

30. It is desirable that the use of this film should not be restricted for educational or similar purposes. At the same time, if the ordinary entertainment films are to be subject to a restrictive licensing system, it is only fair that licensees who have spent considerable sums to provide both amenities and safeguards for the public in picture-theatres should not be subject to competitive operation of sub-standard copies of the same film. The Film Industry Board has given much consideration to the problem in an endeavour to reconcile these two principles, and the recommendations made to the Government are attached (Schedule 10).

PUBLIC SAFETY IN THEATRES

31. The Municipal Corporations Act gives control of public buildings to local authorities. The schedule to the amending Act of 1938 empowers the Council to require as a condition of license that a fireman shall be employed at all of the performances. In practice, it is found that in some cases the position is controlled by definite by-laws, in others by inserting the necessary conditions in the licence, and in still others, by mutual agreement between the local authority and the licensee. In a limited number of cases, no action whatever is taken. As a result there is no standard of requirements or practice. Even where a fireman is employed there is no definition of his duties or responsibilities or of those of the management.

32. The position was very strongly represented to Government on behalf of the Theatrical Workers' Union when it was contended that the present position was most unsatisfactory from the point of view of public safety. Further, that since many of the local authorities were not in fact exercising their powers adequately, some positive provisions were necessary to safeguard the public. A conference was held with representatives of the Wellington City Council, the Exhibitors' Association, the Fire Service, and the union. As a result of this conference, a Technical Committee consisting of the executive officers of the Picture Exhibitors' Association, the Wellington City Council, and the union, together with the technical officer of the Department, was set up to draw up a draft set of conditions for adoption.

33. It was found that the Municipal Corporations Act did not contain any authority under which regulations in this regard could be issued, and an empowering clause was inserted in the Statutes Amendment Act of 1944. The draft regulations were subsequently drawn up by the Technical Committee under this provision. It was afterwards decided that the necessary provision could more appropriately be made by way of by-law under the general provision of the the Municipal Corporations Act. The Standards Institute was therefore instructed to draw up a model by-law based on the draft regulations. A copy of this is attached (Schedule 11).

34. Briefly, the by-law provides a standard set of conditions for fire and panic prevention and for the enforcement of these conditions either by a member of the local fire brigade or by a member of the theatre staff trained as a fire-protection watchman. Part I sets out the obligations on the theatre management. Part II determines the application of the by-law and the qualification and duties of the fire-protection watchman. Part III defines breaches of the by-law. The First Schedule sets out in detail the duties of the fire-protection watchman and the second schedule the panic drills.

35. In addition to this by-law the Standards Institute is drawing up a model by-law dealing with the standard of construction and exits and other safety provisions to be required in theatres and places of public entertainment.

LICENSING OF FILM OPERATORS

36. Another provision made since 1934 having an important bearing on the safety of the public in theatres is the licensing of operators. The regulations providing for this were made in 1938. The film normally used in commercial picture-theatres is very highly inflammable, and despite the fact that a number of safety devices are incorporated in all projection machines and the general regulations provide rules for safe operation, occasional fires do occur, usually involving only a limited length of film. The Film Operators Licensing Board set up under these regulations is responsible for ensuring that operators are trained to a satisfactory technical standard and that appropriate rules of safe practice are observed. The administration of the regulations is in the hands of the Chief Inspector of Films, who is Chairman of the Board, and who also administers the general licensing regulations.

STATISTICS

37. Schedule II sets out in an abridged form the main items of statistics which are collected annually by the Government Statistician. The period covered is from 1939 to 1946.

FILM INDUSTRY BOARD

38. The Film Industry Board, set up as the result of the discussions in 1938, has definitely established itself as an important factor in the industry. The 1934 Committee was of opinion (paragraph 71) that the Advisory Committee provided for in the principal Act would suffice to represent the industry viewpoint. This has not proved to be the case. It is felt that the Board as now constituted has much more general and more positive representation of all sections of the industry and that its independent status is an advantage, particularly when dealing with matters of internal concern. The