

BFI launches Ken Loach Project with world premiere of his Save The Children film...42 years after it was made

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Marking Ken Loach's 75th birthday and career of 50 years in film and television, the BFI presents the largest and most comprehensive Ken Loach retrospective ever, along with a host of Loach related projects, activities and events, in cinemas and online. The Loach project launches with the world premiere on September 1st 2011, 6.20pm at BFI Southbank of the controversial documentary Loach made for Save the Children in 1969 which was subsequently banned and has been unseen for four decades – until now, with the permission of Save The Children. The film has been held for this time in safe keeping in the BFI National Archive.

The untitled film was originally commissioned by Save The Children to mark its fiftieth anniversary and had been intended to be screened on London Weekend Television. At this time Ken Loach's reputation for political engagement was already known through his campaigning BBC drama, *Cathy Come Home* (1967), which was widely believed to have played a part in the foundation of the charity Shelter.

The film was shot (on 16mm) in 1969 in the UK and Kenya by Loach's production company Kestrel Films. The film is directed by Ken Loach and produced by Tony Garnett - creative collaborators on many other films including *Cathy Come Home*. The tone of the film is set with a quote from Friedrich Engels, goes on to explore the politics of race, class and charity in capitalist society and closes with a resounding condemnation of capitalism from Loach himself.

The film opens as the camera records the great and the good arriving at St. Paul's Cathedral and then discovers in a brutal contrast the desolation and mean streets of Manchester and some of its inhabitants. Voice-over commentary includes a range of attitudes to poverty, race and attitudes to child-rearing. We are shown an intake of deprived children benefiting from a holiday at a Save the Children home called Hill House in Essex. Some of the staff give their own trenchant views on parenting and charitable support. Many of the children are also given a voice.

The latter part of the film focuses on a Save the Children project in Nairobi, Kenya for homeless children and includes a visit to a substantial school which seems to be run on the strict lines of an English public school. Commentary includes some political activists who disapprove of the colonial approach to education including the forbidding of any native language. These schoolboys are shown to be fed a diet of Tom Brown's Schooldays and Jeeves and Wooster.

Expatriates from Britain give an account of their lives of luxury and the benefits of business in Kenya. Black political activists discuss the contrast between foreign businesses taking money out of Kenya through the exploitation of labour, while many of its citizens need charity.

Save the Children were unhappy with the content of the film and were determined not to allow it to be screened, successfully persuading LWT not to broadcast it. However, Loach and Garnett refused to hand over the negative to Save the Children for purposes of either re-editing or destroying it. The dispute went to court where it was decided that the film should not be destroyed, however all the material should be sent to the National Film Archive (now BFI National Archive) on condition that it would not be shown without Save The Children's written approval. The surviving materials have no title or any credits.

These negatives remained in the BFI National Archive, untouched and unviewed until polyester preservation material and a 16mm viewing print were made in the early 2000s. In accordance with the court order, however, the film has never been publicly shown, and only viewed by a small handful of BFI archivists.

The planning of the Loach retrospective prompted the BFI to renew dialogue with Save the Children earlier this year and they agreed to a screening in association with the BFI. The film's screening will encourage debate around the issues it raises and it also gives a fascinating insight into an otherwise unknown chapter in Ken Loach's important career as one of Britain's leading directors of film and television.

Heather Stewart, Creative Director BFI said *'An unseen film from the early works of one of the world's best and most controversial directors is like gold dust so we were excited and very grateful when, after many years of trying, Save the Children agreed to let us show it to the public for the first time. The film has been in safe keeping for the nation in the BFI National Archive for over 40 years and it's an incredibly important insight into not only the craft of Loach as a director but as a piece of social history - through his eyes.'*

Justin Forsyth, CEO Save the Children said *"Ken Loach is a great film maker who asks the tough questions and as the new CEO of Save the Children I am pleased we have belatedly allowed this film to be shown after 40 years. It raises important questions about power, colonialism and charity that are still relevant today. I am enormously proud of the work Save the Children does in the UK and around the world. We save millions of children's lives and help millions more fulfil their potential, and expect to be scrutinised and challenged to do the best possible job."*

The BFI's Ken Loach retrospective

Ken Loach is a filmmaker with an outstanding international reputation both as a hugely talented craftsman and radical social and political commentator; the retrospective will explore the full range of Loach's films, television plays and documentaries. In full collaboration with Loach himself, this major BFI project incorporates a donation of Loach's collection to the BFI National Archive, a two-month BFI Southbank season and Mezzanine exhibition, regional tour, education programme and Screenonline and Mediatheque collections.

For more information or to book a ticket to Save the Children, or any other Loach events and screening please visit www.bfi.org.uk

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