

## Nuclear bomb's explosive power examined in BC documentary

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There is no image as awe-inspiring, yet terrifying, as that of a nuclear bomb detonation. Nuclear Dynamite is like the bomb itself, both horrifying and immensely interesting. Blending detonation images with well-placed interviews and video clips from the period, director Gary Marcuse documents one of the most compelling periods in recent history.

In the 1950s and '60s, the American government supported the concept of geographical engineering. The idea behind geographical engineering was that engineers could create instant harbours or canals by simply setting off nuclear bombs. A bomb's explosive power could force the earth away from the bomb site, leaving a nice and neat crater. This project came to be known as 'Plowshare.'

With ideas ranging from blasting a tunnel under New York city, building a new Panama Canal, and using nuclear explosions to send a shuttle to Mars, to using nuclear heat to burn off the smog of LA, Plowshare had it all - until it came up against the peace and environmental movements, that is.

Canada had its own version of Plowshare. An American company in partnership with the Alberta government planned to place a bomb under the Athabaskan tar sands. It was thought that the tar sands would melt in the explosion, leaving an already oil-rich province with even more oil. The American company later announced the explosion date without any Canadian consent, leading Prime Minister Diefenbaker to call the project off.

Nuclear Dynamite is humourous, suspenseful and makes a good argument for testing the effects of new technology before experimenting with it on a major scale. I would like to have seen more on the effects of nuclear fallout on humankind. I also feel that the information on the effects of nuclear testing seems to be tacked on at the end rather than wholly integrated.

However, these are small quibbles in the grand scheme of things.

David Suzuki's narration is unobtrusive and the editing is superb. As a good documentary should, it allows the interviewees to speak for themselves, and leaves the audience to decide if they agree.

Nuclear Dynamite is a Canadian-made documentary, which, like a nuclear bomb, leaves the viewer in awe. Nuclear Dynamite will air October 5 at 8 p.m. on CBC's The Nature of Things.

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