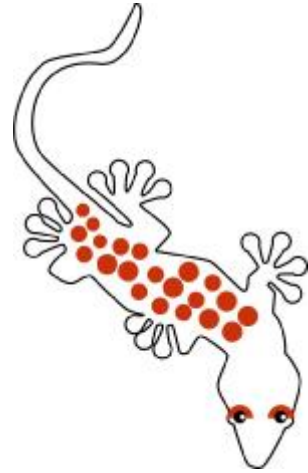


# LaborFirst

A grassroots movement for ALP renewal



## THE WATSON FILM SOCIETY

Honouring the memory of Australia's first Labor Prime Minister,  
Chris Watson.

## ABOUT THE WATSON FILM SOCIETY

The Watson Film Society has been established as an initiative of LaborFirst – a resolutely non-factional grouping of Australian Labor Party members committed to party renewal and the election of federal and state Labor governments – in the interests of enabling ALP Branches and Federal Electorate Assemblies (FEAs) to upgrade their programs and enhance member satisfaction through access to progressive classic and contemporary feature and documentary films.

Screenings are at the Erwin Rado Theatre,  
207 Johnson Street, Fitzroy.

Full-year membership of the society is limited to 70, and the annual subscription is \$50. ALP Branches and FEAs may arrange introductory group attendances at a cost of \$300, strictly payable in advance and recoverable by them through the issue of up to 60 introductory mini-passes at per capita charges of their choice.

Entitlement is to a single screening of a film of the group's choice from the society's recommendations together with light refreshments, at a date and time to be arranged

Recommendations are indicative only, and subject to availability, and the society looks forward to hearing from members about additional titles which they may wish to see included. Recommendation notes have been adapted in part from entries in the Maltin and TimeOut Movie Guides, and auspicing bodies may wish to acquire and consult these publications before finalising their selections.

For bookings or further details, contact the Secretary:

Andrew Liston, 3 Eric Street, Essendon, 3040.  
Phone (03) 9370 0635. E-Mail <listonandrew@hotmail.com>

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## The Recommendations

### **Adalen 31**

1969, Directed by Bo Widerberg. 115 min. Strikers in a Swedish paper mill disagree over whether or not to make their case with violence; matters are further complicated when a striker's son falls in love with – and impregnates – the factory manager's daughter. Generally appealing mix of romance and history, though no one will ever mistake director Bo Widerberg for a gritty filmmaker of social realism.

### **Advise and Consent**

1962, Directed by Otto Preminger. 139 min. Long but engrossing drama of Washington wheeling and dealing, from the Allen Drury novel.

### **All the King's Men**

1949, Directed by Robert Rossen. 109 min. Brilliant adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about the rise and fall of a Huey Long-like senator, played by Broderick Crawford in the performance of his career.

### **All the President's Men.**

1976, Directed by Alan J. Pakula. 138 min. Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman play real-life *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who persevered in the investigation of the Watergate break-in that led to earthshaking scandal and downfall of the Nixon presidency.

### **The Battle of Algiers.**

1965, Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. 125 min. Straightforward drama about revolt against the French by Algerians from 1954-1962. Its impressive pseudo-documentary style helped earn it many awards, and the searing imperialism vs. independence struggle it depicts still resonates.

### **The Best Man**

1964, Directed by Franklin Schaffner. 102 min. Sharp film adaptation of Gore Vidal's play about political conventioning with several determined presidential candidates seeking endorsement at any cost; brittle, engrossing drama.

### **The Big Chill.**

1983, Directed by Laurence Kasdan. 103 min. Entertaining, surface-level look at a group of former college-radical friends who have dropped back into society. Wonderful acting ensemble, and an irresistible soundtrack of 1960s hits, help to camouflage weaknesses of script.

### **Blue Collar.**

1978, Directed by Paul Schrader. 114 min. Muck-raking expose melodrama with Richard Prior, Harvey Keitel and Yappet Kotto delivering strong performances as auto workers who find that it isn't just management ripping them off – it's their union.

### **Bob Roberts.**

1992, Directed by Tim Robbins. 101 min. Smart, funny political satire about a right-wing, folk-singing Senatorial candidate who knows how to manipulate an audience – and the media.

### **Born on the Fourth of July.**

1989, Directed by Oliver Stone. 144 min. Relentlessly realistic and powerful saga of real-life Vietnam vet Ron Covic, who joined the Marines as a gung-ho recruit in the 1960s and came home paralysed from the chest down – only to endure an even greater ordeal of physical and mental rehabilitation before emerging as an anti-war activist.

### **Bread and Roses.**

2001, Directed by Ken Loach. Gripping fictionalised account of the 2000 L.A. janitors' strike focuses on a Latina illegal immigrant who stands up to her corrupt employers and struggles to convince her co-workers to join the union.

### **Bulworth.**

1998, Directed by Warren Beatty. 107 min. Audacious political satire about a Californian senator, running for re-election in 1996, who solves his crisis of conscience by telling the truth – and embracing the black community. Unsettling at times – as it is meant to be – with trenchant observations on the political process and the plight of the poor.

### **Casualties of War.**

1998, Directed by Brian De Palma. 113 min. Vietnam War picture focusing on one patrol, led by off-the-wall Sean Penn, and its inhumane treatment of an innocent Vietnamese girl. Based on a real incident, detailed in Daniel Lang's *New Yorker* article, later published as a book.

### **The China Syndrome.**

1979, Directed by James Bridges. 123 min. Heart-pounding drama about attempted cover-up of accident at a California nuclear plant is as much a probe of television news as it is a story of nuclear power – and it scores bulls-eye on both fronts.

### **Chinatown.**

1974, Directed by Roman Polanski. 131 min. Bizarre, fascinating mystery in the Hammett-Chandler tradition (and set in the 1930s) with Jack Nicholson as L.A. private eye led into a complex, volatile case by femme fatale (Faye Dunaway).

### **Coming Home.**

1978, Directed by Hal Ashby. 127 min. Powerful look at the effect of the Vietnam War on people at home. Mature, gripping film, marred only by lapses into melodrama.

### **Control Room.**

2004, Directed by Jehane Noujaim. 98 min. Documentary about Arabic television channel Al Jazeera. US Army's Qatar press centre becomes an isolated theatre for an exploration of the rituals and motives of various members of the international media deployed there.

### **The Corporation.**

2004, Directed by Jennifer Abbott. 145 min. This hefty documentary goes for the Great White Whale of our times, the engine of global capitalism's wealth creation and distribution, whose 'hidden' costs, it argues, over-awe the benefits. It's a vast subject, shrouded in fog and contention, and at nearly two and a half hours the film is bursting at the seams with facts, argument and illustration.

### **Edge of the City (A Man is Ten Feet Tall).**

1957, Directed by Martin Ritt. 85 min. Sombre, realistic account of N.Y.C. waterfront life and corruption. Friendship of army deserter John Cassavetes and dock-worker Sidney Poitier, both conflicting with union racketeer Jack Warden, focus for reflections and integrity in lower-class society. Masterfully acted by all.

### **Electric Edwardians: The Films of Mitchell & Kenyon.**

Contemporary 'slice of life' UK footage from the era of the Labor Party's inception.

### **Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room.**

Scathing exposure of corporate corruption as in the US power industry.

### **Erin Brockovich.**

2000, Directed by Stephen Soderbergh. 131 min. Julia Roberts won a Best Actress Oscar for her performance as a brassy, divorced mother of three, at the end of her rope. She talks her way into office of lawyer (Albert Finney), then becomes obsessed with a pro bono case involving residents of a Californian desert town who have been exposed to poisonously polluted water,

### **Fail Safe.**

1964, Directed by Sidney Lumet. 111 min. US bomber is accidentally ordered to nuke Moscow, plunging heads of American and Russian governments into crisis of decision making as time runs out. High tension drama, done with taste and intelligence.

### **The Front.**

1996, Directed by Martin Ritt. 94 min. Bulls-eye comedy with a serious theme. Woody Allen is a schnook enlisted by blacklisted writers to put his name to their scripts during 1950s witch-hunt era, leading to various complications. Allen's casting is perfect, and Zero Mostel is standout as 'tainted' comic fighting for survival.

### **The Gamekeeper.**

1980, Directed by Ken Loach. 84 min. Simple, effectively subtle Ken Loach tale of conservative young gamekeeper Phil Askham who sublimates his anger at being unable to crack the British class system.

### **Good Night, and Good Luck.**

2005, Directed by George Clooney. 99 min. American television personality Edward R. Murrow – famous for his World war II broadcasts from London – took on the malevolent power of muck-raking US Senator Joseph McCarthy and won.

### **The Grapes of Wrath.**

1940, Directed by John Ford. 129 min. One of the great American films, an uncompromising adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel about impoverished Okie farmers making the trek to California during the Depression, where the good life they've hoped for is well out of reach.

### **Harlan County USA.**

1977, Directed by Barbara Kopple. 103 min. Gripping, human documentary (an Academy Award winner) about the strike of Kentucky mine workers against the Eastover Mining Company, a subsidiary of Duke Power.

### **Hidden Agenda.**

1990, Directed by Ken Loach. 108 min. American human rights activist Frances McDormand and British police inspector Brian Cox (both excellent) try to unravel mystery surrounding police ambush and cover-up in strife-ridden Belfast during the early 1980s.

### **If.**

1968, Directed by Lindsay Anderson. 111 min. A modern classic in which Anderson minutely captures both the particular ethos of a public school and the general flavour of any structured community, thus achieving a clear allegorical force without sacrificing a whit of his exploration of an essentially British institution.

### **The Insider.**

1999, Directed by Michael Mann. 157 min. Dynamic, fact-based story of a gutsy segment producer for TV's Sixty Minutes (Al Pacino) who sniffs out a story in disaffected scientist (Russell Crowe), who has just been fired by a tobacco company.

### **JFK.**

1991, Directed by Oliver Stone. 188 min. Absolutely riveting film about President Kennedy's assassination. Full of startling scenes, and bravura acting; as dramatic movie-making it's superb.

### **Joe Hill.**

1971, Directed by Bo Widerberg. 114 min. Story of legendary labour leader has usual Widerberg matter-of-taste glossiness, but also some affecting scenes and pleasant performances. Joan Baez sings the title song.

### **Kes.**

1969, Directed by Ken Loach. 113 min. Refreshingly unsentimental account of a young working-class boy who finds release from the dreariness of his life by looking after and training a falcon. A pointed commentary on the lack of opportunities for the lower classes in Britain – a theme that has been constant in director Loach's work.

### **Ladybird Ladybird.**

1993, Directed by Ken Loach. 103 min. Shattering, based-on-fact account of a durable but deeply troubled single mother of four who has a history of being abused by men.

**Land and Freedom.**

1995, Directed by Ken Loach. 109 min. Perceptive, passionate account of the Spanish Civil War, centred on a young, working-class British Communist who comes to Spain to join the anti-fascists in their battle against Franco.

**The Last Hurrah**

1958, Directed by John Ford. 121 min. Sentimental version of Edwin O'Connor's novel of politics, loosely based on life of Boston's mayor James Curley, who in this film is mounting his final election campaign. Top-notch veteran cast makes the film sparkle.

**The Leopard.**

1963, Directed by Luchino Visconti. 195 min. Magnificent spectacle, set in 1860 Sicily, about an aristocrat who tries coming to terms with the unification of Italy ... the concluding hour-long banquet scene is among the great set pieces in movie history.

**Looks and Smiles.**

1984, Directed by Ken Loach. 104 min. Working-class teenager Graham Green cannot find a job or place for himself in society. Solid, realistic story of alienation, frustration, anger.

**The Manchurian Candidate.**

1962, Directed by John Frankenheimer. 126 min. Tingling political paranoia thriller about the strange aftermath of a Korean War hero's decoration and his mother's machinations to promote her McCarthy-like husband's career.

**Marie: A True Story.**

1985 Directed by Roger Donaldson. 125 min. Solid drama about divorcee and mother of three who takes a job in Tennessee state government, then blows the whistle on corruption and finds herself in very hot water. Might be hard to believe if it weren't true.

**Matewan.**

1987, Directed by John Sayles. 130 min. Compelling and compassionate drama about labour troubles in the heart of the coal-mining country, Matewan, Virginia, in the 1920s.

**Medium Cool.**

1969, Directed by Haskell Wexler. 110 min. Arresting, unique film about TV cameraman who remains detached despite events demanding his involvement at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago.

**Millhouse: A White Comedy.**

1971, Directed by Emile de Antonio. 92 min. Millhouse is entirely concerned with Nixon's political career, backing up the early material with interviews with some of his opponents at the time. It's certainly a funny film (commie-baiting Nixon 'discovering' microfilm in a bed of pumpkins) but the strength with which it reveals the full horror of Nixon's personality is devastating.

**Missing.**

1982, Directed by Constantin Costa-Gavras. 122 min. A carefully manipulated drama that works, because of Costa-Gavras' convincing direction and Jack Lemmon's emphatic performance as a stiff-backed father who comes to a politically volatile Latin American country in search of his missing son – unable and unwilling to believe that American representatives might not be telling him the truth.

**The Molly Maguires.**

1970, Directed by Martin Ritt. 123 min. Well-crafted film about a secret society of Irish mine-workers in Pennsylvania, circa 1876, led by Sean Connery; newcomer Richard Harris is working as an informer.

**My Name is Joe.**

1998, Directed by Ken Loach. 105 min. After coming into conflict over a young couple troubled by debt and drug-dependency, amateur soccer coach and recovering alcoholic Joe and health service worker Sarah find themselves embarking on a mutually wary but fulfilling romance; the trouble is, they have different ideas about how to deal with the problems posed by the unforgiving world around them.

**Nixon.**

1995, Directed by Oliver Stone. 190 min. Controversial, fragmented portrait of the US politician and president, presented as a driven man beset by deep-seated insecurities.

**Norma Rae.**

1979, Directed by Martin Ritt. 113 min. Sally Field is excellent in her Oscar-winning performance as real-life poor Southern textile worker gradually won over towards unionisation by N.Y.C. labour organiser.

### **On the Waterfront.**

1954, Directed by Elia Kazan. 108 min. Film of Bud Schulberg's unflinching account of New York City harbour unions, with Marlon Brando unforgettable as the misfit, Rod Steiger as his crafty brother, Lee J. Cobb as his waterfront boss and Eve Marie Saint as the girl he loves.

### **Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism.**

2004, Directed by Robert Greenwald. 78 min. If you haven't seen Fox News, this is for you: a frightening study of the abuse of economic power, as practised by Rupert Murdoch's 'fair and balanced' news-folk, whose objectivity is exposed to be anything but. The right is might, indeed. Nightmarishly good.

### **The Parallax View.**

1974, Directed by Alan J. Pakula. 102 min. Director-photographer-production designer team later responsible for 'All the President's Men' gives this political thriller a brilliant 'look' as reporter (Warren Beatty) investigates a senator's assassination.

### **Places in the Heart.**

1984, Directed by Robert Benton. 111 min. Writer-Director Benton's affectionate look at life in his home-town, Waxahachie, Texas, during the Depression 1930s.

### **Primary Colours.**

1998, Directed by Mike Nichols. 143 min. Dynamic adaptation of political roman a clef by Anonymous (Joe Klein) about a Southern governor's (Clinton's) Presidential race – and an idealist who sees in him both a true believer in people power and an insatiable womaniser who'll do anything to cover his tracks. Smart, funny, foul-mouthed screenplay by Elaine May.

### **Raining Stones.**

1993, Directed by Ken Loach. 91 min. Despite the unemployment, petty crime and crack that afflict their Lancashire housing estate, Bob and Anne remain staunch Catholics, Bob does odd jobs to put food on the table, but also because he's determined to buy their daughter her communion dress. Loach's film has him soon in hock to loan sharks.

### **Rats in the Ranks.**

1997, Directed by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson. 98 min. Timeless, incisive documentary about internal ALP shenanigans, as exemplified by a struggle for the mayoralty in inner-Sydney municipality Leichhardt.

### **Reds.**

1981, Directed by Warren Beatty. 196 min. Sprawling, ambitious film about American idealist/journalist John Reed's involvement with Communism, the Russian Revolution and a wilful, free-thinking woman named Louise Bryant.

### **The Return of the Secaucus Seven.**

1979, Directed by John Sayles. 110 min. A simple, low-budget film about a weekend reunion of good friends who shared the 60s radical college life and have since gone in different directions.

### **Riff-Raff.**

1990, Directed by Ken Loach. 95 min. Bitingly funny comedy about the ongoing struggle between the classes in England, examining the plight of a blue-collar type, newly arrived in London, who signs on at a construction site.

### **Salt of the Earth.**

1953, Directed by Herbert J. Biberman. 94 min. Earnest film about Latino mine workers in New Mexico who go on strike – in spite of the tremendous hardships it causes. This film is particularly impressive considering its history – made under difficult conditions (and on a shoestring) with many non-professional actors, by blacklisted filmmakers.

### **Secret Honor.**

1984, Directed by Robert Altman. 90 min. Richard Nixon, with a Chivas Regal assist, paces round his study in a near-psychotic rail against Hiss, Castro, Ike, Kissinger and anyone named Kennedy. Robert Altman's film of Philip Baker Hall's one-man show is fluidly filmed and outrageously conceived – a titillating, one-of-a-kind for anyone who barracked for Krushchev in the Kitchen Debates.

### **The Seduction of Joe Tynan.**

1979, Directed by Jerry Schatzberg. 107 min. A film using familiar themes – the personal pressures of success, power as an aphrodisiac – to recount its Kennedy-style success story of the young, dynamic but blandly selfish Senator (Alan Alda) who jeopardises family and friends in pursuit of power, and succumbs with understandable swiftness to Meryl Streep.

### **Seven Days in May.**

1964, Directed by John Frankenheimer. 118 min. Absorbing, believable story of military scheme to overthrow the US government.

**Silkwood.**

1983, Directed by Mike Nichols. 131 min. Superb performances and vivid dramatisations of workaday life in an Oklahoma nuclear-parts plant.

**State of Siege.**

1973, Directed by Constantin Costa-Gavras. 120 min. Highly controversial Costa-Gavras film, based on fact, about political assassination in Uruguay.

**Strikebound.**

1983, Directed by Richard Lowenstein. 100 min. Documentary-like chronicle, based on actual incidents, of a miners' strike in the Australian coal-fields during the 1930s, culminating with the workers – many of them Communist Party members – barricading themselves in their mine.

**Sweet Sixteen.**

2002, Directed by Ken Loach. 106 min. Loach and scriptwriter Paul Laverty's look at young Scottish lives stifled by crime, poverty and lack of opportunity is one of their best efforts, with the message mercifully never drowning out the drama.

**Thirteen Days.**

2000, Directed by Ronald Donaldson. 145 min. Absorbing dramatisation of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and how President John F. Kennedy dealt with the difficult decisions at hand, with hostile opposition from his military chiefs.

**Unconstitutional: The War on Our Civil Liberties.**

2004. Directed by Nonny de la Pena. 66 min. A further great documentary from the Robert Greenwald team: 'Unconstitutional provides the facts and stories that illuminate administration lies, wrongheaded policies, and the real victims of these actions – the American People'.

**Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War.**

2003. Directed by Robert Greenwald. 56 min. 'This controversial and arresting film offers an in-depth look at the actual arguments, speeches and spin given by President Bush and his senior advisors before, during and after the Iraq invasion'. Suitable for a double feature screening.

### **Wag the Dog.**

1997, Directed by Barry Levinson. 95 min. A desperate White House team, eager to fend off impending negative publicity about the President, hires a political fixer (Robert De Niro) who recruits a hotshot Hollywood producer (Dustin Hoffman) to stage a nonexistent war, simply to distract the public.

### **Weekend.**

1967, Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. 103 min. Mind-expanding anti-Western diatribe about one woman's road to guerrilla-hood is among Godard's more fully realised works, with a long traffic-jam sequence that is justifiably regarded as one of the great set pieces in screen history.

### **Why We Fight.**

2006, Directed by Eugene Jarecki. 99 min. Unflinching look at the anatomy of American war-making. Granted unparalleled Pentagon access, the film launches a non-partisan inquiry into the forces – political, economic and ideological – that drive America to fight.

### **The Wobblies.**

1979, Directed by Stewart Bird. 89 min. In the currently depressing US political situation, any recovery of that continent's militant, socialist tradition is welcome, especially from the first two decades of last century, when the Wobblies tried to organise the whole booming working class into one industrial union. Guided by the memories of several old World War I activists on film, this is a fascinating and often moving compilation of newsreel, photographs and those amazing songs.

### **Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price.**

2005, Directed by Robert Greenwald. 97 min. From the team that gave you 'Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism': '... takes you behind the glitz and into the real lives of workers and their families, business owners and their communities, in an extraordinary journey that will challenge the way you think, feel ... and shop'.

### **Z.**

1968, Directed by Constantin Costa-Gavras. 110 Min. Oscar-winner for Best Foreign Film and Editing, based on true-life incident, concerns political assassination of a Greek politician (Yves Montand) and chilling aftermath.