

The second annual report of the British Film Institute, presented to the annual general meeting on 1st October, 1935, states that the Institute decided during the year to establish a national film library with the following as one of its aims :—

“To distribute films to schools and other approved institutions using non-theatrical films for educational purposes. It is intended that this section of the library shall become the central source for the supply of such films in this country, and that it shall provide the starting-point for an organized system of decentralization whereby these films may be supplied to schools from local centres.”

The Institute expected to be in a position to begin distribution to schools by the end of the autumn. It has worked out a scheme for the award of vouchers of approval to films voluntarily submitted to it for examination. During the year ended 30th June, 1935, details of over 2,000 films of an educational character have been collected, and these films have been classified under a detailed scheme of subject-heads.

I am of the opinion that before a school decides to incur the expense of installing equipment for showing films in the class-room it should give consideration to the following points :—

- (1) Supply of film by loan, hire, or purchase.
- (2) The purpose for which the films are to be used, either—
 - (a) As part of specific lessons. Many teachers who have had experience consider that silent films give the best results ; or
 - (b) As the means of broadening the pupils' knowledge by providing a background to the lessons. For this purpose sound films are said to be the most suitable.
- (3) The Projector : The choice will depend upon whether it is intended to use silent films or sound films. It appears to be generally true that a sound projector can nearly always be used as a silent machine, but that a silent machine can never be used to show sound films. Sound apparatus is considerably more expensive than silent-film apparatus.
- (4) Size of Films : The weight of opinion seems to be in favour of sub-standard 16 mm. gauge for school use because of its portability, cheapness, and safety.

While I was in London I visited the British-Gaumont Instructional, Ltd., the British Film Institute, and the Imperial Institute. The latter lends silent films to a large number of schools from the Empire Film Library which was inaugurated last year.

BROADCASTING TO SCHOOLS.

The following is the report of the Scottish Education Department for the year 1934 on broadcasting :—

“We stated last year that arrangements had been made to include in the annual returns obtained from the schools certain details which would enable us to publish statistics showing to what extent the school authorities avail themselves of the broadcast courses provided under the direction of the Scottish Sub-Council for School Broadcasting. From the returns which have been received it appears that in the year 1933-34 there were 273 schools taking one or more of the broadcast courses and a considerable number of other schools in which wireless receiving-apparatus was available but was used only on occasions of special interest. The total of 273 is made up of 57 schools conducted under the Secondary Schools (Scotland) Regulations and 216 schools conducted under the Code. Of the latter number, 13 are central advanced-division schools, 199 are primary schools (including 117 in which there are advanced-division classes), and 4 are special schools. The list includes no fewer than 108 small rural schools. About one-sixth of the receiving sets used in these schools have been supplied by the education authorities ; most of the others are the property of the teachers or have been acquired by the schools from various sources, including funds specially raised for the purpose. In the great majority of the schools the reception of the broadcast is described as satisfactory.

“The subject which has attracted the greatest number of listeners in the schools is music, under which head are included the course of lessons taken by pupils between the ages of nine and eleven, and concerts, which are listened to by pupils of various ages. Next in order of popularity are courses in history, nature study, geography, English, biology, French, and German. The ages of most of the pupils who take these courses vary from eleven to fifteen or sixteen, by the returns indicate that a considerable number of broadcast lessons are heard by pupils above and below these ages. Senior courses in French and German are taken up to the age of eighteen.

“The returns from which the foregoing statistics are taken relate to the year ended 31st July, 1934. We understand that between that date and December, 1934, additions have been made to the list of schools taking broadcast courses, and that the total number of such schools is now 342. The completion of the new transmitter which is being erected to serve the north-east of Scotland should lead to a further increase in the number of listening schools.”

I had the privilege of meeting the recently appointed Director of School Broadcasting and other officers of the British Broadcasting Co., and of discussing with them the possibilities and the technique of school broadcasting. I also heard broadcasts to schools. We should develop what we are doing through the courtesy of the New Zealand Radio Broadcasting Board. The time has probably arrived when each of the four principal stations should appoint an officer to work in conjunction with the existing committees to secure the greatest possible amount of technical perfection in putting the lessons or talks upon the air. All speakers should be adequately paid for their services, and should be required to submit scripts and to rehearse, as is done in London. Separate broadcasts should be given to primary and post-primary pupils.