

CENSORSHIP OF CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS

CONFERENCE IN WELLINGTON

A REPRESENTATIVE GATHERING.

A most successful conference of various bodies interested in the subject was held last Wednesday night to consider the question of the censorship of cinematograph films. The conference (says the *Post*) had been convened by the New Zealand Catholic Federation, and the list of delegates was as under:—

Education Board Representatives.—Wellington: Messrs. Wm. Allan and C. M. Luke. Otago: Professor Garrow. Hawke's Bay: Mr. H. Hill, B.A., F.R.S. North Canterbury: Mr. J. G. W. Aitken. South Canterbury: Mr. Alexander Bell. Boards in sympathy: Taranaki, Nelson, Westland, Southland.

Education Institute Representatives.—Wellington: Mr. J. C. Webb. N.Z. Institute: Mr. H. A. Parkinson. Nelson: Mr. C. N. Haslam, B.A. Taranaki: Mr. A. Erskine. North Canterbury: Otago: Mr. W. T. Grundy. Institutes in sympathy: Auckland, South Canterbury, Southland.

Other Bodies.—Church of England Men's Society: Mr. J. Snell. Young Men's Christian Association: Mr. W. Allan. Young Women's Christian Association: Miss Mary McLean, M.A. Women's Christian Temperance Union: Mrs. Peryman. Richmond Kindergarten Union: Mrs. Anderson. Moral and Physical Health Society. Society for Protection of Women and Children: Mesdames McLaren and Atkinson. Secondary School Teachers' Assistants Association: Mr. F. Martyn Renner, Wellington. Wellington Diocesan Council N.Z. Catholic Federation: Mr. A. Cassie. Dominion Executive, N.Z. Catholic Federation: Messrs. Burke, Duggan, and Girling-Butcher.

Representatives of City and Borough Councils.—Ashburton: Mr. Nosworthy, M.P. Feilding: Councillor Frost (for Mayor of Wellington). Hawera: Mr. J. G. W. Aitken. Hastings: The Mayor (Mr. G. Frost). Karori: The Mayor (Mr. B. G. H. Burn). Lower Hutt: The Mayor (Mr. H. Baldwin). Miramar: Councillor James Pollock. Napier: Councillor J. H. Sheath. Onslow: Councillor L. A. Browne. Palmerston North: Councillor F. Jackson. Patea: Councillor Frost (for the Mayor of Wellington). Petone: Councillor A. Anderson. Temuka: Mr. A. Bell, Education Department. Wanganui: Councillor A. Thompson. Wellington: Councillor J. Hutcheson. Wairoa: Mr. J. Duggan. Waimate: Mr. W. F. Johnson. Rangiora: Mr. L. T. Reichel. Marton: Councillor Frost (for the Mayor of Wellington). Pahiatua: Councillor Hildreth. Waihi: Mr. W. H. Phillips. Councils in sympathy, but unable to be represented: Auckland, Birkenhead, Brunner, Blenheim, Carterton, Devonport, Dunedin, Eketahuna, Gisborne, Gore, Greymouth, Greytown, Hamilton, Hokitika, and Invercargill.

The Reasons for the Conference.

Mr. J. J. L. Burke, chairman of the Dominion Executive of the Catholic Federation presided, and in his opening remarks said:—I wish to extend to you a very hearty welcome to this conference, assembled to consider a question which is of the utmost importance to the future well-being of the citizens of New Zealand. A brief summary of the reasons for convening this meeting may not be out of place here. Our Federation has been in existence some three short years, and during that period we had several complaints from our people that pictures of an anti-Catholic nature had been screened in various parts of the Dominion. These complaints we invariably dealt with ourselves and, in justice to the management of the picture theatres, I must say that when we approached them and pointed out our objections to these displays, we had always been very courteously received, and the objectionable pictures had been removed from the programme. I mention

this in passing merely to emphasise the fact that this conference is called together to deal with the moral and social side of picture films and not the religious side. Apart altogether from those pictures, to which we, as Catholics, have taken exception, we have also had numerous and frequent complaints of the very unsavory and objectionable class of picture which is gradually creeping into the programmes of many theatres. So frequent have these complaints become of late that our Dominion Council, which is composed of delegates from all parts of New Zealand, deemed it advisable to put into force one of the aims of our association, which is as follows:—'It (the Federation) stands for the suppression of indecent and objectionable pictures, films, theatricals, and advertisements, and is willing to co-operate with all citizens and all civil and social agencies working for truth and virtue.' With the object in view of making an effective protest against the indiscriminate presentation of so many indecent, immoral, and objectionable pictures, which are tending to undermine the moral, social, and home life of our rising generation, the council, when in assembly in Wellington last August, waited on the Minister of Internal Affairs, and pointed out to him the urgent need of a rigorous censorship of moving pictures. Our reception by the Minister was so sympathetic and favorable, and we received so many messages of congratulation for the steps we had taken, that we decided to carry the matter further by getting into touch with all city and borough councils, education boards, educational institutions, and other associations, working for the social welfare of the people, and ask their opinions on the necessity and advisability of holding a conference to discuss the question. Need I say how our appeal was received? Your presence here to-night is the only answer necessary, and whilst your numbers are sufficient indication of the feelings of the people you represent, I might add that we have received very favorable replies from many other bodies who are sympathetic with the object but are not able to send delegates. In conclusion, I wish to add, that in order not to discount in any way the importance of the decisions to be arrived at this evening, no invitations have been extended to purely religious associations, although very many have in their assemblies endorsed our action and forwarded letters of appreciation. (Applause.)

Councillor J. Hutcheson (Wellington) moved that Councillor G. Frost, who represented the Mayor of Wellington, take the chair. This was agreed to, and Councillor Frost presided over the gathering. He apologised for the Mayor's absence, and complimented the Federation on the action it had taken in the matter. He believed that a strong censorship had been established in other parts of the world, and New Zealand should not lag behind. In the interests of the young folk particularly, such a censorship was necessary. He was glad to see such a representative gathering assembled to debate such an important subject. (Applause.)

The secretary of the Federation (Mr. G. Girling-Butcher) read a telegram from the Mayor of Wellington (Mr. J. P. Luke), wishing the conference every success. He (the secretary) had found that the police had made a report to the Minister, but that nothing could be done without legislation.

What is Wanted.

Mr. J. J. L. Burke moved the following resolution—That this conference of local governing bodies, educational authorities, and organisations concerned with the social welfare of the people of this Dominion, whilst fully appreciating the useful and educational value of the cinematograph, is of opinion that the class of moving pictures at present exhibited in New Zealand constitutes a grave danger to the moral health and social welfare of the community, and affirms the necessity for a strict supervision by the Government of all films exhibited to the public in the picture theatres of this Dominion, and requests that an officer or board be appointed, whose duty it shall be to inspect all films before they are allowed to be exhibited, and that every film so licensed shall bear a certificate signed to that effect; and, further, that a list of all films declared