

*Development of Film Industry*

are one of the most powerful and subtle influences on the development of the values of a society, a continuing influence in the setting of certain standards and goals. If one does not believe this, he should visit some countries overseas which have been exposed for the past few years to American feature films and learn from them what is their understanding of North America. The response would be alarming.

We in Canada who have continued to view the feature film productions of other countries have identified ourselves with their values and established goals for ourselves which are not necessarily concurrent with what life is like in this country. There has been a continuous impediment to our development of a national image and a national identity. I am not saying this in a narrow, restrictive, or partisan sense, but I think it has been a great failure on our part to have overlooked year after year the necessity for establishing a feature film industry.

● (4:30 p.m.)

For many years we have considered as very important our Canadian broadcasting system. It is well known to hon. members of this house that hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent in establishing this communications link, this heart throb, if you like, for the Canadian nation. We have also taken a considerable amount of trouble to do similar kinds of things under the National Film Board in other kinds of less direct but still, on the whole, cultural fields. But when it comes to the feature film industry we have been greatly negligent.

I suppose the blame does not fall on the head of any one person or any particular government, because as far as I know no government has ever taken this question seriously. I was investigating and looking into this particular matter some months ago, Mr. Speaker, and I chanced upon what I consider to be one of the real ironies of our development as a nation. Apparently shortly after the second world war, during the period 1945-47, there was some interest in Canada in the development of a feature film industry. There was a real desire on the part of some to see a feature film industry get off the ground. Actually this would have been a good time to think about starting a feature film industry, because after the war there had been neglect of this proposal and there was a kind of vacuum into which a new industry could have moved.

[Mr. MacDonald (Prince).]

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that five of the major film producers in Hollywood got wind of this possibility of a loss of market in this country. They were disturbed that some of the extra revenue they received from runs in Canada would be lost to them, and so they approached the then minister of trade and commerce, I think it was, with a proposal. The proposal was that instead of actually going to the trouble of giving some special protection to, and assisting the development of, a Canadian feature film industry, these five major Hollywood producers would fill the vacuum, so to speak, and would make two concessions which would prevent any difficulties from developing, and would also ensure that some kind of Canadian image was carried on in film making in North America.

As I understand it, their two concessions were as follows: First of all they agreed that every year one of the five producers would come to Canada and would make a 15-minute travelogue on some aspect of Canadian life, and this would be a major concession; there would be some kind of Canadian identity at the movies.

That was good enough, Mr. Speaker; but they decided to go a little further and to establish something called, I think, a Commonwealth office in Hollywood, where they would have a couple of resident script writers. These resident script writers were to review all of the scripts of the shows to be produced. They would read the scripts, and if they found a line or two that ran something like: "I was talking to my mother in Seattle by phone the other night", a chap would sit down and would rewrite it in this way: "I was talking to my mother in Vancouver by phone the other night", to make sure that occasionally there would be some geographic references to places not only in the United States but also in Canada. This was the kind of concession that I understand was agreed to by the government of that day in order that the five major producers of films could carry on their distribution in this country without impediment.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, after many years, we are now in 1967 on the verge of paying some real attention to the development of a feature film industry in this country. As other speakers have said when dealing with the resolution preceding the bill, I think in the first instance we must give the minister a very real vote of praise in taking the initiative in this matter. We sympathize with her in part for the way in which other members of her