



The Lusty Minister

IT IS NOT exactly a trade secret that it requires \$1,000,000 to obtain Elizabeth Taylor's services for a movie, and the price for the tandem appearance of Miss Taylor and Richard Burton is \$750,000 more. The enterprising producer Martin Ransohoff came up with his own story, called *The Sandpiper*, got the Burtons' signatures on a contract, and now, as they say in the trade, he's got himself a picture. This means not that he has made a *good* picture, but that he has made one almost guaranteed to turn a profit. I mention the above to dispel any illusions that *The Sandpiper* may offer a significant or interesting cinematic experience; what it does have is \$1,750,000 worth of so-called acting talent displayed in lavish Panavision and Metrocolor, directed soporifically by Vincente Minelli, using situations and lines of dialogue written by Dalton Trumbo and Michael Wilson, from an adaptation by Irene Kamp and Louis Kamp.

From the purely commercial point of view, Mr. Ransohoff has done no wrong in assuming that vast numbers of people would be interested in seeing the Burtons together in a story of star-crossed love. What bothers me, though, is how so many intelligent people could take seriously the mess of windy platitudes and stale stereotypes that make up the substance of the tale. Miss Taylor is introduced to us as a free-spirited young woman of Bohemian inclinations who is raising her young and illegitimate son into what she hopes will be unfettered and nonconformist manhood. The State of California regards the boy as troublesome, however, and insists that he be enrolled for corrective purposes in a private boy's school run by a handsome Protestant minister who turns out to be Richard Burton. The minister is married to Eva Marie Saint, has two teen-age sons of his own, and upon meeting Miss Taylor is drawn not only to her appetizing appearance, but to her free-willed or "sandpiper" way of life. Soon they are embroiled in a portentous affair in which pangs of Victorian conscience corrode the minister's inner spiritual being, and eventually he decides to leave the school, separate from his wife, and seek a new purity of soul. He doesn't even get Elizabeth Taylor.

Some of Miss Taylor's dialogue appears to have been cribbed straight out of *The Feminine Mystique*, that book's general argument serving as her justification. Where Mr. Burton's dialogue derives from is harder to ascertain—old-

time afternoon radio soap operas, perhaps. The scene is mainly the Big Sur region of California, where the poverty-stricken Miss Taylor lives and paints (she's an artist) in what seems to have struck the scenic designer as an appropriate place, a charming cottage high on a bluff overlooking a dreamy stretch of beach on the Pacific, the kind of place any poor soul could probably buy for forty or fifty thousand dollars. In this lovely hideaway she poses in the nude for a beatnik sculptor, but is modest enough to cover part of her bosom with her hands when the minister unexpectedly walks in. In spite of the story, in spite of her role, Miss Taylor achieves an almost monumental quality: she is *the* star, not walking through a part but employing it as a vehicle. Her acting is of the kind that is convinced rather than convincing. Mr. Burton is less convinced. If his lust is understandable, none of his other actions are.

A much more modest undertaking

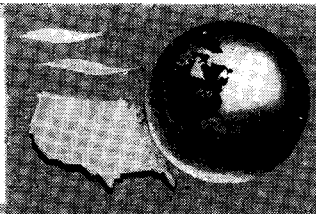
was the Boulting Brothers production of *Rotten to the Core*, a deft, slightly insane comedy about a bumbling band of thieves who nearly get away with a couple of million dollars (in pounds, of course, this being an English film). The leader of the band, played by Anton Rodgers, organizes the operation by using the latest scientific methods, his aim being to lift the payroll for a whole British division deployed in a camp for inspection by a German general of the NATO forces. Mr. Rodgers is a clever actor and comedian who parodies a German general, a doctor in charge of a clinic given to dispensing mineral water laced with gin, and a secret agent unraveling a mysterious government's menacing plot. His assistants are less intelligent but always funny, and parodies of a police officer and a private detective (retired from the police force by collapsed arches) are cleverly wrought by Thorley Walters and Eric Sykes, respectively. Nothing great in the way of English satire, the gags are nevertheless inventive, and the modestly capable direction sees to it that the laugh is obtained and the cut swiftly made to the next gimmick. Anton Rodgers bears watching; he's an original.

—HOLLIS ALPERT.



"You don't look like a smut writer."

As Others See Us



VANCOUVER:

The U.N. at Twenty

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S SPEECH at the United Nations' twentieth birthday observances in San Francisco set short- and long-term goals for the member nations of the world organization. But essentially the President's call was for a United Nations that will have sinew and teeth. It must have these or fade away, and it cannot have them unless the great nations of the world, the U.S. included, are willing to provide them and to accept the U.N.'s mandate even when it impinges on their own sovereignty. . . .

There is no doubt that the U.N. is in trouble. Vietnam proves it, and it will be no easy task for the world body to follow Mr. Johnson's urging "to bring to the table those who seem determined to make war" or to bring them into his imaginatively named "alliance for man."

The crisis of financing peacekeeping operations is a symptom rather than the disease which besets the U.N. The most difficult current problem is China. But even this is but an obstacle in the way of what Mr. Johnson rightly conceives as the U.N.'s principal tasks—achievement of disarmament, solving the overpopulation problem, and banishing poverty and inequality.

But let it not be forgotten how the world organization steered the nations past other crises, from the Berlin blockade and Iran, through Korea, Suez, and the Congo.

Its most serious failure has been its inability to master the power patterns of the atomic age. Yet when all is said and done, men must say of the United Nations that if it did not exist it would have to be invented. If it fails, the last great hope of peace may go with it.

—*Vancouver Sun.*

LONDON:

The Price of Poverty

THE POVERTY PROGRAM in the United States is in some minor trouble. With so much sticky money and so many new jobs and patronage suddenly available, it was inevitable that politicians would be attracted.

It was inevitable that the old outraged cries of "boondoggle" and "pork barrel" should resound in tones of calculated outrage. But the fact remains that this program is one of the best and most American things that America has undertaken in a long time.

The first idea of a program of this sort was President Kennedy's. During his election campaign he fought a primary in West Virginia. He fought this with a single-minded Kennedy-type ferocity that is still held against him by his opponents.

It resulted in the defeat of the present Vice President, Hubert Humphrey; but in crossing and recrossing this poor relation among the American states the candidate also saw rural and mining poverty that came as a surprise even to a man who had a nodding acquaintance with the slums of Boston. . . .

The program itself is wholly American in concept. There is little of the welfare state and nothing of socialism in it. It owes nothing to Lord Beveridge. Its purpose is to give the deprived, the underprivileged, the down-and-outs, a chance to re-enter the great society.

Essentially it is a training program designed to help men and women to help themselves. It depends heavily on local organizations and voluntary help. It is a crash program to right the careless wrongs of capitalism.

American poverty is less obvious than, say, British poverty. It is hidden in forbidding slums where strangers are discouraged. It is disguised under bright shirts and behind the wheels of third-hand cars and in a cloud of marijuana smoke. It is hidden at the end of dirt roads in the country and in almost secret valleys in the mountains.

Yet the authority that runs this program, the Office of Economic Opportunity, reckons that America has 34,600,000 in the poverty class. To qualify, an annual income below \$3,000 a year for a family of four or \$1,500 for an individual is the entry pass.

In this lush society where every nation can become President, poverty sets up its own vicious cycle. Poverty forces an early dropout from school and poverty quells ambition and confidence. In a population of some 200 million there are some 2,360,000 known adult illiterates, and there are probably more.

—*Patrick O'Donovan in the Observer.*

HELSINKI:

When East Doesn't Meet West

AS RECENTLY AS at the time of President Johnson's taking office last winter, the situation seemed not inauspicious for positive developments. The President, who had won a towering victory at the polls with his peace program, declared his complete willingness to talk with his counterpart in the new Kremlin government in order to chart the possibilities of progress.

The situation today can hardly be characterized in such positive terms. . . . It is to be feared that hopes of a contact at top level between the chief protagonists of East and West have been scuttled, for the near future at least. It remains to be seen just how deep the rift is. . . .

—*Hufvudstadsbladet.*

MANCHESTER:

Pressure on the President

AS AMERICAN CASUALTIES mount in Vietnam, President Johnson is beginning to suffer the political torture of the rack. The two-way stretch of his critics is so



—*Ladis Matyi, Budapest.*

Copyright suit: "He stole my foreign policy!"