

players—lawless or law-abiding—were genuine non-actors. In itself that didn't bother me (the documentary tactic of using the non-actor can be overdone), though I did feel that perhaps I had been cheated out of a little of the novelty I had been led to expect. But even with that on the debit side there was enough left to add up to a reasonably exciting story.

## THE GALLANT BLADE

(Columbia)

FILMGOERS who wept happy tears over Larry Parks' pacification of the Highlands (*The Swordsman*, *Listener*, 26/11/49), and who may be anticipating a second helping of the same hilarity from *The Gallant Blade*, should be warned not to expect too much of a good thing. The mixture is not quite as before, though most of the swordplay would make a cat laugh. I imagine that in the France of Louis XIV, Mr. Parks found history pressing him too closely. The MacArdens and the Glowans of the earlier epic were in no danger at any time of crossing the frontiers of fantasy, but *The Gallant Blade* opens in the year 1648, an exceedingly well-documented year in French history. And the film does not quite coincide with the documents. Larry appears as the personal bodyguard of General Cadeau (who in turn seems intended to play the part history has hitherto allotted to Condé), and the pair of them become involved in the Frondest uprising. As recreated by Hollywood, it is a decidedly Popular Frondest inspired by a sort of prophetic Spirit of '76; and thanks to Mr. Parks and his gallant blade it is as successful as it is popular. It is, in fact, so successful that they manage to end the war with Spain 10 years before the historians do. I should, of course, have mentioned that (as usual) Larry's sword is only unsheathed in the cause of peace, though that is a paradox which need not disturb us. But I would be disturbed if I were Errol Flynn. As a strong, silent comic Mr. Parks is a serious rival.

## ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON

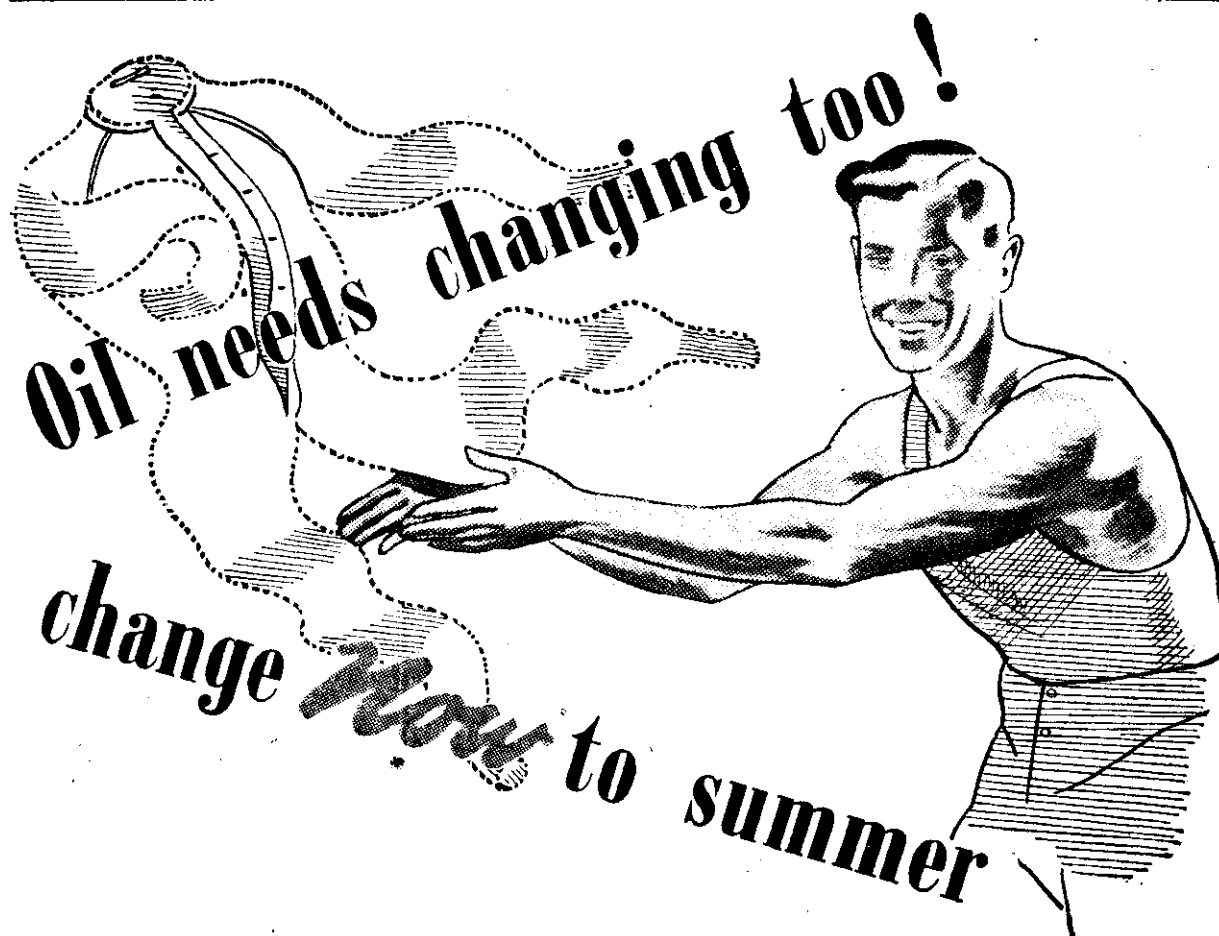
(Warner Bros.)

IN spite of Technicolour, this potboiler costume musical is rather a dim show. The setting is the Nineties, and the songs date from the same period. This is not in itself a bad thing, but the humour is of equivalent antiquity and that is a good deal harder to bear. Those who nourish an enthusiasm for the close harmonies of the barber's shop quartet may find one or two numbers to their taste, but I would scarcely describe the film as a rewarding experience.

## NATIONAL FILM UNIT.

BAND enthusiasts should be interested in the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 430, which will be released on December 2, for the highlight of the week is an item by the St. Kilda Band. For good measure there is also a solo by K. G. Smith, Jun., who won the Ballarat champion of champions contest in the brass solo class. The newsreel also shows how Excellency won the New Zealand Cup, and a newsclip from Auckland shows the balloting for grandstand seats at Eden Park for the Empire Games.

N.Z. LISTENER, DECEMBER 2, 1949.



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