

(continued from previous page)

be wrong, and certainly unfair, to condemn the New Zealand clubs out of hand, solely on the basis of English experience. Here, as with several other aspects of the cinema, local research is required; and therefore those parents and teachers up and down the country who are seeking information and a lead as to this new educational phenomenon in our midst should be prepared, I suggest, to suspend judgment until the impartial survey of the New Zealand cinema clubs which the New Zealand Film Institute is now getting under way has been completed.

THERE are one or two other challenging conclusions arrived at in *Sociology of Film*—notably that the film industry should not continue under its present ownership structure ("Though I do realise the dangers, particularly to the independent producer. . . I am almost certain that nationalisation is inevitable"), and that some form of State Distributing Corporation should be set up to import (and export) those films which "the dictatorial heads of the big distributing agencies either do not like or which they think not profitable." Those suggestions open up a wide area of controversy which Mayer will possibly cover more fully in his next volume. But I think I have said enough to indicate

that *Sociology of Film* is a very stimulating and important work in its field. It has some faults (including the author's habit of quoting profusely in French and German and neglecting to translate, and his fondness for what I can only describe as the jargon of sociology). But his chapters on the history and psychology of audiences, his comparison between the Elizabethan theatre and the modern cinema, and his appendices, are painstaking and scholarly, while his "documents" showing the reactions of children and adults to many different films, reproduced exactly as given to him, are entertaining to read and at the same time are likely to raise the hair on the head of some parents. Finally he does, I think, make it clear that it is necessary to dig deeper than is customarily done for the cause of harmful influences in the film; and that, particularly in the case of children, a conveniently stage-managed triumph for virtue and justice in the last reel does not necessarily put right everything which has happened earlier.

#### NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE Weekly Review No. 303, for issue by the National Film Unit on June 20, will contain the following four items: "Mr. Nash Returns"; "Sheep for China"; "Leaf-Collector"; and "On Leave in Japan."

#### SISTER KENNY (RKO Radio)



HERE is one example of one way in which the cinema, in the name of entertainment, can be used to sell an idea. It is a very striking and in some ways a rather disturbing example. The idea expounded here with almost fanatical fervour is that the Kenny method of treating infantile paralysis is the only effective treatment of the disease and that Sister Elizabeth Kenny herself has long been a consistently-misunderstood and even much-maligned figure in the world of medicine.

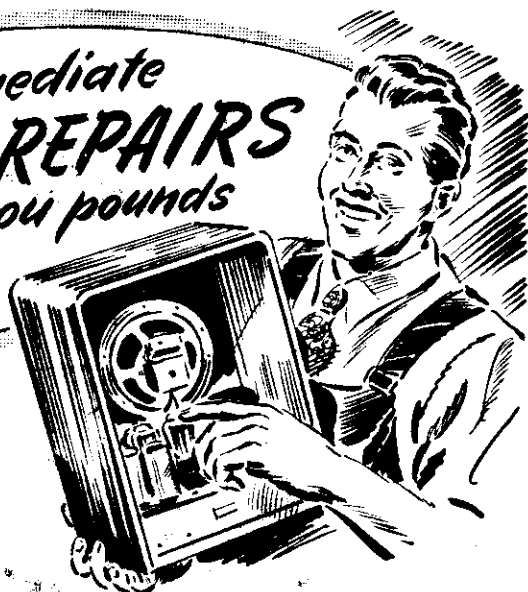
I have nothing but admiration for Rosalind Russell's actual performance as the redoubtable heroine, developing from an idealistic young nurse in the Australian bush to a sharp-tongued, rather cantankerous crusader of 59. I admire also the technical skill of the director (Dudley Nichols) in creating out of the heartbreaking subject of infantile paralysis a dramatic screen biography which many people will find absorbing and convincing. Yet just because many people will be convinced and just because the subject is a heartbreaking one, deeply concerning parents all over the world, I think that Hollywood should not have tackled it at all, and certainly not with the partisan zeal that is shown here by all concerned (and especially by Miss Russell, who is a director of the

Kenny Foundation in Minneapolis). It is wrong, and possibly dangerous, for the cinema to take what is still a matter for fierce argument and present it emotionally as incontrovertible fact. The only real concessions which the film makes to doctors as a body is that they are in earnest and well meaning, though stupid and wilfully obstinate. Well, the organised medical profession can probably look after itself, but for the sake of others who may be inclined to regard *Sister Kenny* as gospel, I think it may be as well to quote *Time's* analysis of the film's major distortions, implied rather than explicitly stated:

(1) Most doctors and medical organisations pigheadedly denounce Sister Kenny and reject her technique. The facts: practically all orthopedists acknowledge medicine's debt to Sister Kenny and employ her treatment in whole or in part. The American National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis alone has spent two million dollars for the advancement of physical therapy, including the Kenny technique. But even when they use the Kenny treatment, most doctors agree that poliomyelitis is a disease of the nervous system, and vigorously reject the Kenny theory that it is primarily a muscle-and-skin disorder.

(2) All infantile paralysis victims treated by Sister Kenny get up and walk; those treated by other orthopedists become lifelong brace-and-crutch cripples. The facts: Sister Kenny's record in Minneapolis, over a five-year period, has just about matched the average for all modern infantile paralysis treatment: 6 per cent. deaths, 16 per cent. remaining severely paralysed.

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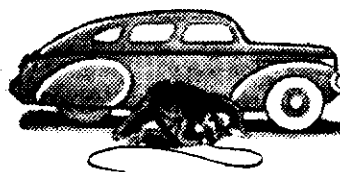
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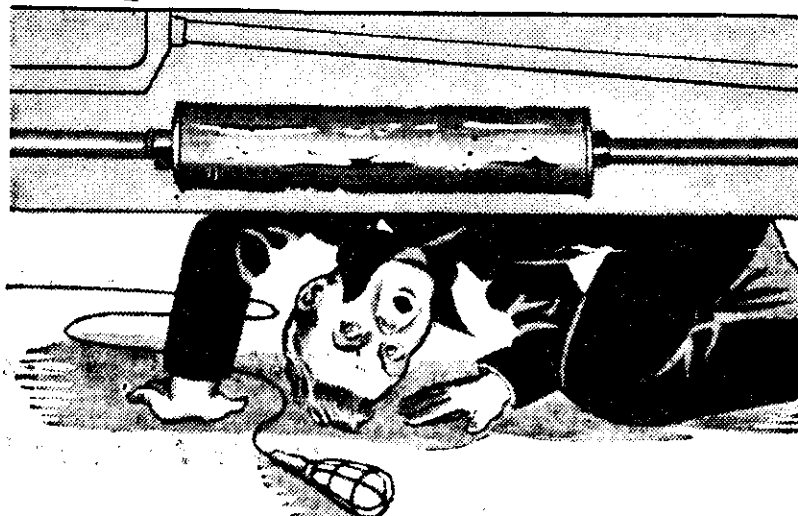
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