

What a storm there was over news reels! To judge by all that was said, there was hardly anything right with news reels. They were too scrappy; they were too long drawn-out; they showed too much of one thing and not enough of another. Their treatment of war news was hopelessly ineffective, superficial, incomplete, lacking in propaganda, hopelessly dull, obviously taken far behind the fields of action. From all of which it may be gathered that all is not well with the news reel.

"Why must all the news reels feature the same thing or things?" was a frequent question—and one to which the obvious answer was one that could only fail to give satisfaction. It was freely asserted that overseas news reels devoted far too much time and film footage to local and domestic affairs. "Why not one news reel for home consumption and another, of more general interest, for export to overseas countries like New Zealand and Australia?"

In this vein of criticism, comment was directed at the New Zealand news reel. In the first place it scored high marks for method of treating subjects and for the distribution of film footage. "Nothing like so scrappy as the overseas article" was a fairly general comment. Secondly, it was a good feature for non-New-Zealanders, as it showed very sincerely interesting scenes of life and activity in the Dominion. There, however, the favourable comment ended and was replaced by some strong criticism. The New Zealand news reels frankly did not interest New-Zealanders. With a few rare exceptions, the subjects chosen were dull, prosaic, or too well known. A W.A.A.C. made the comment that she had seen a New Zealand film dealing with dairy-farming. All she had seen was a series of shots of white-smocked land girls doing their best to impart some "glamour" to the milking-sheds. The whole thing irritated her because it was so obviously posed. Even the white smocks were not only spotless but without a wrinkle.

It was clear that the "March of Time" is a popular feature amongst all types

of servicemen and servicewomen. Its propaganda value was not widely appreciated, but it was generally praised as an interesting, informative, and authentic news film. A popular aspect of "March of Time" was the way in which it devoted a whole session to a particular subject. Critics said this gave them time to see things in greater detail—a big improvement on the news reel proper.

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"What in your opinion was the best film you have seen?" When this question was asked in two discussion groups in C.M.D. most of those present men and women, thought it rather hard to answer offhand, and nearly all of them named two or more films. A film that was mentioned more than others, however, was the comparatively recent "Mrs. Miniver" and then, in order of preference, came: "The Great Dictator," "Mutiny of the Bounty," "Rebecca," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Good Earth," "Blossoms in the Dust," "San Francisco," "Gone with the Wind," "The Story of Louis Pasteur," "Good-bye, Mr. Chips," "Song of the Plough," and "The King of Kings" (silent film).

A majority in these groups agreed that they went to see films for relaxation and amusement, though there were a few who said they went for educational reasons and a few more who said that, mostly because of home ties, they saw films very rarely and when they did they carefully chose the show first.

The question, "Are you satisfied with the pictures as they are?" was considered to be too wide in its scope, and some members of the groups found it difficult to give a succinct answer. However, the replies seemed to indicate that a majority considered "the present position fairly good, though there was considerable room for improvement." Here are some of the suggestions that were made:—

(1) More and better use could be made of educational subjects.

(2) There is too much propaganda.

(3) Sex themes are considerably overdone.