

# Nasty nostalgia...again

## MENACE/KNOTS

Longford Cinema  
Toorak Rd., South Yarra

Admittedly, I know little about Australian politics of the 1950s. The film *Menace*, now showing (with *Knots*) at the Longford Cinema in South Yarra, is a collection of interviews with people directly involved from one side in the tyrannical "purges" of the Menzies era, which in this very good film, is shown as one of a bigotry which we, imbued now with ideas of social democracy, would find difficult to understand.

For Menzies, during Australia's own McCarthy-istic Cold War, communists were threatening his conception of society and law and order (possibly quite rightly), but he was determined to outlaw the evil, and in 1951, he attempted to dissolve the Australian Communist Party. Communists went underground, and the Cyclops-like media, proclaiming madly and with all the "liberal" post-war zest its nationalistic flavour gave, slammed down on "subversives", in some cases, even if they were not communist at all, or even affiliated with a trade union!

It is not surprising that even after a strong campaign, including Boy Scout-like Young Reds marching down Swanston Street, those who were organising a "No" vote to Menzies' absurd referendum on outlawing

communism, only just won. And they all breathed a cyclonic sigh of relief.

The people interviewed are still unknown to me because their names were not given. Sitting over supper, the communists and sympathisers interviewed are not scrawny radicals, but gentle, thinking people, obviously so as not to lead the audience to suspect there was any tarnish on the group. They enunciate nicely and they are even seen sitting around a barbeque in one chummy segment.

A lot can be learned from this film, which hooray horray, does not cater to the mass market. I was only a little upset when I saw one of those being interviewed oh so genuinely, on a television commercial the following evening.

The film *Knots*, based on the book by R.D. Laing, which follows *Menace*, is a British film, oddly, about a theatrical group who, during rehearsals and the final performance of a play-cum-circus-act revue, are focussing onto problems in associations with others, where motives and motivations are learned to be understood. To quote:

"Some people have a definite aptitude for keeping others tied in knots

Some are good at tying knots

Others excel at being tied in knots

Both the tier and the tied may be unaware of how it is done

## FILMS



Or even that it is being done at all".

They pause and think about their relationships. One of the most tense parts of the film is when one of the young men creeps behind the curtains and then onto the stage, with a bow and arrow, poisoning it to kill a girl. It is very dramatic, but when he shoots her, it is suddenly turned upside-down into a humorous sketch.

This film is very exploratory and touching, opening up incisions into things so often presumed or neglected. It is also very funny, and again, I am so glad it is not just another piece of cheese-cake. To show how life can be circular and a complete contradiction: There must be something the matter with me because I think there isn't anything the matter with me".

Hamish Grant

(Malc. v. m.)

FARRAGO JUNE 14th 1977.