

war. Here, as in Britain, the voice of the leaders of the people came into the homes of the people. Broadcasting was used to inform and instruct the people in the broad principles of policy and its innumerable details. They were asked to save their money, subscribe to war loans, support the Red Cross, and offer themselves for various essential jobs. Farmers were urged to produce more butter and grow more pigs. Rationing was explained, and housewives instructed in the science of making do with less. The NBS broadcast many special items—talks on aspects of the war; the Director-General of Medical Services reported to the people direct on the work of the doctors with the army. New Zealand merchant seamen rescued from the prison ship *Altmark* told their story.

"With the Boys Overseas"

The NBS, however, was not content with a purely home service. It sent radio to the war. A fully-equipped recording unit was sent to the Middle East with the Third Echelon, and from this unit came what was perhaps the most popular of radio features—"With the Boys Overseas." Thousands of personal greetings from soldiers to their families and friends in New Zealand, were recorded and broadcast at home from NBS stations. The Unit also recorded many war experiences of New Zealanders and impressions of the campaigns. The staff of this NBS Unit were several times called on by the BBC to contribute to its news services. Later on another recording unit was sent to the Pacific war area.

One result of all this is a store of historical data of quite a new kind. If the historian wants to know what Mr. Gladstone said in 1879, he looks in Hansard or newspaper reports. He may not find it, or he may find that there are various readings of the statement. But if he wants to know what Mr. Churchill said in a war broadcast to the world on such and such a date, he can turn on his actual spoken words. The voices of all the leading public men of Britain and New Zealand—to say nothing of figures like President Roosevelt and General Smuts—together with many another such document of the war, are stored in the archives of the National Broadcasting Service.

SIX YEARS OF WAR FILMS

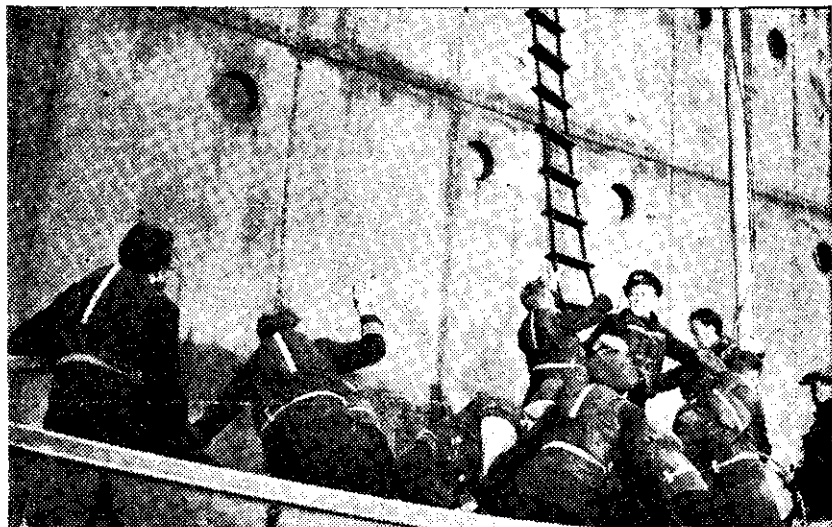
FOR six years now the cinema industries of America, Great Britain and Russia (and doubtless those of Germany, Italy and Japan, too) have been pre-occupied with the fact of war. At the very outset of the conflict—indeed, some time before it—the movie camera was loaded on to the war chariot, and since then the screen has closely reflected what various countries have been doing to fight a war, or to prepare to fight a war, or even to keep out of one.

In its issue of August 27, 1914, *The Bioscope*, a film trade paper of the day, stated: "Manufacturers and agents are feverishly putting to the fore any and all pictures with the faintest smell of gunpowder and the rumble of guns." Almost the same thing happened this time—but with a difference. For this time there has been much greater recognition of the cinema's value as a weapon for disseminating propaganda and information, and as a method of maintaining civilian morale; a weapon as powerful for this purpose as the press, the pulpit, and the radio.

So governments have taken a much greater part in making and sponsoring films during World War II than they ever did during World War I. We in New Zealand have seen the wartime rise of the Nation Film Unit at Miramar, with its worthwhile weekly newsreel and an occasional longer documentary film; the Canadian National Film Board, with John Grierson at its head, has done an outstanding job of making war-information pictures; in Great Britain, many of the young men who were formerly associated with Grierson in pioneering the Documentary Film Movement have in the past few years been working for the film section of the British Ministry of Information; and from the United States there has come a continuous flow of official and semi-official material (e.g. the *March of Time* and the *This Is America* series).

The Documentary Movement

What is known as the Documentary Film Movement has been given a great



POSSIBLY THE FINEST war film made by either America or Great Britain was the B.E.F. production "*San Demetrio, London*," a scene from which is shown here

impetus by the war. For various reasons, which need not be gone into here, New Zealand picturegoers missed seeing most of the classic documentaries of the pre-war period (and even if they had seen them, they might not have recognised them as such), but they have in the past few years had plenty of opportunity to study this branch of picture-making—for example, in such productions as *Target for To-night* and *Desert Victory*, which have proved that fact can be even more enthralling than fiction.

Yet although the documentary, in every country at war, has become part of the machine of destruction, its creative ideal remains. It was in such terms as this that Grierson spoke when he visited New Zealand early in 1940 and helped to launch our National Film Unit. He mentioned the plans which war had interrupted for establishing a great international clearing-house for constructively propagandist films at Geneva, and pointed out that, although the documentary movement had been forced for the time being to concentrate most of its energy on the task of fighting the war, it was still necessary "to keep on thinking about to-morrow and the day after to-morrow."

Training the Troops

There has been one particular sphere in which the cinema has played a vital part during the war: that of direct instruction to troops and civil defence workers. More and more the value of visual education has been recognised. So films have been produced on almost every imaginable subject: to teach soldiers and civilians how to salvage waste material; how to operate anti-aircraft guns; how to engage in street fighting and sabotage in the event of invasion; how to recognise enemy aircraft; how to put out incendiary bombs; how to deal with mosquitoes and the malaria menace; how to cook; and even on the subject of how Americans should behave when in Great Britain. It has been estimated that such films can reduce training time by as much as 75 per cent, especially if the showing of them is accompanied by competent explanatory lectures. New Zealand has made wide use of films of

this type; projectionists trained by the A.E.W.S. have covered the country and gone far afield with mobile cinema units.

A good many of these films have not been seen by the public, either for security reasons or because they would not have been of general interest. But some have been released for exhibition, and one in particular was a big box-office success: the full-length feature produced for the British Army under the title of *The Next of Kin* (but released here as *Mr. Davis*), which dealt dramatically with the danger of careless talk.

Entertaining Them, Too

As for ordinary entertainment films, a run through the advertisements in the newspapers of the past four or five years would reveal that scarcely a week has passed in which four or five pictures with a war theme were not showing in our main centres, and to a corresponding extent throughout the country. In fact, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, Hollywood gave the impression of having suddenly discovered war as a brand-new subject.

So much for films that deal specifically with war. But it may also be argued, and often is, that even the most frankly "escapist" Hollywood melodrama or romance—whether it is a musical comedy without a whiff of gunpowder in it, or a Western in which the only people shot are the rustlers or the Injuns—is also doing something to help the war effort, in that it is providing the masses of the people with a means of relaxation, and is thereby assisting to keep up morale.

Sometimes quite remarkable efforts have been made to provide troops in forward fighting areas with a regular supply of the latest shows from Hollywood, while movie "theatres" of one sort or another are the expected thing in base camps and hospitals.

The cinema, then, has been and is being used to help win the war. If it could be used in a different way by the right people with the same enthusiasm and the same skill in the years ahead, it might do just as much to help win the peace.

—G.M.



One of radio's biggest moments: Our photograph shows B. C. H. Clarke, who was on the NBS Listening Watch when the news of D-Day came through