

# Brightening Rural Life With Government Movies

By J. CAMERON SECORD

THE lives of the common people have been immeasurably enriched by the coming of motion pictures. The dull, drab monotony of their humble existence has been brightened with the thrills of rapturous hours before the silver screen. They have taken wonderful trips to foreign lands, have lived through fairy tales, have hunted "bad men," have suffered for wayward daughters, and have even witnessed great battles like "The Somme"; to say nothing of the fun they've had watching Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Max Linder and other laugh-makers.

The Movies have democratized art and entertainments. No longer are the masses compelled to gaze at dusty paintings, or statues in dusty museums to satisfy their longings. To-day they go globe-trotting via the silver screen on a "pay-as-you-go" system, a dime a time.

Truly the Movie is the educator of the people and is something belonging peculiarly to them—it is their own, for they made its development possible.

That brings us to a new premise. The Movie as an entertainer is now commonplace. The passing of the bar-room has left no deadening void, for in its place have come the Movies, bringing joy, thrills and education to all the family at a fraction of the cost of liquor.

Yet there is another phase, a great growing movement which seems to promise unlimited possibilities. It is the birth of a new method of educating—visual education by means of motion pictures. Educational films have been used in many places and by many organizations and governments, but it is something to be proud of to know that visual educational work is being adopted in a more thoroughly progressive manner in Ontario and in Canada than in any other country in the world.

On May 7th, 1917, the Hon. T. W. McGarry, Provincial Treasurer, established the Ontario Provincial Motion Picture Bureau, under the direction of Mr. S. C. Johnson, who had been engaged in making films of many places, things and processes for over a year previous. In this time more than fifty films have been produced; more are being finished almost daily. It is the present intention to complete as many as three hundred films of Ontario subjects for release to all and sundry who express the wish to learn from these films.

It is the primary intention of the Bureau to circuit these mainly in those centres not now served by established movie theatres. It is in line with this basic idea that the programmes of these rural meetings have been made more attractive by supplementing the regular showing of educational films with comedy and drama reels featuring Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Max Linder and other famous people. One of these comedy or drama reels will be used as an initial number on the evening programme, and, when time permits, a second one as a concluding number. There is a sound business reason in this move, for beyond the unquestioned benefits the remote rural residents will derive from these comedy films, there is the result of greatly augmented audiences at these educational meetings, and the increased receptivity to educational influences.

THUS all concerned are benefitted by the Government's broad vision.

The Department of Agriculture in Ontario has been the most aggressive user of educational films; this Department alone having nearly fifty reels ranging from "How to plant a backyard garden," to "How to Grade Wool." These films are used by the Department's agricultural representatives (one in each county in the Province) who journey from section to section giving lectures and exhibitions wherever they can get farmers together.

The use of moving pictures in agricultural educational work is proving a greater success than had been anticipated by those responsible for its adoption. The average attendance at the meetings where the district representatives

conducted their educational work by means of lectures and demonstrations, was about 15, whereas to-day the average attendance is around 85. This is due almost entirely to the use of moving pictures to demonstrate the right and the wrong way to get things done on a farm. There is no doubt that these audiences will be further increased when the Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford films supplement the educational films as now shown, but the Department has no intention of permitting these comedy films to take up more than a very limited part of the evening's program.



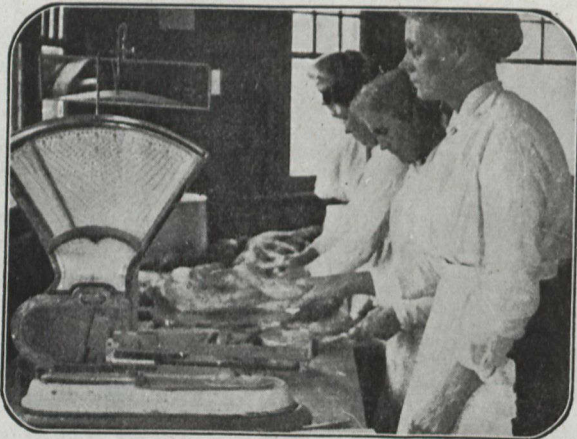
"Sheep Farming in Ontario" Film



Prize Calves, Norwich School Fair

## An Excellent Drawing Card

THAT farmers appreciate what the Government is doing is proven by the attendance at these meetings. In four weeks' meetings (usually three a week) in forty-five counties the total attendance was 67,801. A three-week circuit among the Women's Institutes of Simcoe County brought out a total attendance of 1,500. More than 5,000 farmers have seen the "Wool Grading" film since November 1st, 1917, while the average attendance per film from November 1st last varies from 20 to 5,000, according to the subject. The cost of this educational work is exceptionally low as compared with the former methods, for the cost per capita of attendance is less than 3 cents now, as against the former 15 cents. This result



Community Canning Centre Film

was so outstanding that, when the Provincial Legislature, during the past session, granted \$52,000 for the extension of this work, members of both the Government and the Opposition rose to compliment the Government on this progressive movement, and on the fact that these films were being made in Canada by a strictly Canadian company. In passing it is not irrelevant to mention that Canadians have risen very high in nearly every phase of motion picture work. The world's leading movie star is Toronto's own Mary Pickford—Gladys Smith—Jack Pickford is also very popular and there are many others. "The Iron Claw" written by Arthur Stringer, of Chatham, is still fresh in the public mind, and that is but one of the hundreds of successful scenarios written by Canadians. When it comes to camera men and directors, it is too much to remember names; but Canadians are there and right up at the top, too. Now Canada has its own companies operating in Canada—one at Trenton, Ont., making "amusement" reels; one in Toronto, making "educational" films; and several others making "news reels" features. But this is digressing.

In the making of these educational films, the Ontario Government has recognized the very important part played by "the women on the farm" and "the woman in the home" in the cause of increased food production and conservation, by giving considerable attention to the widening sphere of women both on the farm and in urban centres. Films No. 110, "Rearing Chickens"; No. 111, "Incubation," and No. 112 "Killing and Dressing of Poultry," are three very popular reels, since the care of poultry has been the "pin-money" earner for the woman on the farm from time immemorial. Film No. 119 "Handling Bees" and two others in beekeeping, Nos. 105 and 118, run those on poultry a close second in interest among rural audiences, though generally speaking the two most popular films among women in both rural and urban centres are Nos. 120 and 146, "Home Canning of Vegetables," and "The Community Canning Centre" respectively.

Film No. 169 "National Service on The Land," which is a cinema record of the wonderful work done by Canadian girls on the farms in 1917, shows beyond the shadow of a doubt the ability of our girls to "do their bit" in the hour of the nation's need. This film is being used as a recruiting feature both in Canada and in the United States, to whom it has been loaned. It will ever be a true record of the part played by our college girls in winning the war; it will be more appreciated in the years to come.

On March 1st, last, the Provincial Motion Picture Bureau had completed nine films on Vegetable Growing; 3 on chickens, 3 on bees, 3 on fruit growing, 7 on live stock, 5 on dairying, 6 on road-making, 3 on grain-growing and 12 on general topics. Since then this list has been increased very materially and a great number of new subjects have been put in course of production. The educational list above is being kept in constant circulation. It is interesting to note that the films on backyard gardening which have been in use in the schools as a feature of the campaign to enlist the pupils in "greater food production" have been a great success. One Government lecturer tells of holding one hour lectures twice

per day every school day for two weeks. These lectures were attended by from 200 to 400 children of varying ages and only once in the twenty lectures was it necessary to call "Order." This test gives food for much thought upon the advisability of adopting visual instruction, as a regular part of our educational system. There is much to commend the suggestion for it is a well known thing that what the eye sees the mind remembers and that so long as action is visible and continuous it is difficult to keep from watching that action. One of the chief benefits of such an introduction into our schools would be the condensation and the cutting down of the curriculum due to the greater efficiency of pictures as against printed words to get across to the student the right conception of the subject upon which education is desired. A few years hence, this suggestion will have become history, for already educational authorities have recognized that visual educational films cannot long be denied. Here and there throughout Canada they are being taken up with almost phenomenal results both in imparting information and in holding the students' interest.

Up to this time, little thought has been given to this phase of the educational film by the Provincial Motion Picture Bureau. Its chief work has been in the cause of better farming, for the reason that in the present crisis this is the more important phase, and until after the war is won, the Bureau's major efforts will be concentrated upon the problem of producing and conserving foodstuffs. The subjects of visual education and vocational guidance by means of films, can well wait till the big job is finished. There will be time and pleasure then in taking up these kindred phases of visual educational work when the war is over; however it would not be wise to overlook the merits of visual educational films in the meantime.

The fact that Canada stands out in the forefront in the matter of the utilization of motion pictures for educational work is the great big thing to remember. Even in the matter of "War Records" Canada was the first to adopt moving pictures as part of its permanent War Records system and is to-day far in advance of any other combatant in its organization for this purpose. The great picture of "The Battle of the Somme" is but one of many that will vividly depict the valorous deeds now being performed.

## In Every Province

WHILE Ontario has taken the lead in the development of the motion picture as an educational force, it does not follow that it is the only province using films for this purpose. Other provinces, especially the Western Provinces, have followed Ontario's lead and are now busy endeavoring to reduce it. The Dominion Government is becoming interested in the motion picture and at the present time is having films made of its seaboard fisheries and hatcheries. This (Continued on page 25)



Parade of Prize Winners, Norwich School Fair



Prize Colts, Norwich School Fair