

THIS WEEK'S SIGNED ARTICLE.

This Craze For Condemning The Cinema by A. R. McElwain

THE other day, a member of Parliament, whose sincerity I have no reason to doubt, delivered himself of this gem: "There are many films exhibited throughout New Zealand that are totally unsuitable for children. That is my reason for advocating a more rigid censorship."

When I read this at my office I was in a particularly receptive mood, as I had just been planning with my colleagues how best we could continue to foul the child-mind. You know, I take it, that we are always secretly plotting to flood our beautiful country with every conceivable sort of films totally unsuitable for the youngsters, and to screen them to audiences packed entirely with little innocents. If you don't believe me, ask any critic, listen to any sermon, read any paper. You'll learn.

And it's frightfully encouraging, the wealth of support we obtain. While we callously exhibit throughout New Zealand many films that are totally unsuitable for children, the public libraries, with dastardly persistence, clutter up their shelves with all sorts of stuff besides Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, "Peter Pan," and Aunt Lucy's First Lessons for Lipping Mites. Days and days are devoted by the Broadcasting Service to putting over the air information for adults, while children's sessions are given a paltry hour here and there. They're teaching things in our schools and universities that are miles ahead of the kindergarten stage, and not a hand raised to stop it. The newspapers go on telling mothers and fathers about the war in Spain, and flaunt sex under the very noses of the adolescents per medium of the egg-laying competition results. Parliamentary debates that are totally unsuitable for children are reported at length, and the police just ignore them. Authors are in this vile conspiracy up to their necks. Painters and sculptors prefer an occasional nude to a succession of infant studies; and as for those film-producing companies! Well, you must admire their stubborn refusal of all requests that they do the decent thing and ignore every phase of Life Beyond Ten Years.

Aren't we a lot of devils! Being serious (if possible), it must seem strange to right-thinking souls who are sickened by this constant repetition of banal theories about The Film and The Child, that people in responsible public positions are still propounding such simple nonsense. Actually, the fact that it is so easy to do makes for its perpetuation. From my own experience I find that

the majority of critics-cum-would-be reformers of the pictures can be divided roughly (as they deserve) into three classes:

- (1) The biased;
- (2) The ignorant;
- (3) The biased and ignorant.

They would have to be one or the other or both, or else this infernal carping would have blown itself out long ago.

Instead, it drags on . . . the child-mind . . . the child-mind . . . the child-mind . . .

As I remarked in a recent address, you have no idea of the child-minds we come up against in this business. The only sensible souls who don't bother about it in the slightest are the children themselves. I know dozens of parents who simply cannot persuade their tots to accompany them to a soul-searing drama of love that is as modern as to-morrow's headlines. The kids respond with slightly raised eyebrows, turn another page of Pete the Pirate and remind Dad to keep sixpence aside as they're going to see Buck Jones next Saturday if it's too wet for footy.

All very strange.

We are told from time to time that it is our function to give the public what it wants in entertainment. It can't be done, if only because the dear old public itself doesn't know from one minute to another what it wants. Theatre proprietors, film producers and entrepreneurs have been sent two things trying to find out—crazy and broke.

Even Nero—and, Heaven knows, he was a showman!—discovered this back in his day of super-entertainment. No matter how original he tried to be, he always had two schools of thought in the Colosseum; and those who stood to get the lion's share of the performances provided ancient proof that tastes constantly change.

Reverting to the child-mind—frequent attempts have been made by means of questionnaires to discover what film fare children like best. The replies have been pretty varied, some exceedingly disconcerting, but this is clear—they've still to unearth the high-minded, model little chap who will answer: "Do please confine my Saturday matinees to lovely thrillers about the mysteries of irregular verbs, or corker dramas about the by-products of the Himalayas, and, to satisfy my vicious craving for excitement, throw in some nice history films about 1066 and all that."

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Introducing . . .

A. R. McELWAIN, publicity manager for the Fuller-Hayward Theatre Corporation.



Mr. McElwain, who was formerly a well-known Auckland journalist, takes a keen interest in the cultural and educational aspects of the cinema. Mrs. McElwain is also a figure in journalistic circles. Before her marriage last Easter she was Miss Marjorie Simpson, well-known Auckland writer.

AOTSATS

DON'T kill your wife! Let electricity do it. You may as well be up-to-date.—Waitaki Electric Power Board advertisement.

FRANCES REVERE, the clever young Feilding pianist, journeyed to Wellington last week-end to hear Eileen Joyce playing.

MEMBERS of the South Canterbury Rugby team, as guests of the Otago Rugby Union, visited the station at Highcliff.

THE shopping public will suffer little inconvenience under the 44-hour week for retail establishments, according to a Christchurch business man.

PASSENGERS to Christchurch from Wellington the other morning did not know that they were travelling in company with a cargo of £250,000 Reserve Bank notes.

AOTSATS

A "DRUNK" was fined 10/-, in default 24 hours' "improvement," according to a Dunedin paper.

ANNOUNCER the other evening: "That was a broadcast by the Wellington Amateur Operatic and Theoretical Society."

A WELL-KNOWN Auckland cartoonist last week returned from the House with notebooks full of drawings of parliamentary personalities.

AUCKLAND undertakers have abolished Sunday funerals. In future, will those who are about to cross the Great Divide kindly do so early in the week?

THE "Society for the Prevention of Women and Children" was how a well-known New Zealand radio announcer quoted the sponsors of a talk the other day!

Dr. Malcolm Sargent, the eminent British conductor, comments on music in New Zealand in next week's signed article.