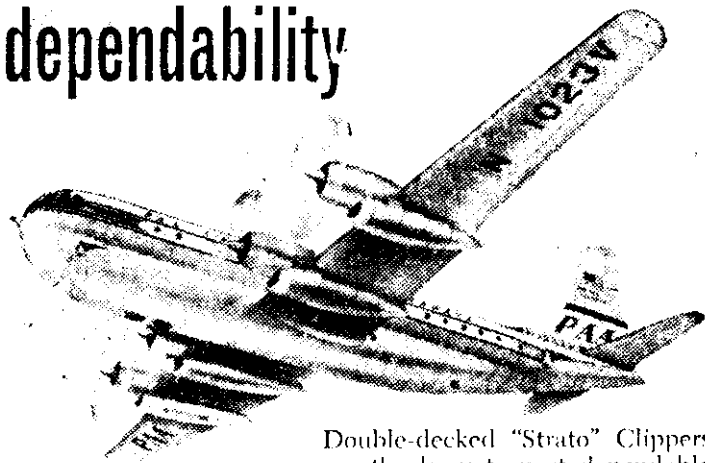


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STAR SELECTOR



N.P.S. photograph

WILLIAM BURNSIDE (above), who has come out here to select the New Zealand players for J. Arthur Rank's production of *The Seekers*, is an old hand in the film game. He is also a man who likes to be packing his bag. Since he started as casting director for the old Fox Film Company in England in 1933, he has represented the J. Arthur Rank organisation in Hollywood, made documentaries for the Canadian Government with John Grierson, acted as liaison officer between the British Government and the American Film Industry, worked with Eric Pommer, Alexander Korda and David Selznick as production assistant, and represented Hunt Stromberg and James A. Fitzpatrick in Argentina.

His main job in New Zealand, he said last week in an interview with *The Listener*, is to find Maoris to play alongside Jack Hawkins, the British actor who will be the star of *The Seekers*. The two principal roles, next to those of Hawkins and his film wife, will be those of Hongi Tepi, a Maori chief, and his wife Moana. The role of Hongi is as big as that of Jack Hawkins, and will require a man aged about 35, of "great integrity, poise, sincerity and splendid physique"—in fact, able to represent on the screen one of the old Maori nobles of pre-European days. He must have a commanding presence and an authoritative voice. His wife Moana should be about 22, and "of great beauty of face and figure." The woman for this role need not be a full-blooded Maori, Mr. Burnside said.

The story of *The Seekers*, which has already been scripted by William Fairchild from [John Guthrie's] novel of the same name, concerns the conflict between Maoris and British settlers in the 1820s. The situation revolves around the relations of the book's hero (played in the film by Jack Hawkins) with Hongi Tepi, a powerful Maori chief, his wife Moana, and the high priest Awarua. George Brown, the producer, is "an absolute stickler for authenticity," Mr. Burnside said, and first-class Maori tech-

nical advisers on such matters as costume and tradition will be employed during the shooting, which starts in London in October and will continue later in New Zealand. The film will be made with a strong documentary touch, and the opening in particular will be documentary in form.

The team to visit New Zealand will consist besides the actors of about 20 or 30 technicians, with cameras, lights, generators, and other equipment needed for shooting. The film will cost in the vicinity of £350,000 or £400,000.

Mr. Burnside said that amateur players of the right type such as he was seeking can give performances as good if not better than professionals. "It is sometimes better," he said, "to take people with absolutely no knowledge of the game and let a first-class director and film editor work on them. By means of retakes, added scenes and so on first-class performances can be conjured from amateurs in film-making in a way that cannot be done on the stage."

Early in the war Mr. Burnside was production assistant to David Selznick on such films as *Nothing Sacred* (starring Fredric March and Carole Lombard), *Gone With the Wind* and *Rebecca*. He then went to Canada to become production supervisor for the Canadian Government, producing documentary training films for the armed forces. Here he worked closely with John Grierson, the leader of the British documentary school. While in Canada he wrote the treatment for *Corvette 225*, which was produced there by Howard Hawks, and which, he says, "first showed the Americans what a corvette was."

In 1943 he became production liaison officer between the British Government and the American film industry in California, and from 1945 to 1946 he was Pacific Coast representative for the Rank organisation. This work included organising Rank's offices in Hollywood, engaging Hollywood talent for British productions, loans of British stars for Hollywood films, purchasing of original stories and scripts, and hiring of key technicians for England.

For the last two years he has been working in New York as a television "packager" or production man, and while he is in New Zealand he hopes to make a series of film shorts on New Zealand sport in which he has already interested American television and film companies.

"Television in the States has boomed from three million set owners in 1950 to 90 million when I left two months ago," he said. He thought television was "a Gargantua—there is no knowing where it will stop." As an entertainment medium it was "mesmeric and hypnotic," but it had enormous educational possibilities which hadn't yet been exploited in the States. He thought it would have a greater impact on family life in the future than motion pictures have had in the past. Before its educational potentialities could be realised, however, it would be necessary for cities, states and the Federal Government to write into their statutes that certain frequencies should be reserved for educational use.