

cut down the supply on his own initiative, he would have to commit himself more heavily in the risky sphere of production."

SO it would appear that, though he professes not to be concerned, the exclusion of American films from Britain, as a result of the dollar crisis, will hit Mr. Rank in the most vulnerable part of his pocket-book. How is he going to keep his money-spinning chain of theatres in operation?

I don't myself think that he will "go broke," as the writer just quoted has suggested; but this clearly is a testing-time for him as well as for the whole British cinema industry. In the first place, since British films have up till now occupied no more than 20 per cent. of the total screen space in British theatres, it is obvious that Mr. Rank and his colleagues will have to speed up production enormously in their theatres if they want to catch up on the deficiency to any appreciable extent. Furthermore, Mr. Rank will have to abandon costly ventures like *Caesar and Cleopatra* (which absorbed valuable studio space and technicians' services for two whole years), concentrating instead on the maximum output of good quality films for home consumption. It seems equally obvious that Mr. Rank's monopolistic tendencies in the production field will have to be curtailed and every encouragement given to independent producers. Similarly, every effort will have to be made to secure films from the Continent to help keep the British theatres open.

THERE are, of course, latent dangers as well as benefits in all this—and they could be grave ones. The hunger for films in Britain may become so acute that anything will seem good enough; with the result that the British industry may revert, at least in part, to the production of "quickies." There may also be some dumping of inferior products from the Continent. As against this, however, the British industry (not to mention the public) has had bitter experience of "quickies" and should have learnt its lesson. Again, the general run of films from the Continent to-day are, from all accounts, of a high standard and there is growing appreciation of them. Above all, there are new men and a new spirit in the British studios to-day; men who, when the British film industry during wartime was thrown back entirely on its own resources, responded by creating a truly national cinema which put Hollywood's efforts to shame. For helping to encourage that spirit, chiefly by allowing several of these new men of the British industry to have a very free hand, J. Arthur Rank deserves some credit, and should be ungrudgingly given it.

All in all, then, the ill wind of the dollar crisis may in the long run blow good for British films, if only by dissipating some of Mr. Rank's more grandiose schemes for the conquest of America and by bringing him back to earth.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

WEEKLY Review No. 312 from the National Film Unit released on August 22 contains five varied items. "Foot Survey" shows what is being done to improve and standardise children's footwear; "Governor-General Plants Tree" is an Arbor Day item; "Bristol Freighter" is a close-up of the visiting air freighter; "Gift to Britain" deals with the presentation of the war-time profits cheque for £77,752 given to Britain by employer and employees of a cheese factory; and in "Willows from the Air" a plane drops bundles of willow sticks to be planted in country where erosion has caused great damage.

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