

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## THE LAST CHANCE

IN a notice of the film *The Last Chance*, exhibited recently at the Paramount Theatre, Courtenay Place, our reviewer expressed the opinion that it was exhibited in Wellington at very nearly the most unsuitable theatre in the city. It has been pointed out to us that these words are capable of more than one construction, and we take the first available opportunity of saying that nothing more was intended than that, having regard to the fact that the theatre has for some time specialised in films of a widely different type, the kind of audience to which this film seemed particularly likely to appeal was apt to overlook the exhibition. It was not intended to suggest that the Paramount Theatre, which has the merit of being one of the few houses independent of "chain-ownership," is not suitable for the screening of this or any other first-class film; nor that, if the policy of exhibiting these films of a similar character is persevered in, it will not regularly attract those who would be sorry to miss films of the standard of *The Last Chance*. The same article described the audience as composed largely of callow youths out for an evening's fun at their favourite thriller-and-leg house, and for the publication of this phrase we likewise express our regret. We ask our readers to regard as unreservedly withdrawn both the phrase in question and any imputation it may be taken to bear.

—Ed.

## THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

(M-G-M)

THERE are a few books and stories which Hollywood just cannot hope to film successfully, things being what they are with censorship codes and even the conventions of common decency. The *Decameron*, the works of Rabelais, Ulysses, and Forever Amber are random cases in point, to which you could add fairly easily. But *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is a specific

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where a large screen and two projectors had been erected in a park. This was all part of a festival of Soviet films. I could not understand the dialogue, but apparently most of the Czechs could—there is a great kinship between the language and customs of the two countries—and for the first time I realised why it is very natural for the Czechs to be intensely interested in everything Russian. But that is not to say they have no critical ability. I heard them criticising the slowness of the Russian film, just as they criticised some of the English music played at the British music festival. Their judgments and opinions may not always agree with ours, but it is a good sign that they are wanting to prove that they have the ability to analyse and think for themselves, and I believe that other festivals, such as the British film festival which is going to be held in Prague in the autumn, will help the Czechs to become a people we will be glad to know, glad to share our national life with, and glad perhaps to learn something from.

example of "untouchability," and it is a pity the producer did not accept the fact. He was licked before he started.

I have read the James M. Cain novel twice, the first occasion some years ago, and again after seeing the film (fortunately it is a very short novel, a virtue which the screen version does not possess). I think now as I did before that it is quite a remarkable book; in its way a brief masterpiece of unsparing and unpleasant realism, written in a style which has often been imitated, but seldom with success. But the very qualities which made *The Postman* a novel worth rather more than passing notice are the qualities which put it outside the pale for screen transcription. I mean particularly its savage sexuality, its tense and sordid action, its crude dialogue, and its refusal to sentimentalise even though there is a good deal of sentiment behind some of the situations. The two leading characters, Cora and Frank, are about as amoral as a couple of monkeys. From what can only be described as motives of sheer lust, they decide to murder her husband, a restaurant-proprietor named Nick Papadakis; the first attempt fails; the second succeeds; by legal chicanery they escape the gallows; and finally, after some further displays of violence and jealousy, they meet retribution just when the future begins to look rosy for them. At least this is a story which holds your interest when you read it; indeed, the tension is often terrific, and the finale packs a real punch.

But except for a few short sequences, and particularly the legal passage-at-arms between Hume Crbryn and Leon Ames as Katz and Sackett (and even this episode is remodelled to disadvantage), the film is simply an emasculated compromise which, of course, lacks even the crude honesty of the original. I suppose one might say that this is the fault of the material rather than of Tay Garnett, the director, or of John Garfield and Lana Turner (as Cora and Frank) or of Cecil Kellaway (as Nick). One might even admit that they do their best, Mr. Garfield to be tough, Miss Turner to be sultry, and Director Garnett to exploit, to the verge of censorship, the sexiness of their illicit relationship. But they were all at fault in attempting the story in the first place, and more specifically in trying, notably at the end, to give a gloss of sugary glamour to an unsavoury romance. The result of these cumulative errors and evasions is that a nasty story not only becomes nastier; it also becomes boring.

—G.M.

## NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE stewardesses on the Trans-Tasman flying boats have many and varied jobs to do and "Flight Stewardess," an item included in the National Film Unit's Weekly Review for October 18, shows one of these attractive girls carrying out her duties en route to Australia. "Aunt Daisy Returns to Work" introduces a well-known radio personality to her thousands of New Zealand friends who have hitherto known her only as "a voice." She has just returned from America. "Wool-doing," showing the salvaging of wool at Rongotai where there was a big fire recently, and "Opening of the Rowing Season" by General Sir Bernard Freyberg, complete the news reel.

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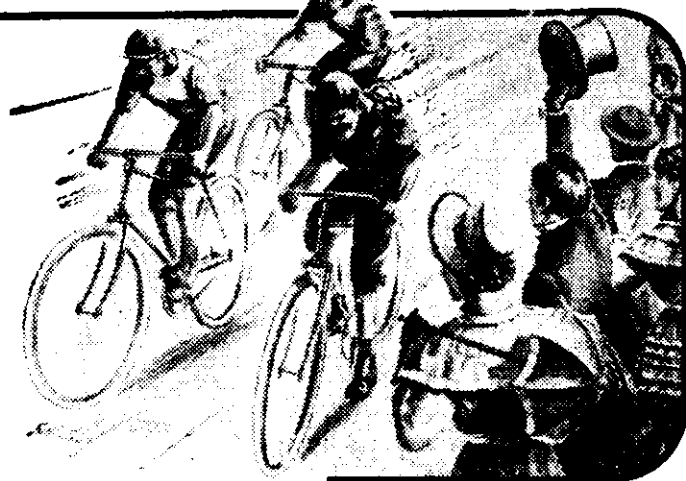
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