

80. On the other side of the picture, complaints have been made that owners of theatres in isolated country districts where the theatre is the only possible place at which performances such as concerts or amateur theatricals can be held have refused to forgo the exhibition of films to allow outside bodies to rent the theatre for these other productions. Beyond recommending theatre-owners to consider the public interest and its need for cultural entertainment, the Committee cannot suggest any way in which the holder of a licence can be denied the full advantage which the licence confers upon him; indeed, it is to be remembered that by the provisions of Regulation 5 of the 1937 regulations (Serial number 1937/182) an exhibitor's licence is deemed to involve an obligation to carry out exhibition of films on the number of nights set out in the licence, so that an exhibitor who was licensed for six nights a week would actually commit a breach of his licence in allowing some other society to use the theatre. If this is a real difficulty in the way of the exhibitor meeting requests for the use of his theatre, then it is recommended that the licensing provisions should enable the licensing officer to exempt the exhibitor from the obligations of Regulation 5 on special occasions.

ORDER OF REFERENCE No. 6

Whether the existing provisions of the Cinematograph Operators Licensing Regulations 1938 and the proposed standard by-laws on the prevention of panics provide adequately for the safety of the public in picture-theatres.

(a) CINEMATOGRAPH OPERATORS LICENSING REGULATIONS

81. Without desiring to express an opinion on matters of detail for which specialized technical knowledge is essential, the Committee feels that adequate protection both of the public and the operator must be maintained at all times. Representations from the New Zealand Federated Motion Picture Projectionists' Industrial Association of Workers tended to show that present regulations and the proposed safety code contemplate the protection only of the public and do not embrace the personal safety, convenience, and health of the operator. The Committee, at the invitation of the association, inspected a number of premises in Wellington which, if typical, certainly illustrated the need for more consideration being given to the needs of the operator. Some of the matters in question are within the province of the Arbitration Court; others, however, involve the Cinematograph Films (Storage, Exhibition, and Renting) Regulations, the enforcement of which come within the province of the Internal Affairs Department and the Inspectors of Films and Inspectors of Explosives, &c., appointed under the various Acts and regulations.

82. The association invited the Committee to recommend the adoption of fixed minimum standards for size, construction, ventilation, &c., of operating-boxes and the amenities to be provided for operators. It is felt that this would operate too harshly in the smaller and country theatres and in buildings such as local halls which are used for purposes other than the exhibition of films.

83. At the same time, the present regulations should be overhauled to ensure that adequate provision is made for the protection of the operator, and it should be a condition of the issue of a licence that the Inspector is satisfied with the size, construction, and amenities of the operating-box.

(b) PUBLIC SAFETY : FIRE AND PANIC

84. The proposed safety code (included in the departmental report as Schedule 11), which in its uncompleted state was presented by the Standards Institute, is regarded by the Committee, subject to the following comments, to be adequate, and the Committee recommend that the code should be completed and brought into operation as