

Movie



Quiz

1. How many movie theatres are there in Canada?
2. How much do Canadians spend in a year on admission to the movies?
3. Are any films made in Canada?
4. How many Canadian-born film stars can you name?
5. How often do you think the average Canadian went to the movies, say in 1942?
6. Can you name five Canadian-made films.
7. What agency produces most of the films made in Canada?
8. How many Hollywood films about Canada can you remember?
9. Are Canadian-made films shown in more theatres in Canada or in United States?
10. How much do you think it cost to produce the prize-winning Canadian film "Churchill's Island"—\$5,000, \$10,000, \$50,000?

(Answers to Quiz on page 10.)

A FILM POLICY FOR CANADA

By JOHN GRIERSON



CANADIAN AFFAIRS



Canada and This Movie Business

Most of us wouldn't mind having a nickel for every hour we have spent at the movies—or even for every hour we've spent *talking* about movies. Through them we get most of our entertainment and a good deal of our news and education.

But as far as movies are concerned Canada up till now hasn't been much more than a colony of Hollywood. That's why many Canadians have been asking the question: Will Canada ever amount to anything in this movie game?

Why not a Canadian Hollywood? We have talent. We have a good deal of technical skill. But are the stakes too high? Could we ever produce anything better than a cheap imitation of the American product? Would it be worth the effort?

On the next pages you will find the ideas of Mr. John Grierson, of the National Film Board of Canada, one of the most colorful men in the moving picture industry. What he says will certainly start you thinking and will probably start an argument.

His claims:

- (1) There is a way in which Canada could play a part in the production of first-class feature pictures.
- (2) There is what he calls a "non-theatrical" revolution in movies going on right now in Canada.
- (3) Canada is already becoming a world leader in the production of a new kind of film—which can exist side by side with the Hollywood feature productions and which is playing a part on the job of building a better Canada.

A story on what Canada is doing in the field of films told by the man who has been in charge of the job.

A Film Policy for Canada

By JOHN GRIERSON

I SAW a film program the other day. It had a short picture describing the desolation of the war, the despair of peoples' lives in occupied Europe, the problems we all have to face in re-establishing and reconstructing the world. It described an issue as important as any on God's green earth today, involving the fate and future of society and civilization. It was a two reeler. It was not important from the point of view of box office, because it did not have a love story.

On the same program was a dazzling epic. It had everything, including Ginger Rogers. Ginger was having a hell of a time too, just like the poor desolate disrupted people of Europe. She also needed rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The poor darling was a big shot on a fashion magazine, rich and secure and nothing to prevent a good time being had by one and all, except that she was all balled up with her sex. It was very

exciting. For ten reels we examined Ginger's dreams so that we could get to the bottom of that sex life of hers and, of course, it was an excuse for high jinks in every sort of emotional direction and in technicolor too.

I need not tell you that in high contrast with the realistic bit about occupied Europe, the boys and girls, especially the girls, ate this one up, and the picture cannot fail to make from four to five million dollars 'domestic'.

Nowhere To Go

I beg you to examine the presence of these two films in the



"everything including Ginger Rogers"

same program. The first about Europe was a deep and serious thing, simple, straight-forward, informative. The second was about a rich dame who didn't need a thing in the world but a good sound thrashing and a sense of purpose.

The movies—of America in particular — sometimes reflect a silly inconsequential outlook on life. Often they do not reflect a purposeful society but rather a neurotic, meaningless society which is all dressed up and has nowhere to go. That is the really bad thing about the movies.

In Business for Your Health?

To some, movies are the 'film business', which is to say a business like any other, making profits. Profits depend on the box office and a carefully calculated estimate of what people in the theatre are hungry for—sex and heroism, comedy and adventure, day dreams and romance.

The movie takes people out of themselves in different ways; sometimes healthy, sometimes unhealthy, sometimes in a time-killing way that makes no difference one way or another. It is healthy when it quickens or tones the nerves. A lot of comedy does this. It is healthy when it sets a high example and inspires. Some

epics, some great biographies, some dramas that deal with real people and real issues of life do this. Some stars, by the quality of their personality, have this effect too. They deepen the audience's sense of itself. They tend to pull back the drooping shoulders of Joe Doakes; they add spring to the instep of his faded Missus. They give a mite more courage, more appreciation of being alive, to the millions of ordinary people who tend to bog down in the humdrum of routine. That is the good side of movies, with infinite possibilities.

The bad side one has also to expect in this world. When you are looking for an escape from the drag, who is to say where inspiration stops and cheese cake begins, where vitality stops and vulgarity begins, where enjoyment becomes foolish and only successful in depressing vitality?



"pull back drooping shoulders"

No Quick Answers

This is the first problem in film criticism and no one should jump to fast conclusions as to what is what. Some over-righteous critics don't know vitality from a hole in the ground and think everything is vulgar which is not respectable and sedate. You will find a dash of bawdiness and coarseness in the greatest art. If you deal with life honestly, you deal with complex relationships of cause and effect. You do not arrive at the Virgin Mary, Dos-

GOOD OR BAD, WE IMPORT THEM

When it comes to movies, good or bad, Canada is a dependency of the United States. By far the greatest part of the film product comes from Hollywood. The biggest chain of theatres is under the suzerainty of New York. The newsreels are made up in New York

I do not mean to say this is a bad thing, because with all its

toevski said, without passing through Sodom and Gomorrah.

I mention this to emphasize that there are no quick answers as to what is good and bad in the movies. It is sometimes a salutary business to play ducks and drakes with the accepted conventions of behavior, and the accepted dignities and pretensions of our leaders and masters. Perhaps they are not as solid as they appear to be. Who knows until they have been kicked about a bit whether or not they are phonies?



confusion of thought and purpose, the United States is a great and wonderful centre of human energy. The technical skill of its films is astounding, and the creative ingenuity behind them is enormous.

But it is well to face the fact that the skill and ingenuity, the images, the characters, the stories, the themes, are defined by others. The evaluation of what is good or



"what is the difference?"

bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, is done by others.

We can shout as we like about this new nation we are building; we can be proud as we please about the Canadian 'thing'; but when it comes to the movies, we have no emotional presentation of our own. It is another nation's effort and pride we see on our screen, not our own. We are on the outside looking in.

Does It Matter?

Here indeed is another problem you can argue among yourselves. Is it good or bad that this should be so? Is it necessary for a nation to have its own popular expression of its own loyalties, its own faith, its own pride? As we become more and more an important nation in the world, must we build our own film industry as an expression of our own life and a safeguard of our own national identity? Or is this just old-fash-

ioned nationalistic nonsense? Is it not the curse of the nations that everyone of them should be so insistent on its own unique and special virtues?

Isn't there another world of loyalty, faith and pride in which national barriers do not mean a thing? I mean the world in which all men need identically the same things—houses and families and a creative job in the world to do—and what is the difference between the Joe Doakes of this world whether they come black, white, or yellow? What is the difference whether a film comes from Hollywood or Timbuctu or Saskatoon so long as it is about the life of man as it is lived and dreamed in common everywhere?

THE AUTHOR

John Grierson came to Canada in 1938 on the invitation of the government to make a survey of film possibilities and is now government Film Commissioner, executive head of the National Film Board. For a year he was as well the General Manager of Wartime Information Board. Born and educated in Scotland, he served in the Royal Navy in the last war from 1915-19. He spent several years in the United States and then went back to England where he made the first British documentary film "Drifters". From 1930 to 1938 he was responsible for the production of a long list of documentaries on social problems in Britain and the Commonwealth.

American Products But Canadian Loyalties

We shall have to be practical, and there are some practical things to consider before you decide the answer. Let me say first of all, the Canadian movie distributors and theatre operators, sometimes referred to as our film industry, are a loyal group of men. They depend for their living on American production; many of them are directly dependent on American contracts and American controls; so far as their work is concerned, they live and breath in American terms, but none the less they are Canadian citizens and within the limitations of their trade, are anxious to serve their country. Since the war broke out, they have given their theatres and their screens generously to the war effort. Unlike newspapers which

charge for war advertising, they do not charge for screen space.

Until the war began, there was very little Canadian film they could show. The government made a few films of an industrial or scenic type and so did Associated Screen News, Montreal. But there was in no sense a 'flow' of production.

The situation has changed during the war because the government has taken a vigorous hand in the matter. Canada today turns out short films for the theatres in a regular flow—short two-reel informative films about Canada and about world affairs that affect Canada. By and large, the showmen are supporting them with a true appreciation of the fact that the Canadian film industry cannot continue to live exclusively on foreign materials.



Articles which appear in Canadian Affairs should be regarded as expressing the views of the individual Canadians who write them. These are not necessarily the views of the Defence Departments, the Wartime Information Board, or any other Government Authority. Indeed, occasions will arise when in order to complete the picture of some aspect of wartime life an issue will present opposing views of different authors on one subject.

CANADIAN AFFAIRS invites constructive criticism. Your comments will not be for publication. We want your suggestions so we can do a better job. Write directly to: The Editor, CANADIAN AFFAIRS, Wartime Information Board, Ottawa.

OUR OWN HOLLYWOOD?



The question most often asked me is why Canada does not make her own feature pictures. An attaché in the Soviet Embassy put it to me the other day. He wondered why we allowed our feature artists like Deanna Durbin, Walter Pidgeon, Mary Pickford, Norma Shearer, Hume Cronyn, Alexander Knox, Ned Sparks—all of them Canadians originally—to work for the benefit of another country.

Attractive But Tough

It is an attractive notion, this building up one's own local Hollywood, but how difficult it would be to execute.

If films are to compete successfully in the home market, they have to be big enough and bright enough to compete in the international market. This costs a great deal—anything from half a million dollars up for a single production, and distribution and promotional expense besides. It

can't possibly be got back in a home market of a thousand theatres. Only a very great market like the American can keep a home film industry going. All the others, England included, depend on freedom of access to foreign theatres, especially freedom of access to American theatres which are the Golconda of the film business.

It is not an easy matter to conjure a film industry out of the local sky. It involves a host of highly specialized technicians, of writers, actors, directors, of specialists in a thousand and one fields of mass showmanship. It takes a generation to build a mature tradition of skill like that of Hollywood.

Stop, Look and Listen

This is not to prevent a brave country from embarking on so large an adventure, but here are some questions. Is it worthwhile for Canada to do so? Would

sufficient people be drawn into the industry? And even if they were, what is to prevent them from going to the greener pastures of the south as soon as they have made their names? What accommodation would Canadian productions get in the United States market? In a tough world you can't say, "Stand back, we are going out on our own," and in the same breath say, "Stand in, we need your help".

More Ways Than One

Are there not other possibilities for the development of Canadian film production? I think there are, and far more practical and possible than this dream of a Canadian Hollywood.

One way is for Canada to make its feature films in New York or Hollywood. We might build up in either centre a company for the making of Canadian films with an associate producership in one of the big international companies. Given a Canadian producer of the standing of say Hal Wallis or David Selznick, there would be nothing to prevent a program of four to six Canadian films a year, nor the building up around him of a team of actors and writers drawn largely from Canada.

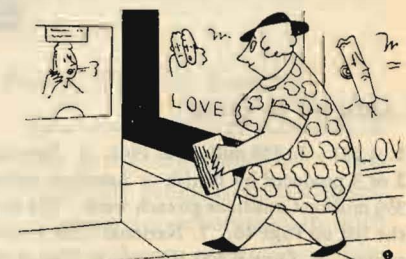
Simpler still is the notion that the United States must increasingly

appreciate its international obligations and give a quid pro quo for the benefits it receives abroad. It takes nine million dollars a year from the Canadian market and what does it do in return? It provides profitable entertainment, yes, but what besides?

More For Our Money

International business has to become progressively an international co-operative business, not just a question of markets exploited but of peoples' interest consulted and served. The American film business has been one of the last of the great international concerns to learn this, but it is learning. Direct pressure upon Hollywood is developing from the various governments who want Hollywood to give them a return for the money it draws from their national markets.

What can be asked of Hollywood, and is increasingly being



"provides profitable entertainment"

asked, is that it should, as a matter of policy, spread its net wider in the search for its themes. Hollywood, on the whole, is glad to respond if it sees a way to do so without prejudice to the essentially commercial nature of its enterprise.

Canada has done fairly well, but not well enough, in recent years in the allotment of Canadian subjects. Hollywood has given it films like "Corvette," "Royal Northwest Mounted Police" and "Captains of the Clouds". If Canada is sufficiently imaginative in the ideas it presents to Hollywood; if it develops a more intimate system of contact between the film industry in Toronto and Hollywood producers, the record must grow.

International Co-operation

Hollywood is presently co-operating with the Canadian govern-

ment and the Canadian film industry in the production of war loan appeals. It is sending its stars north to focus attention on war loan drives, much as though Canada were already part of its American obligation. A larger collaboration in Canada's national interest is bound to follow. I myself expect that before very long the big American companies trading in Canada will see to it that one or two films are devoted to Canada.

Paramount has made a start. The Paramount newsreel which runs in Canada is made in New York, but it becomes more and more a true Canadian newsreel. The next step, I expect, will be for Paramount to set aside a production unit in Hollywood for the production of Canadian feature films. Its holdings—that is to say its responsibilities—in Canada might justify such a step.



Answers to Quiz

1. 1,251. 2. \$58 million in 1942. 3. Yes—hundreds of shorts but no feature films except 2 or 3 produced by British or American units in Canada. 4. See the article Page 8. 5. 3½ million Canadians go each week. The population is 11,000,000. Work it out. 6. See the list on Page 16. 7. National Film Board. 8. See the article on Page 10. There are others. 9. Over 6,500 theatres in United States—about 800 in Canada. 10. \$5,000—actual figure \$4,990.15.

NON-THEATRICAL "REVOLUTION"



That is the Canadian film picture in the 'big feature' field, but do not believe for a moment that it is the whole story. It is only half the story and, according to people like myself, not the more important half.

Has it ever occurred to you that there is more seating capacity outside the theatres than there is inside of them? There are the schools and the village halls, the church halls and the community centres.

Today 16mm projectors can go anywhere. They cost \$350 at present, but when the war is over they will probably be in the



"more seating capacity outside the theatres"

higher price radio bracket, around \$150. Any group will be able to afford one.

When you think of the nation's organizations, you will readily see how big this new 16mm audience can be. It includes educational classes in schools and universities, industrial workers in factories and trade union halls, farmers' groups, women's groups, Rotary clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and so on. Wherever people are gathered together in the name of a specialized professional or social or civic or educational interest, there you have a ready-made audience for films which are devoted to their needs and interests.

People Want to Know

This non-theatrical audience is today being organized on a vast scale in all progressive countries. It represents a revolution in both the film industry and in education. It demands films concerned with



"internationale of people interested in medicine"

education of every kind, professional and civic. It needs films concerned with the real interests of people and the provision of materials which make for a more creative citizenship. Its potential development is enormous.

The demand of this audience is for particular films rather than those designed for the "general public". In a way there is no such thing as the so-called general public, whether you are speaking nationally or internationally. If I talk on films or education, I can meet my kind in every country from China to Peru and not feel an alien anywhere. There is an internationale of people interested in medicine, in wheat growing, in town planning, in child welfare. There is for that matter, an internationale of stamp collectors. People everywhere divide themselves off into organizations and groups of specialized interests; and specialized in-

terests are much the same all over the world. There are no boundaries when it comes to what people are basically interested in. They are interested in jobs and wages, houses and homes, the bread they will eat and the welfare of their children.

Seen in this light, there is no great mystery about the public and its requirements. They want to know what they can do to help their future along and they want to know what their leaders are doing about it.

Films for Resolution

We have our moods of resolution but also our moods of relaxation. The movies until now have concentrated on the moods of relaxation. They have provided the romance and the escape and have taken us off the earth when we got bored and wanted a let-up.

We have made a big business out of our moods of relaxation; we have not concentrated nearly so much on our moods of resolution. Yet, on the face of it, it is in our moods of resolution that we may be expected to build the future. These moods are worth organizing, just as deliberately as the movies, the newspapers and the show business generally, have been organizing our moods of relaxation.

Canada Off to a Good Start

In Canada we are well ahead in this new film development, out among the leaders. The development has been sponsored by the federal government but it has the support of all political parties. It has besides, the co-operation of the provincial governments, the trade unions, the co-operatives, and national associations throughout the country. In Canada today we may not make many feature story films, but every year we make hundreds of short films which describe the life of the nation.

They describe Canada's place in the world and its contribution to the United Nations on every front of human endeavor. They describe Canada's achievements in industry and agriculture. They go into the various problems of finance and housing and labor and nutrition and child welfare.

They progressively cover the whole field of civic interest—what Canadians need to know and think about if they are going to do their best by Canada and by themselves. Nor do they forget the cultural aspects of Canadian life. There are films too of Canadian achievements in painting and craftsmanship, of Canadian folk songs, of the contribution of the various race groups to Cana-

dian culture and Canadian life.

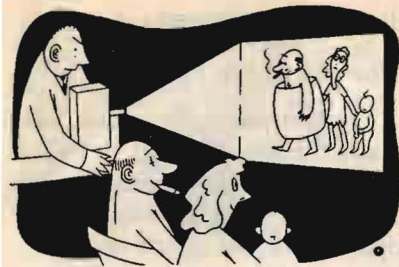
The Job of the Film Board

The instrument by which this plan is being executed is called the National Film Board. It is a department of the government but operates somewhat like the CBC. It has a national commission and is free from the dictates and pressures of party platform and party viewpoints. It was created in 1939 when all the film responsibilities of the government were put in its charge. It became a really active concern in 1941 when it took over the old Motion Picture Bureau in Ottawa and started training technicians to carry out a long-term plan of film production.

In three years its staff has grown from forty to more than five hundred. It produces between three and four hundred films a year—training films for the services, newsreel items and short subjects for the theatres, and a large number of films directed to the specialized audiences of the country.

Successful Series

One particular success of the Film Board is the two series for the theatres — "Canada Carries On" and "World in Action". They are two reels and come out



"describe the country they come from"

once a month. That is to say, every fortnight in Canada's theatres there is a Canadian documentary film. One describes Canadian affairs, the other world affairs. They are, incidentally, not hand-outs by the government as are the government films in other countries. They go out commercially and that is a good test of their standing in the theatre world.

The international series, "World in Action," has had especial success in the United States where it plays every month to some 6,500 theatres, just like "March of Time" and other films devoted to world circulation. Like many other Canadian films, it is translated into several languages and goes all over the world. Such films help our ambassadors describe the country they came from. They help to meet the demand in educational institutions everywhere for more knowledge of this

country which has suddenly come out of the north to be one of the greatest producers and powers and, after the Big Four, the most important of the "middle" nations.

Mobilizing Imagination for Canada's Future

The main thing is to see this National Film Board plan as a service to the Canadian public, as an attempt to create a better understanding of Canada's present and as an aid to the people in mobilizing their imagination and energy in the creation of Canada's future.

The National Film Board is using films to do this, using them as they have never been used before in a planned and scientific way to provide what might be described as a supplementary system of national education.

Today almost every department of government is working with the National Film Board in this activity. Labor is describing new viewpoints on labor management relationship. Agricultural interests are developing a system of rural education covering not only the technology of the land but its sociology also. Finance is interested in popular economic education and Mines and Resources in the country's new possibilities.

The new departments of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare may be expected to make great contributions to the nation-wide discussion of plans for the future.

Can Lead the Field

That is the other half of the Canadian film story. I know that Canada cannot hope to compete with Hollywood, but in this bright new field of national information and civic interest there is no reason why Canada should not lead the world. I am inclined to bet that if it maintains the speed of the last three years, in five more years it will be out in front. When it comes to education—and I mean education in the live and real sense which I have described—our country can be as fervent and imaginative as any other. Perhaps a young country which is going places and knows it, is apt to be more imaginative than most.

For a Great Drive Forward

Canada must inevitably grow greater as it occupies and develops the vast territory and resources which are in its keeping. It has half a century of five year plans ahead of it. They will need



"going places and knows it"

a new burst of imagination and effort and an increasing number of skills on every level from labor to the laboratory. With this need must go better and brighter educational plans than we have ever had before, plans which take account not only of techniques but of human welfare.

A country is only as vital as its processes of self-education are vital. In a hundred fields Canada is preparing herself for a great drive forward in the next generation—in finance and economic management, in industrial and agricultural improvement, in the development of the procedures of government itself. The film, like the radio, has a contribution to make to the active imagination of the people of Canada. It is of the first importance. It is not being forgotten.

Some Film Board Productions

You may wonder what John Grierson has in mind when he talks about a new kind of movie produced in Canada. We list below a few representative titles. We suggest you watch out for them and other Canadian-made films.

WAR FOR MEN'S MINDS

A vivid picture of the clash between Nazi propaganda and the democratic idea. A good example of how a vital contemporary issue can be effectively presented on the screen.

SMOKE AND STEEL

The story of how industrial Canada is producing the materials of war.

PEOPLES OF CANADA

This film reminds us that our Canadian population is a blend of many racial strains. The picture helps Canadians to understand and appreciate their racial heritage; it also provides audiences outside Canada with an introduction to the people of this Dominion.

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

A guide to what we ought to eat in wartime and why,—with an account of the basic principles of Canada's wartime food production program.

BEFORE THEY ARE SIX

A film to show mothers exactly how day nurseries can be organized.

CANADIAN LANDSCAPE

A color film which takes us with the artist, A. Y. Jackson, as he goes about creating his paintings of the scenery of northern Ontario and of the St. Lawrence valley.

OUR NORTHERN NEIGHBOUR

This "World in Action" subject takes the U.S.S.R. as its theme. The global relations of Canada and the Soviet Union are emphasized.

MORE PIGS

A lively instructional cartoon showing farmers the best methods of housing and feeding hogs.

A MAN AND HIS JOB

This film explains to Canadian wage earners the exact meaning and operation of the Unemployment Insurance Act. It also gives the typical story of a Canadian worker, how he lived through varied years of depression and good times from the twenties until now.

FIRST AID IN THE FIELD

Made for use in military training, this film shows in detail the first aid treatment that should be given to various types of battle wounds. It is in color and has animated diagrams as well as simulated battle scenes.

More on Rehabilitation



You will remember that in our *Future for Fighters* article we promised to keep you up to date on rehabilitation developments. Well, here are the latest changes as announced by the Minister of Pensions and National Health on May 16th, 1944.

(1) *New living allowance rates:*

The allowances payable to discharged members of the Armed Forces while continuing their education or taking vocational training will henceforth be at the rate of \$60 monthly for a single man and \$80 monthly for a man and his wife. (Remember, that the government also pays your fees at vocational or technical training school or at University.)

The new living allowance will be \$50 monthly for a single man and \$70 monthly for a man and his wife for ex-servicemen in the following categories:—

- (a) farmers waiting for returns from their crops.
- (b) men and women who are starting in business for themselves (until they get on their feet).
- (c) those fit and available for work for whom no suitable employment can be found.
- (d) those who can't take a job at once because they are temporarily incapacitated.

In addition, in all cases allowances will be paid for dependent children and parents on approximately the same basis as paid while in the service. Prior to this new announcement, rates in all categories were \$44.20 monthly for a single man and \$62.40 monthly for a man and his wife plus allowances for dependent children.

(2) *Special grants to pensioners:*

If a veteran receiving a war disability pension takes vocational training or continues his education he will receive a special training grant, based on his pension rate, in addition to his regular pension and allowances.

(If you want to review the whole rehabilitation program we suggest you refer back to *Future for Fighters*).

Guide for Discussion



Movies provide us with one of our major topics for easy conversation. How often, parked beside a new acquaintance, we chop a hole in the ice with a reference to the weather and then launch an ice-breaker with the line "Did you see Rita Hayworth in 'Cover Girl'?" or whatever the latest release on our minds happened to be.

When it comes to a discussion of movies at the level set by John Grierson, the verbal gates may not swing open quite so easily but they won't need much prying.

If you start with the familiar critical comments on some current films, before leading on into the more novel subject of a film policy for Canada, you should be able to ease your group into a discussion of principles.

Aim to develop by discussion a broader understanding of the role of movies in education, the kind of films being produced in Canada, and the possibilities of the future.

Boil It Down

For a talk based on the article, the following may be useful as an outline:

(1) The contrast between the film for relaxation, which is largely fictional and often a fantasy, and the informational film

which is largely true to life. Both contain elements of the other and the successful informational film must be good entertainment.

(Note that Grierson contrasts "Lady in the Dark" and "UNRRA;" you can pick two recent films shown locally.)

(2) Movies for relaxation may be good or bad, but beware of snap judgments.

(3) The movies we see, especially the feature pictures, come almost entirely from American studios, and deal in the main with American topics. (Refer to CANADIAN AFFAIRS PICTORIAL No. 5.)

(4) There are various means by which we might obtain more feature films with Canadian stories—Grierson suggests three.

(5) The films produced in Canada today are true to life shorts of educational value. Under the National Film Board, great strides have been made during the war in this field of production. (See CANADIAN AFFAIRS PICTORIAL No. 5.)

(6) The development of educational movies has great possibilities for the progress of Canada. (Groups overseas who receive *Canada Digest* might make use at this point of the story by Anne Fromer, "Rural Movies Building Citizenship", which is condensed in the June, 1944, issue.)

The time to use the Quiz on page 20 is at the beginning of the discussion period after your talk. Make your talk brief, just raising the main points of the article. Then fill in with detailed information during the quiz.

Then go on from there with the following questions.

1. Are You Satisfied With Hollywood Feature Films or Do You Want To See Others?

NOTE: Most Canadians prefer Hollywood films. In 1942, of the 795 feature films shown in Canada, 734 came from Hollywood, 42 from Great Britain, and the remainder were chiefly French or from the

U.S.S.R. The real argument is whether it is good for us to remain dependent upon American films, whether we should try to make some of our own feature films to be produced in a Canadian Hollywood.

2. From Which Do You Learn More, A Lecture or An Educational Film?

NOTE: Most people enjoy a film more than a lecture, especially if it is discussed after the showing. But do they learn more? It has been claimed that training films cut training time by 30 per cent. This war has seen a wide use of such films in the armed services and in war industry. The use of such films is spreading in schools, factories, trade unions, rural communities, and civic groups. The film forum, where

people can discuss movies, has had a big growth with the rural circuits of the National Film Board and has spread to other groups as being an essentially democratic use of films.

In this connection, the discussion leader might show a training film prepared for another branch of the service or for a non-service group and quiz the group on how much they remember from one showing.

3. Are National Film Board Movies Just "More Propaganda"?

NOTE: In popular usage the word "propaganda" has come to have a bad meaning. When we think of propaganda we think of high-pressured methods of foisting the opinions of one party or group upon the public with little regard for the truth or for honest discussion of the opinions. In short, the word propaganda makes us think of Goebbels and his outfit.

Some of the movies turned out by the National Film Board are propaganda in the technical sense. They spread the ideas of the United Nations and departments of the Canadian government throughout Canada and the world. To the extent which they are the vigorous expression of our democratic faith they are good as far as we are concerned, bad as far as the Axis is concerned.

The following arguments have been expressed at one time or another: (A) *That they are propaganda*—(1) You do not get any chance to argue back with a film. (2) The commentator pushes the ideas of the script writer into your ears with undue force. (3) We have no control over the Film Board. (4) They express the opinions of the party in power, or could be used for that purpose. (5) It's government stuff and therefore suspect. (B) *That*

they are not propaganda—(1) The National Film Board seeks discussion of its films and in hundreds of rural and industrial showings each month obtains the opinions of the people "arguing back" with the film. (2) The commentator is trying to interpret in simple and dramatic terms the meaning of Canadian and world events. You do not have to agree. (3) The policy-making body of the Film Board consists of eight members appointed by the Governor in Council, i.e. by the Cabinet, any may be removed if there is cause to do so. The chairman of the Board is a member of the Cabinet. The manager of the enterprise, known as Film Commissioner, is responsible to the Board. (4) Only two of the members of the Board can be members of the party in power. Of the remaining six members, three are civil servants, three are outside the civil service. (5) The American publication, "Business Film," wrote in 1942: "In few other countries has any department of government permitted itself to view facts so realistically or to hammer them home so hard . . . It is this actuality approach . . . that has endowed Canadian documentaries with their tough core of realism, their refusal to treat with any emotion less comforting than the truth.