

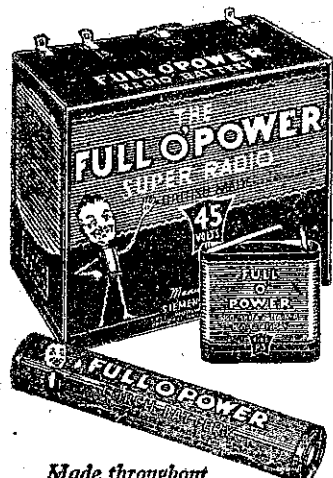


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## The Man Who Put British Films On N.Z. Map

By G.H.M.

**T**HE New Zealand film industry is going to miss the cheery personality of R.L. Grant (Lyll Grant to all his friends), who has resigned from the general managership of British Empire Films. He sailed this week for London. The "Record" will miss him, too, because he was one of the first to recognise the value of its film section, and has for years been one of its keenest supporters.

It is just about seven years and a half since Lyall Grant came to New Zealand as representative of British International Pictures, a firm that has now merged in the Associated British Picture Corporation.

Five years ago Lyall Grant started the firm of British Empire Films with offices in Wellington, and a staff of three. He leaves it with a staff of 20—a pretty good indication of progress.

When he arrived in this country, the British studios sold feature films only. Lyall Grant was the first to inaugurate "unit" programmes—that is, "shorts" to go with the features; and the first film released under that scheme was "The Yellow Mask," followed by "The Middle Watch."

"The happiest job I have ever had has been with B.E.F.," he told me, "and I think I can say that I am leaving it with the complete goodwill of the directors. I am going to America and London on a combined business and holiday trip lasting for six months; and I retain my position as personal representative of the Associated British Picture Corporation—the largest British film company in existence to-day. Incidentally, it also owns the second largest chain of cinemas in the world, having 867 theatres in key situations in Great Britain."

"I am indeed sorry to be leaving New Zealand, but I have every hope of returning."

Which reminds me of Lyall Grant's story about how he wasn't at all keen on coming here in the first place. He was at Vancouver on the way out, at the beginning of 1931, when, a few hours before sailing time, the newspapers appeared with screaming headlines announcing that New Zealand had been completely submerged by a terrific earthquake. It seemed no use going on, and he was on the point of cancelling his passage and returning to London. However, as sailing time drew nearer, the position, as described by the Vancouver newspapers, improved. Having been completely sunk, New Zealand was apparently gradually rising to the surface again. Only the North Island had been submerged; then only a part of the North Island; and finally, just as the boat was leaving, the true facts of the earthquake came through—terrible enough, but there was still a country left for Lyall Grant to come and show British pictures in.

Gordon Ellis, managing director of B.E.F. in Australia and New Zealand, arrived in Wellington this week to take over from Lyall Grant and arrange for his successor.