall, mean anything? As Heather harbors Paul in the rec room they circle around a globe and, with the question "You're an American, aren't you?", Paul touches that globe. And let me mention too the marvellous scene when Paul, who has helped to betray John Grey's business interests, finds himself, smartly dressed, in the water beside Grey and at the feet of the American businessman who has paid Paul for information and wants more.

Partners is an excellent film - fast-moving, totally involving and excellently shot by Marc Champion.

Eleanor Beattie

Don Owen's new Canadian film **Partners** uses its title in two different ways. The young man and woman at its centre meet and become partners - in crime of a sort and also in passion. A second partnership explored is the cultural and business relations of Canada and the United States. It is an entertaining film, if overall disappointing as the first feature from Don Owen in several years. Looking like a frank attempt at a commercial property, **Partners** doesn't put itself out of critical court by being excessively violent or far-fetched (like **Breaking Point** and others). It is a "thriller" with only

one killing and relies, generally, not so much on sensation as on a tense cleverness worthy of Hitchcock at times. When the young man (Michael Margotta) breaks into a hotel room, he is surprised by a maid who politely inquires if he needs clean towels!

The story is a bit casual about drugs - which I think we should be reminded are dangerous to health - but refrains from unduly glamorizing its confused pair of young people, whose edgy attraction to each other is based on opposition. (He's a social climber, she belongs to an establishment family, presided over by Denholm Elliott, in an immaculate performance of comfortable but threatened privilege.)

In terms of "commercial appeal" versus serious intentions - which are not really incompatible, but often seem to be - **Partners** places plenty of action at the beginning and end and leaves a central section free for some thoughts about American domination of Canadian industry and how our self-regard may be affected. This is interesting, though thematically underdeveloped, and allows for a relaxed interlude among the autumnal splendors of Niagara-on-the-Lake. **Partners**, then, is a film of some merit but it leaves open the bigger question of where exactly Don Owen, who hit a national nerve with his **Nobody Waved Goodbye** a dozen years ago, is "at" today.

Clive Denton

Goldenrod

Director Harvey Hart

d. Harvey Hart, asst. d. Tony Thatcher, sc. Lionel Chetwynd, dial. ed. Ellen Adams, ph. Harry Makin, ed. Ralph Bruajes (CFEG), Peter Shatglow, Ron Wisman, sd. Karl Scherer, sup. sd. ed. Ken Heeley-Ray, a.d. George Holmes, set dec. Fred Geringer, cost. Patti Unger, l.p. Tony Lobianco, Donald Pleasance, Gloria Carlin, Will Darrow McMillan, exec. p. David Susskind, p. Lionel Chetwynd, Gerry Arbeld, assoc. p. Duane Howard, p. manager. Timothy Rouse, p.c. August Films and Talent Associates, 1976, col. running time 90 min. dist. Ambassador

At the conclusion of **Goldenrod** there were tears in my eyes. Not overflowing down my cheeks, you understand, but ready to do so if I blinked incautiously. And something

about the movie has to be given credit for this embarrassing state of affairs - a state all the more remarkable when you consider that for half of the movie's length I had been shifting about in my seat and muttering 'Oh shit!' loud enough to be heard.

Perhaps the surest stimulus for tears, in art, life, and the movies, is the spectacle of reconciliation - when two people yield to a prompting they have long resisted, and acknowledge that they love each other after all and will try again. It's a good place to end the story, because as often as not, nothing much comes of this lovely purifying moment, and all the old thorns come poking through within a few days or weeks. That the joyful flow of healing reconciliation will re-



The joyful flow of healing in *Goldenrod*

deem all the years gone by is a dream of the highest art – like *Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* and *Dombey and Son* – and of the quite low, like Harvey Hart's production of *Goldenrod*.

The strength and emotional power of *Goldenrod* are in Herbert Harker's novel, which the film version does its damndest to sabotage at every turn. I know there's a school of thought that says you should treat a film in "filmic" terms, whatever that means, and not apply literary standards to it. Bullshit. A film begins as a screenplay – a screen play – which means a structured progression of dramatic episodes, and the revelation of character and relationships through dialogue and behavior. And when a pre-existing work has furnished the governing imaginative and moral conception to the tale, that work inevitably stands as a point of reference.

The screen adaptation of *Goldenrod* (by Lionel Chetwynd) is a travesty of the original. Why start with a novel at all, if you're going to pull it out of shape so crudely and insensitively? Harker's Jesse Gifford is a sadly demoralized man, a champion bronco-buster put out of action with a broken pelvis. Shirley, his wife, has given up on their slide into the rural underclass, and gone off with big Keno McLaughlin, leaving Jesse with the two boys, Ethan (12) and little George. Descending even to a suicide attempt, Jesse is slowly restored, through the courageous loyalty of Ethan, to faith in himself, to a comeback on the rodeo circuit, and to the winning back of his wife. Chetwynd's conception of Jesse, elaborated in several newly written scenes, turns him into a hollow, bullying brute, vain, noisy, and stupid. His recovery is rendered as

a moral transformation into an unoppressive, tender, liberated bronco-buster, who respects Shirley's personhood and tells Ethan, 'Son, there's more than one way to be a man.' Message.

Each time the screenwriter presumes to improve on Harker's writing, the result is lamentable, tending towards sentimental moralizing. Thus, for instance, Jesse-on-screen mumbles a pre-suicide prayer in the "Gee, God, I guess what I'm doing is wrong, but don't punish my boys" vein; Harker's Jesse would have died first! Towards the end of the film, when the boys are coping with a dirt ranch they've bought, and



Harvey Hart

Jesse is in hospital with a broken leg, Shirley visits him and brings out a pack of cards. In the book they play cribbage, but the film has to give us a game of rummy, and a meaning-laden conversation about needing one more card to complete the set. And on the level of trivial but telling detail, these Alberta ranchers are said to go into Estevan for their Saturday night boozing – a round trip of several hundred miles, to the far side of Saskatchewan. The film was made for U.S. television.

When it comes to acting, the most pervasive distortion of Harker's novel can be described as a shift of *accent*. Imagine the incongruity of a Quebecois movie with Parisian accents, or of *Mean Streets* in Cockney. Tony Lobianco, the Italo-American star of *Goldenrod*, brings Arkansas to Alberta, and calls his son 'Bowah!' Gloria Carlin as Shirley contributes the voice and acting style of country and western movies, while the canny old J.T. Jones speaks in a strange and unstable dialect invented by Do-

nald Pleasence. This confusion of accents is not merely a superficial flaw, but expresses the central falseness of the movie. These people have nothing to do with each other, and nothing to do with Alberta.

Ethan and George (Will Darrow McMillan and Ian McMillan) steal the show — George with his stubby-nosed cuteness, and Ethan with a strongly felt and affecting performance as Jesse's faithful daughter and sweet-heart. Yes, truly. For all his gutsy

determination in winning the boys' prize at the stampede and fighting to save the ranch, Ethan's tearfully loving fidelity to a wayward father puts him in the place of Cordelia and Florence Dombey. He imparts a greater sincerity to all the scenes in which he appears, and creates the moving power of the final moments of Shirley's return home. The spectacle of reconciliation works its magic once again.

Robert Fothergill

The Far Shore

Director Joyce Wieland

d. Joyce Wieland, sc: Bryan Barney from an original script by Joyce Wieland, ph. Richard Leiterman, ed. George Appelby, Brian French, Judy Steed, Joyce Wieland, sd. ed. Marcel Potier, Rod Haykin, Mel Lovell m. Douglas Pringle, l.p. Celine Lomez, Lawrence Benedict, Frank Moore, Sean McCann, Cosette Lee, Don le Gros, Leo Leyden, Murray Westgate, Charlotte Blunt, Susan Petrie, Aviva Gerson, David Bolt, Colette Sharp, Dianne Lawrence, Jill Galer, Janet Doherty, Rachel Barney, Keith Craig, special appearance: Jean Carignan, exec. p. Pierre Lamy, p. Judy Steed, p. man Marilyn Stonehouse, Louise Ranger, p.c. The Far Shore Inc., 1975 col. 35 m.m. dist. Astral, running time 1 hour 37 minutes.

Until her heroine dove into a northern Ontario lake, fully clothed in billowing chiffon and Sunbonnet Sue chapeau, Joyce Wieland had an intriguing love drama going for her in **The Far Shore**.

The lady in the lake struck out for the far shore and her artist lover and made it, but the movie sank just about then with no hope for rescue because director Wieland decided to change forces in mid-stream.

Instead of continuing a tense, uneasy suspense in the story of a woman reaching out for freedom from a domineering, insensitive husband, **The Far Shore** suddenly turned into a farce. It became a silent movie comedy with a chase scene that Mack Sennett — as a Canadian — could have been proud of, but which Ms. Wieland should not be unless she really intended it to be funny.

I don't think she did. It just turned out that way as husband and friend in one canoe chased wife and her lover

in another, dodging and backtracking through scenic Canadian countryside to the accompaniment of finger-tripping piano straight out of nickelodeon beginnings. I was ready to believe this to be the most embarrassing sequence in a film from which better things were anticipated due to its advance reputation.

But then came an even more shattering scene, one from which I wanted to hide, even in the darkness of the Vox Theatre in Cannes. Ahead of me sat two German critics whose laughter at everything I was trying to take seriously had annoyed me immensely. But now I found their reaction was contagious as Ms. Wieland threw non-obligatory sex into **The Far Shore** in the most far-fetched coupling ever dreamed up for the screen.

Celine Lomez and Frank Moore, their blood boiling hot after months of

repressed love for each other, finally release their feelings in the icy waters of that familiar lake. Off come the longjohns and the petticoats while she and he tread water.

The love-making is prolonged and passionate and the bluer they turn in the water, the more frantic the action, until, like a couple of exhausted fish, they climax and everything is over but the laughter. It was at this point I decided Ms. Wieland really did have a sense of humor.

But she did not have an artist's vision of the cinematic canvas she was attempting to cover with realism. Although Richard Leiterman's cinematography brings to the screen a colorful recreation of the rugged beauty of painter Tom Thompson — about whom **The Far Shore** is supposedly concerned — Ms. Wieland's direction is romantically uncertain. She also has cast in black and white. The heroine's husband is obvious from the start, a snob and a bore, a businessman who buys what he needs and needs nothing he can't buy. So there's never any doubt that there'll be trouble when his Debussy-playing wife and poetic hermit Tom find themselves on the same wavelength. Yet there is no real struggle. The conflict is basic and simplistic, not even imaginative.

Even so Ms. Wieland delivers a beautiful picture whose flaws show up only when one gets too close. The most attractive image in **The Far Shore** is Miss Lomez, whose dark sensuous features are reminiscent of both Genevieve Bujold and Carole Laure. If **The Far Shore** does nothing else, it brings to the screen another Canadian actress whose talent still has to be measured but whose star quality already is evident.

Les Wedman



Joyce Wieland

Brethren

Director Dennis Zahoruk

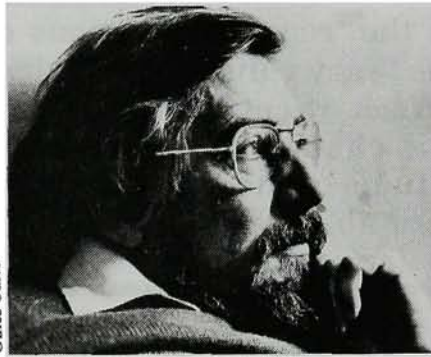
To be reviewed
in *Cinema Canada* issue no. 33



La tête de Normande St-Onge

Director Gilles Carle

Reviewed in *Cinema Canada* no. 24
by Ronald H. Blumer

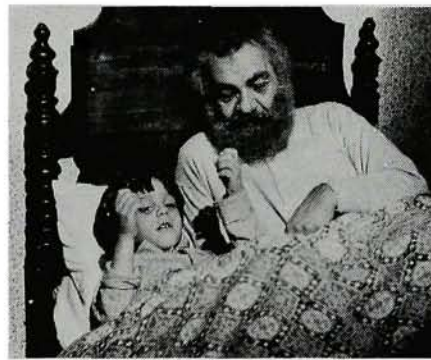


Gilles Carle

Lies My Father Told Me

Director Jan Kadar

Reviewed in *Cinema Canada* no. 22
by Connie Tadros



Partis pour la gloire

Director Clement Perron

Reviewed in *Cinema Canada* no. 25
by Carmel Dumas



Second Wind

Director Don Shebib

Reviewed in *Cinema Canada* no. 27
by Clive Denton



canadian film awards quiz

For Canadian Film Award freaks, *Cinema Canada* offers a bound volume of nos. 21-30 to the person submitting the most correct answers to our CFA Quiz. Answers must be submitted before Dec. 5, 1976 and will be announced in issue no. 34. Good luck! *Cinema Canada*, Box 398, Outremont Station, Montreal.

1. The first Canadian Film Awards were held in 1948. What film was chosen Film of the Year?
2. What former provincial premier has won an Etrog?
3. Three actresses have twice been chosen Best Actress. Can you name them?
4. What year did Claude Jutra first win a Film Award?
5. Only one man has won Film Awards both as an Actor and for Film of the Year. Who is he?
6. Only one man has twice won Film of the Year. Who is he?
7. How many Film Awards have Crawley Films won?
8. Name the 4 films which won Awards and later went on to win Oscars.
9. In 1966, a film based on the making of a film was chosen in the General Information category, while the original film was selected in the Travel & Tourism category. What were the films?
10. Why is the Etrog so named, and what year was it first presented?
11. How many years has Gerald Pratley been Chairman of the Film Awards Jury?
12. What two prominent European directors subsequently came back to Canada to make films here, after having served on the juries of Canadian Film Awards?
13. Who are the people in the photo p.9 and what are they doing when?