

period. Similarly, the outlook for an increase in the number of trained building mechanics is improving, as a small though continuous stream of men at present in training and apprenticeship schools will be joining the labour force. While the problem in 1947 will still be one of material and manpower shortages,

the problem in 1948 and the years to follow will not be so much one of supply as one of making demand effective. Perhaps the answer to both the supply problem in the transition period and the demand problem in the long term future can be summed up in one brief statement:—"Where there is a will, there is a way."

The Role of Documentary Films in Canada

By KATHLEEN M. GREENWOOD

THE growth of Canadian culture has long been handicapped by the inaccessibility of the ingredients of culture. Not only have the art, music and literature of the world been available to only a comparative few in Canada but our own very real Canadian contributions to the world's culture have flourished in relatively isolated pockets until recent years. The outstanding characteristic of Canada's national culture has been its regionalism.

This picture is rapidly changing. The unifying influences of radio and film are revealing a new pattern for the future. The separate achievements of the many arts of the country are now being assembled and related to a new whole. This is a development with which the National Film Board is actively concerned. By means of not only film but all the graphic media it is engaged in telling the dramatic story of our national growth. Our national culture is part of this story.

Unifying the Nation

Film has shown that its greatest potential contribution is in its ability to break down the barriers of distance and bring Canadians of every region within range of each other by the visual presentation of their efforts and achievements. During the war the film makers of the National Film Board realized that an effective war-time information

programme was incomplete without reference to the things we were fighting to preserve as well as those we were fighting against. They took time to produce three beautiful little films in kodachrome devoted to some of Canada's outstanding painters. *West Wind* relived the dramatic story of Tom Thomson; *Canadian Landscape* related the work of A. Y. Jackson to the vivid north country he loves so well; and *Painters of Quebec* wove into a brilliant pattern the work of seven leading artists who are portraying French Canada on canvas. When *Canadian Landscape* was shown to a group of Canadians soldiers fighting in the mud and snow of the Italian campaign there was not a dry eye in the audience.

But painting is only one form of Canadian art that the National Film Board is bringing to a wider public. *Listen to the Prairies*, a film on the Winnipeg Music Festival, has been enthusiastically received in all parts of the Dominion, particularly those in which the festival tradition is taking root. One phase of the growth of our urban culture has been the development of symphony orchestras in several Canadian cities. The sight of Sir Ernest MacMillan conducting the Toronto Symphony Orchestra is no longer a privilege limited to people within commuting distance of Toronto, thanks to the *Canada Carries On* film devoted to this leading musical organization. *Music in the Wind*, which brought to the screen the story of how organs are manufactured by the Casavant Freres of Ste. Hyacinthe, fascinated thousands

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of Canadians who had not previously known that world-famous organs were being produced within their own borders. In this film Healey Willan and Bernard Piche are seen at the keyboard. Another outstanding Canadian musician whose work is frequently heard on film sound tracks, although he does not appear on the screen, is Eugene Kash, formerly concert-master of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, now concert-master of the Ottawa Philharmonic Orchestra. Mr. Kash is in charge of the National Film Board's Music Department.

The handicrafts and dances of the Maritimes, the folk-songs of French Canada, the customs and traditions of continental Europe that have taken firm root in our prairie soil, the native crafts of Indian and Eskimo—they are the stuff of documentary. Films on these subjects are opening the eyes of Canadians to the different regional cultures that have been flourishing in their midst. Their range is indicated by such titles as *Habitant Arts and Crafts*, *Poland on the Prairies*, *Ukrainian Christmas*, *New Scotland*, *Totems* and *Eskimo Summer*. A recent release, *Voice of Canada*, which reviews briefly our currently most popular radio programs, offers an indication of how these elements are blending into a characteristically Canadian pattern. Documentary film is doing two things—it is bringing the established arts within easy reach of people who have little opportunity to enjoy them, and in the process it is evolving new art forms which have the greatest significance for our young artists and musicians.

Film Music

Film music is a field which is only just beginning to be developed. For a long time the writers of film music did not realize the possibilities of the sound film. In Canada, documentary film, which covers a wide range of subjects, offers a great variety of theme to the composer. The success or failure of a film may depend to a great extent upon the composer who has translated the

producer's conception of his picture into music. The composer has no easy job on his hands. For film work he must completely revise his ideas of writing music, since he is working with a new medium. He cannot expect to compose pieces complete in themselves, for music in films must be treated as a subordinate and unobtrusive factor dominated by the action and requirements of the visual image. During the war years Film Board composers had little time for experiment, but now they are beginning to develop traditions of their own in film music, such as using a written or painted sound track. During the past six years the National Film Board has engaged young Canadian composers and given them this new field to apply their crafts and talents. Louis Applebaum, Maurice Blackburn, Lucio Agostini, John Weinzweig, Godfrey Ridout and Eldon Rathburn are the nucleus of a new school of Canadian composers whose work has been used extensively in films.

Creative Production

Art and music have joined hands in the National Film Board's Animation Department. Here a group of young Canadian artists is experimenting with every form of animation, from cut outs and pastel drawing to drawing directly on film. The series of animated *Chants Populaires* made in collaboration with the Alouette Quartet of Montreal is an interpretation of traditional folksongs of French Canada. Sing songs in a corresponding English language series, *Let's All Sing Together* have proved a popular addition to community film programs.

Art has been enlisted in the service of government and industry as well. Modern government can be best assured of public support when people understand its intentions. In such short vita-colour animations as *Dollar Dance* and *Hen Hop* the importance of price control and wage stabilization in the fight against inflation was vividly presented. It is generally agreed that Canada's war-time stabilization programme made

possible her present relatively sound position. Films such as these have played a part in the essential democratic process of presenting the facts to the people.

Art is now engaged in serving the nation in other ways too. The National Film Board produces not only films but all sorts of graphic media. The aim of display production is to combine the best of documentary photography with the best of modern functionalist design. In large photo-mural exhibitions such as *This Is Our Strength* and *Design in Industry* and in small portable informational displays composed of panels telling picture stories, such as a recent one on *Community Art Centres* distributed across Canada by the National Gallery, our artists and designers are teaming up in the service of the community.

The filmstrip is a relatively new medium which is steadily gaining ground in the field of education. It is a little roll of 35mm. film on which is printed in progressive sequence the necessary minimum of still pictures, and which is accompanied by a written or recorded commentary. Sponsored filmstrips have been made on a wide variety of subjects, from pre-natal care to employment services. Particularly beautiful is a National Film Board presentation entitled *Modern Chinese Painting*, in kodachrome, dealing with the subject-matter and technique of two contemporary Chinese artists.

Teaching the People

But creative production is only part of the National Film Board's contribution to a national culture. Through its distribution activities it has made the frequent use of documentary films a practical part of community life as well as of school and adult education. In 1939, when the Board was established by the National Film Act there were only 15 film libraries in the Dominion. There are now more than a hundred, and their number is constantly increasing. Before 1939, 16mm. projectors were relatively scarce in this country and their use was largely confined to schools, uni-

versity extension departments and other institutions able to afford their own equipment. It has been the National Film Board's aim to bring educational films within reach not only of more teachers and students but of service clubs and churches, labour and business groups, women's and youth organizations. Moreover, this extension of film activity has taken place in sparsely-settled farming areas as well as in the largest urban centres.

The first major step in bringing films into popular use was taken in January, 1942, with the organization of the Rural Circuits. Thirty circuits were set up at this time, each operated by a projectionist who took a new program of films on agriculture, war developments and the Canadian social structure to 20 rural communities each month. Afternoon school showings were followed by evening programs for the whole community. This experiment resulted in the introduction of educational films to thousands of Canadians, many of whom had never seen films of any sort before. At present there are 110 Rural Circuits in operation. Several of these are sponsored either entirely or in part by federations of agriculture, wheat pools, forestry associations, churches and other organizations interested in the improvement of farming methods and rural community life.

In urban areas, two other distribution channels were established within a year of the organization of Rural Circuits. These were the Industrial and the Trade Union Circuits on which the Board's field staff brought specially selected monthly programs to industrial plants and trade union meetings. Both these circuit systems have recently been discontinued as it is now possible for the urban groups they served to choose their own programs from film libraries and to secure the use of community projection facilities. The establishment of these local film services in more than a hundred centres during the last two years has been encouraged by the National Film Board

The Board has assisted communities to set up their own film supplies by placing initial stocks of loan prints in new libraries, and by advising the librarians on proper methods of film storage, maintenance and booking. The provision of community projection services has naturally gone hand in hand with the formation of libraries. When possible, the National Film Board has made a number of its own projectors available to different centres for a limited period until funds could be raised to purchase community-owned equipment. In many towns privately-owned projectors have been placed at the disposal of local groups under the Board's plan of guaranteeing those used for community purposes against loss or damage.

Besides this material aid, the National Film Board has offered the services of its field representatives to groups wishing to make best use of films. Their assistance is available in locating and securing the right films for special requirements, in learning efficient operation of equipment, and in using films to best advantage for discussion forums or public campaigns. Through such distribution activities the National Film Board is assisting Canadian communities to forge for themselves a new link with the art, music, architecture, educational systems and social planning of other parts of their own land as well as of countries on the other side of the world.

Although local film libraries are completely autonomous the Board works in close co-operation with them and supplements their stocks from time to time with prints on long term loan. These prints include not only Canadian productions sponsored by Government departments but also outstanding films from British, American and other foreign sources which the Board feels should receive wide circulation. Recently distributed films of this sort include *Man—One Family*, a

powerful attack on racial prejudice which was produced for the British Ministry of Information and translated into 16 languages to be shown throughout the liberated countries of Europe. *Child Welfare in Sweden* and *Valley of the Tennessee*, an American account of the Tennessee Valley Authority program are others that have been shown on circuit programs and placed in libraries throughout the country. By bringing the best current documentary films from many sources within reach of the Canadian public, the Board is making possible the development of generally high critical standards for this particular art form.

But the National Film Board's chief aim is not simply to develop a detached critical appreciation of good documentary films. From the first its object has been to put into the hands of the Canadian people a medium that can add a new dimension to their vision of world events, cultural trends and local problems. The popular preference for the bright uninhibited atmosphere of feature films is an instinctive rejection of the pedantry of the past and a challenge to educators to arouse constructive interest in the things which closely concern all of us with the effective tools now at hand. John Grierson, the first Dominion Film Commissioner, left with the Board the tradition that there need be no distinction between the dramatic and the everyday. It is the aim of Canadian producers to use films to point up the drama in the essential common places of a complex civilization. On the other hand such films can also bring people into living contact with some of the greatest works of their own culture that have been for too long inaccessible and remote. In documentary films Canadians are developing both an important art form and a means of bringing the other arts to the widest possible audience.