

## TELEVISION

By JOHN HAY

# *Well-timed UFO*

**C**CANDIDATES for election — beware! If you just happen to see an Unidentified Flying Object while you're walking the dog one night, it would best be buried in the subconscious for the sake of the image.

Or so the campaign director, bustling, nasty Barney Kline (John Gray) hammers home to prospective candidate Eric Mitchell (Ron Haddrick) in the ABC's Wednesday night play *The Man Who Saw It*.

Topically well-timed, the play gave a rather cynical picture of the image-makers behind the candidate, with scenes including the alcoholic professional speech-writer Whit Morgan (Ben Gabriel) who hawks the candidate's reporting of the UFO to the press with unsettling results for all.

But — good will out, and honest candidate Mitchell decides to stick to his "It was I who saw it" story and stand as an Independent for the fictitious electorate of Mallory.

titious electorate of Manly.

Just as the climax grips the audience, the UFO appears again; as all concerned are gathered at Mitchell's house, the point is driven home that Mitchell is sane and well balanced. It spoils a play that was, up to that point, also well balanced. Was the message that science fiction is a good deal stranger than what goes on behind political doors, or did the author mislay the last page of the script?

**H**OW far can an interviewer probe before his subject bursts out in a

torrent of irrelevancies or, rattled, lets slip his cloak of restraint?

Richard Croll's hard questioning of the South African Ambassador, Mr Maree, on this week's Seven Days, Channel 7, would have made a lesser man call for diplomatic immunity. All the Ambassador really revealed was that the questions Croll asked him would have been better put to the South African Minister for Justice.

Croll was trying to find out whether the BBC film shown earlier in the programme (reconstructing Mrs Ruth First's 117 days detention in South African prisons) was a genuine account of police methods used in that country for cracking those arrested under the old 90 days detention law.

As journalist Ruth First wrote the script and acted in the film, there was some doubt, as the Ambassador suggested, whether the film was a highly-coloured account or the result of factual reporting.

Mr Robert Resha. African exile.

Mr Robert Resha, African exile, interviewed later by Croll, thought that experiences of interrogation and conditions in the film story were understated.

But whatever the content of truth, the documentary proved vigorous and searching television and an example of gloves-off interviewing that the Four Corners Team could well follow for a larger audience at a more civilised hour.

**A**RE you an avid watcher of Showcase 66, on Tuesday nights on Seven? If so, you are with the strength, as a recent ratings survey carried out by Anderson Analysis shows. Showcase is the most popular programme on television locally.