

# IT'S AN ILL WIND . . .

**T**HOUGH a good deal of comment has already appeared in the papers, it is still much too early at the time of writing to say exactly what effect the drastic tax on films imported to Great Britain will have on the British film industry. All one knows for certain is that a very large section of Hollywood producers have retaliated by announcing that they will refuse to send any more of their films to Great Britain; and even this threat seems to have lost some of its sting by the announcement that new American films on hand should last at least six months and that Hollywood in any case isn't likely to retain its ban for very long. In addition, it has been suggested that Hollywood's reprisal will include action against the screening of British films in the U.S.A. Again, we can't yet be sure that this will happen, but it seems likely; and this, to my mind, is the most important aspect of the situation.

Whether one loathes the American cinema and worships the British, or vice versa, or even whether one steers the sane middle course, it is of course deeply regrettable that the situation has arisen.

Ideally, there should be freedom of circulation throughout the world of all films from all countries, even if they are indifferent films: that is the objective which must still be aimed at and, one hopes, gradually achieved. All the same, the present difficulty is not without its compensations. The emergency measures against Hollywood imports combined with the Hollywood reprisals may well have the salutary effect not only of putting British producers on their mettle to fill part of the gap on British screens by making more films, but also of turning them away from their will-o-the-wisp pursuit of box-office markets in America.

**T**HUS the most cherished dream of Mr. Rank in particular would seem to have been shattered—and a good thing too. For most responsible authorities, including the Cinematograph Films Council, have agreed that, by seeking to produce films in Britain which are intended to appeal primarily to American audiences, Mr. Rank was likely to do serious harm to the British cinema.

Though the British Government appears to have listened with approval to Mr. Rank's argument that, in order to earn precious dollars, he should be given

every encouragement to make British films in such a way that they could compete with Hollywood's product on Hollywood's home territory, the problematical short-term benefits of such a scheme were far outweighed by the long-term disadvantages. Even from the short-term viewpoint, the prospect of earning really big money in the States seemed largely illusory: last year Mr. Rank made only 8,000,000 dollars in the U.S.A. (according to *Time*) as against the 75,000,000 dollars—at least 35 per cent. of its income and almost all of its profits—which the U.S. movie industry collected in the British market.

Mr. Rank might eventually have been able to step his takings in America up to about 20,000,000 dollars; but it is extremely improbable that America would ever, in any circumstances, have permitted a really large-scale invasion. In any case, the indications are that, of the British pictures which were beginning to infiltrate the American market, the biggest money-earners were not those based on Hollywood models, but films such as *Henry V*, *Brief Encounter*, and *Great Expectations*, which were indigenously British.

**T**HERE is, indeed, some evidence that Mr. Rank himself, impressed by such facts as these, was beginning to recognise the error in his policy, and was already turning away from the production of "epics" designed with at least

one eye on American audiences. However, the issue would now seem to be settled beyond doubt. Whether he wanted to continue it or not, Britain's economic crisis has put an end, for the time being anyway, to Mr. Rank's risky and costly experiment. On the one hand, he has, it would seem, almost no chance now of being allowed even to knock at the door of the American market, while on the other hand the shortage of films to occupy the screens of British theatres will force him to concentrate on increasing the output from his studios of good, moderately-priced films of a national character.

He has a very good economic reason, as well as a patriotic one, for doing this. For it is important in this connexion to realise that Mr. Rank is a very big exhibitor of films as well as a producer of them—and that up till the present, 80 per cent. of the films which he has been showing in the theatres under his control have come from Hollywood! The situation was described thus by Frederic Mullally in a recent pamphlet:

"Mr. J. Arthur Rank draws his best and his most stable profits (about £8,000,000 last year) from the exhibition in Britain of American-made films. He doesn't risk a penny or a grey hair on their production. He hires the little tin cans from Hollywood, pushes them out to his cinemas up and down the country, hands over a share of the box-office receipts to the American companies, and pockets the rest. If Hollywood stopped sending him those little tin cans, he would go broke. And if he

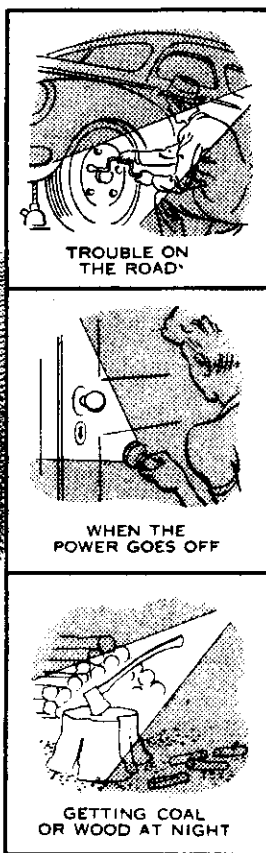


Immediately your torch goes dim . . . Buy FRESH



**EVEREADY**  
TRADE-MARK  
**TORCH BATTERIES**

A NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY PRODUCT



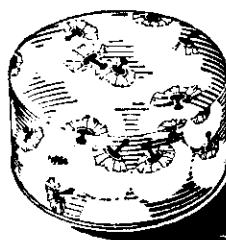
TROUBLE ON THE ROAD

WHEN THE POWER GOES OFF

GETTING COAL OR WOOD AT NIGHT



... such flattering shades  
... so delicately perfumed  
... so long lasting



*Air-Spun*  
**FACE POWDER**

Obtainable from Chemists, Toilet Salons, and the Cosmetic Counters of Department Stores.  
Also . . . COTY TALC POWDER.

27

Agents: Van Staveren Bros. Ltd., 38 Taranaki St., Wellington.