



"Dress up that line!"

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film staff in whose hands would be the conduct of policy in connection with the themes and standards of the film, the international exchange of films, and so on? What is important is that the film should pass out of the hands of those who now control it in the interests primarily of their own pockets, into the hands of responsible people; of people who would realise that the film is a powerful means of world understanding, a means that can bring the nations closer together than perhaps anything else can."

So much for theory. Where do we go from here, in practice? Or are we likely to go anywhere? I think perhaps we shall; and I think also that we in New Zealand have a rather special interest in this international aspect of the cinema, if only because New Zealand, through the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, holds the chairmanship of the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee of United Nations—and it is primarily through that agency of the world organisation that any broad decisions affecting the cinema may be expected to be made. The details, however, are more likely to be left to the auxiliary body known as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation), of which New Zealand has become a member. The cinema certainly enters into all three spheres of education, science, and culture—particularly the first and last. Indeed, at the conference establishing UNESCO, it was generally understood that one of the specialised divisions in which the organisation will work will be that of "mass media" (the cinema, the radio, the press).

IT would be foolish, and dangerous, to expect this international machinery, only just beginning to creak into action, to produce any miracles—or even, for some time to come, to turn out any finished articles of revolutionary design. While I certainly hope it will do something in the sphere of the cinema, I also hope that it will not attempt at first to do too much—and so break down. There are, however, a few simple and useful ideas which might be tackled for a start.

The best way to use the cinema as an instrument of world understanding, and at the same time protect the best elements of national culture in each country's films, is to make people conscious of what those elements are—by letting them see them. As a recent writer in *The Christian Newsletter* pointed out,

there is in a good many countries an astonishingly highly-developed appreciation of "form" so far as football-players and racehorses are concerned. Thousands of people who go to football matches every week have a standard of "form" by which they judge players and referees. It should not be fantastically difficult to develop a similar appreciation of "form" as applied to the cinema.

The trouble is that, in trying to teach children (and adults) to appreciate the best that the cinema has to offer, it is virtually impossible to give examples—not because examples do not exist but because they are seldom readily available. In teaching appreciation of literature or art, suitable "quotations" can usually be found merely by opening a book. But it does not mean much to people to tell them about the revolutionary technique of D. W. Griffith in *The Birth of a Nation*, the historic significance of the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin*, or the social value combined with artistry in the films of Charlie Chaplin, if they have never seen those films and are never likely to.

So, as one of its first activities, the cinema section of UNESCO might well produce, or sponsor the production of, a series of anthologies of the film, embodying quotations from the famous and significant films of all nations, illustrative of the best and most lasting things that each country has to offer through the cinema; the best not only in artistry and technique but also in social content and national character. Such screen anthologies would, I feel sure, find a wide and ready use in schools all over the world, as well as in adult education groups.

BUT anthologies are not enough.

Those who want to should also be able to study the films themselves from which the excerpts are taken. Therefore I think that UNESCO should take early steps to establish and operate some sort of International Archives of the Film—a central clearing-house and circulating library for the best films of all nations—making copies available on loan to any reputable group anywhere that wanted to borrow them. Something like this is already done by the British Film Institute and by the U.S. Museum of Modern Art, but on a limited scale only (partly, one imagines, because of the difficulty of persuading film companies to waive copyright even for old films).

Thanks to the rapidity of modern transport, the scheme could operate without undue delays caused by films wanted in one place being tied up too long in another. However, in addition to the central archives and clearing-house, I suggest that each country should maintain its own National Film Museum (or Film Library; that probably sounds better, since the word Museum rather suggests something dead). The Government of each country should insert a clause into the regulations controlling the local importation and exhibition of films; a clause requiring the producing companies to make at least one copy of each notable film available for permanent inclusion in the National Film Library or Museum (what constitutes a "notable" film would be decided by a qualified committee set up for the purpose). To protect the companies, the film would not require to be put into the library until after its ordinary commercial circuit had been completed; and even then some years might have to pass before its copyright would be regarded as having lapsed and it became available again for general presentation.

WHAT usually happens now is that some time after notable films have completed their commercial circuit and had all available revenue squeezed out of them, they are destroyed by the film companies to save storage space and insurance costs. One small clause inserted by the Government into the licensing regulations could preserve them for posterity, without harming the interests of the film companies. But it might be desirable if the initiative came from a body like UNESCO.

The sooner a start is made on some scheme such as this, the better. Though a very complete collection of films from the earliest days could be assembled for the International Archives, many great films have probably been lost forever to national collections. Unless something like this is done, in a few years' time a film such as *Citizen Kane* or even *Henry V.* may be no more than a memory (it has happened already, I think, with *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Informer*). Those of us who saw them may be able to tell others about them—but of what real value will that be to the student of the cinema, or even to the normally-interested picturegoer whose appreciation and critical taste can only develop through the comparisons which he is himself able to make?

THESE, then, are three simple ways in which the United Nations Organisation might stimulate higher standards in the cinema, combat the present stultifying influence of Hollywood, and help to safeguard the national characteristics of each country's films. From here the United Nations film organisation might branch out more ambitiously, and through the medium of its own literature and world-wide publicity set up its own standards for the cinema, to compete with and where necessary modify those of the purely commercial film industry. It could do this by means of regular selections and awards for the best work each year in all branches of the cinema—a recognition of outstanding work paralleling the present Academy Awards. But UNESCO might, in making its awards, regard the film as something more than commercial entertainment; it could take into account the standards of ethical values put forward in various films, their social content as well as their artistry, and the contribution they make to world understanding by the truthfulness of the picture each gives of national character and behaviour.



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