

Proceedings were organized somewhat as follows. One or two people - perhaps a clergyman and a YMCA secretary - would take the initiative. They would call a meeting of delegates from all local groups who then agreed to form a community film council to sponsor an educational film library, and projection service. The film Board representative for the area would be asked for a basic library of films; the public library board delegate might suggest that the public library was the most convenient place to house the films; and the YMCA secretary would agree to make his organization's sound projector available to qualified operators for other organizations. The YMCA secretary might accept the responsibility for training volunteers from all participating organizations.

This is, of course, a simplification. There were problems and incentives not mentioned above. Not all public libraries were able to distribute films; not every community had a projector. But where difficulties arose, the National Film Board devised expedients to overcome them. For example, NFB projectors were made available until a community obtained its own. An NFB guarantee of privately-loaned equipment induced individuals or organizations to permit public use of their machines. Today there are 200 community film councils in Canada. The fifteen film libraries of 1939 have now increased to 168. Fifty-five are in public libraries. The community film councils have extended their purpose from distribution to the demonstration of methods in using films. They now ask that the passive viewing of films evolve into a live, conscious, harnessing of films to the purposes of groups and the community.

Thus films introduce new ideas in the fields of education, health, diet, housing, medicine and child care. Through films the community expands its view of itself and thereby its interest in the world. Because of films the community has caught the significance of a richer, broader, experience and the film-maker in turn is responsible to a film-conscious people.

Today, film councils are better organized, since they profit by much that has gone before. District federations have been formed to exchange films and plan wider applications. Provincial federations have recently been set up and a movement is already afoot to establish a national federation of community film councils. Such bodies are doing much to systemize distribution of documentary films. But in addition to better circulation of existing films there is the promise of production of new films related more closely to the community and the needs it makes known through film councils.

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