

(a) TYPE OF FILMS GENERALLY

102. In general the evidence showed that all the best film produced in English-speaking countries is exhibited in New Zealand without unreasonable delay. The British quota of feature film has not since the 1936-37 season reached the 20 per cent. figure which the 1934 Act requires, but the Committee is satisfied that the industry is doing its best and that the increasing merit and popularity of British films will, if the same standard of production is maintained, soon result in the quota being achieved. The Committee urges the industry to do all that it can to achieve the full British quota at the earliest possible date.

103. The Committee spent some time examining the situation disclosed by the association between Twentieth Century Fox, Amalgamated Theatres, Mr. J. Arthur Rank, and Kerridge-Odeon. Up till recently Twentieth Century Fox were the distributors of most British film, and despite Mr. Rank's association with Kerridge-Odeon, the first release of the majority of British films took place in Amalgamated Theatres. A changed policy now results in the two chains sharing the first release of British film, and to this extent the early exhibition of these pictures to a wide range of audiences is promoted.

104. On the wider question of the encouragement of the best films generally, whether from Britain, United States of America, or elsewhere, it is not possible to make specific recommendations regarding the normal commercial channels of exhibition. Under commercial exhibition the earning-capacity of particular films - the box-office test - must be the deciding factor as to what type of film is shown, in what numbers, for what duration, and in what cinemas. Up to the present, though many of them have been highly commended by overseas critics, even the best continental films have, with few exceptions, achieved little or no popularity here, and it is clearly impossible to force public taste in such matters. If encouragement to the exhibition of better films is to be given, it must come mainly through the development of public taste and appreciation.

105. In bringing about such development the film societies, library film groups, and other channels of non-commercial exhibition of sub-standard film, which have already been mentioned in this report, though small in numbers, appear to be growing in influence. The co-ordinating body, which represents most of such groups, is the New Zealand Film Institute, the counterpart in New Zealand of similar bodies in Britain, Australia, Canada, United States of America, and elsewhere. The British Film Institute receives a substantial Government grant in furtherance of its work, and it is recommended that the New Zealand Film Institute, working in the field of adult education, should be given every possible encouragement.

(b) CENSORSHIP

106. Many hours of the Committee's time were occupied in hearing divergent views on the question of how far the censorship provisions of the Cinematograph Films Act should be used to exclude children from attending performances of films unsuitable for general exhibition, and on the question of adequacy of censorship generally.

107. At present (apart from two special types of certificate for exhibition to film societies or specified classes of person) there are three types of certificate issued, namely

“U,” which approves the film for universal exhibition.

“A,” which approves the film subject to a recommendation that it is suitable more especially for adult audiences only.

“A Special,” which approves the film subject to the recommendation that it is unsuitable for exhibition to children.