

Development of Film Industry

development of a Canadian film industry. There is a great deal of talent in British Columbia and it is fortunate in having the scenery and background required to develop the industry. I am not suggesting for a moment that our industry should be entirely confined to British Columbia. I am sure that Canadians in all provinces will want to see all provinces receive similar recognition in the efforts of this industry. The development of a Canadian feature film industry portraying Canadian life will provide an opportunity for the development of unity in this country and will promote the cause of understanding.

Mr. Southam: As one of those who have been directly interested in the motion picture industry in this country for some years, I thought I should like to make a few comments this evening concerning the introduction of this measure to establish a corporation known as the Canadian Film Development Corporation. Like all hon. members of this house, I am in favour of the further development of the arts and culture in our country. I am looking forward to the time when Canada can establish its own identity in Canadian literature, music, art and other things cultural.

However, I have some grave doubts about this resolution so far as the development of a feature film industry in this country at this time is concerned. In the first place, \$10 million is a paltry amount in relation to a job of this kind. It is like sending a boy to do a man's errand. Hollywood is the centre of the United States film industry, and with the vast millions that have been put into it, that industry has run into grave difficulties in the last few years. The reason for this has been the impact of television. Television has cut very deeply into this private industry to the extent that in Canada—I have not got the exact figures—hundreds of theatres have had to close their doors. I know that in Winnipeg, the gateway to the west, as a result of the impact of television, no less than 11 theatres closed down in one year.

This does not mean that I am injecting a gloomy note into our discussion. There is still room for motion picture production. However, I feel we have to look at the matter carefully in a young country like Canada that has many more important responsibilities at this time to which reference has been made. It is a curious fact that the minister recently suggested paying \$6 million for one painting, but now she suggests an amount of only \$10

[Mr. Herridge.]

million for the establishment of a motion picture industry.

The motion picture industry, for instance, is divided into four main branches. First, there are the stars. A few years ago the cost of these stars did not run into too big an item because the motion picture producer could hire a top star on an annual contract. As a result, he might be able to produce anywhere from five to ten pictures with the one star. Now these motion picture stars of top calibre insist on getting into the production end before they will even lend their talents to a production. They usually insist on a contract under which they will make only one or two pictures a year and will take a large share of the profits, sometimes 50 per cent. I do not believe Canada would be in a different position if we were to establish a motion picture industry.

We would find ourselves in the same difficulties as private industry has in this regard. Then, too, these production companies with unlimited millions of dollars behind them have, in the last several years, found it necessary to amalgamate in order to remain in business. Then, you have distribution which is a very important part of the whole motion picture industry. It is all right to produce a picture, but you have to have a whole chain of distribution centres in order to get this film to the next stage, which is the exhibitor himself. All in all, Mr. Chairman, I think we should take a very serious look at this resolution before we support it 100 per cent.

For instance, I think the hon. member for Saskatoon mentioned that back in 1948—I recall reading about this—Mr. J. Arthur Rank, one of the great producers of England, came to Canada to look at the potential of this country for the motion picture industry. I must remind you this was before the advent of television and its impact on the motion picture industry. This top executive from that great country came to the conclusion that we were too young, and we did not have a large enough population to support a motion picture industry. He withdrew from Canada, and I believe we should learn a lesson from that action. I just wanted to voice this note of warning to the minister, Mr. Chairman. This government project, even though it may sound laudable, could prove to be a boomerang if we do not give it serious consideration.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman—