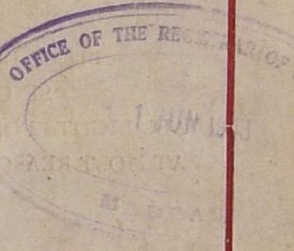


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JOURNAL
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CINE TECHNICIANS
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH INDIA
MADRAS



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JOURNAL

OF THE

CINE TECHNICIANS'

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH INDIA

Editor: A. KRISHNAN, B. A.

Vol. II

APRIL 1948

No. 1

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Woods Road, Madras 2

Between Ourselves

Dear Members,

I wish you all a very happy New Year. Let there be more productions, and let them be more organised. May God Almighty give our producers courage to break away from the bottleneck of the big artistes, and to base their work on a foundation of efficiency and team work.

It is unknown in the entire history of the films that a technician has been late or absent from his work any time. The same cannot be said of the artistes of the present day. With few exceptions, their coming is always unpredictable, their mood is unpredictable, and their work is unpredictable.

As everyone knows production is down this year by a big margin. Financiers are shy to invest money in a venture where the cost of production still keeps high, but receipts are falling.

What has made the cost of production so high? The basic raw materials have not gone up in price proportionately. Wages of the technicians and other workers have not risen unduly. Studios hiring costs went up, no doubt, but they are likely to reach normal very soon. What has gone high is the huge amounts paid to artistes, who, at the same time are not very sure when or how they will be available to any production. This created a favourable situation for the hiring studios, who were always taking more contracts than what they can fulfil, because they were sure they can always dodge the producers, because when their floor is free the artistes won't be available. It was like the saying 'when the dog is there the stone is not there, and while the stone is there the dog is not there.'

This naturally has led to enormous time for completing any one production and it is only this extended time that is responsible for the high cost of present day production.

The C. T. A. in many of their meetings had pointed out the extreme necessity for the industry to organise in such a manner that compulsion will be brought on all artistes, studios and all other persons who work on a contract basis to complete one production before starting another. No one heeded, with what result? We have more than a score of uncompleted pictures. Nearly 100 lakhs of Rupees have been sunk in this business with practically no

possibility of any return. Naturally sound financiers don't even touch this industry.

Let us look at conditions this year. We have about 20 Studios in this presidency. Some of them have got more than one Stage and more than one unit.

If we look at past averages, South India has made 22 pictures in 1943, 18 in 1944, 17 in 1945, 23 in 1946. (I am obliged to the Madras Film Diary 1948 for the figures given above.) Taking even 23, the highest figure as the quota for the coming year, it will be found that we have ample studio space and technical facilities to produce all these pictures in short time, using only daylight hours and working to a regular schedule.

It is possible with the existing facilities to bring down the cost of production considerably, provided the production side of this industry has got ability to organise themselves, and see that their highly paid staff come in time, work throughout the time, and do it efficiently.

Production cost, as in any other business, can only be brought down by greater efficiency, more output of the same quality per every man hour. This is possible to be done in this industry only if the producers will take the wholehearted co-operation of the technicians.

Looking back through the years you will find that in each year the most paying pictures has not been those which had the highest paid artistes. Most of the artistes will be found to have been either new or moderately paid feature artistes. But after each successful picture, the price of these artistes are raised sky high, the producers not caring to find out what exactly were the causes that led to the success of the picture.

Anyway it will be found that while there is a slump in production now, the technicians have in no way been responsible for it. When there were more pictures to be done, he had sleepless nights, and days trying to cover his schedule. If an artiste had to leave the place suddenly he was always willing to work extended time to help the producer, not even caring for the engagement he had made with his family. When a production had to be hurried through, the technician was the first man to put his shoulder to the wheel, and kept pushing to the last.

It is up to this industry to treat him fairly, who has sweated and toiled and 'wasted the best years of his life' trying to bolster up

a woefully disorganised business. In this connection I invite the attention of members to an article published elsewhere in this issue under the title "Quiet Please". And while it may be impossible for the technicians to organise the industry, nothing can prevent them from organising themselves in such a manner that they will not cut into each other's jobs.

Well, leaving this for the present,

How is it that none of you have found time to drop a line to me? Am I to take it that are all so busy or that you want your affairs to be strictly kept to yourself?

Please don't be so shy. Just drop a line to tell me what you are doing now, on what picture you are working, whether the production presents any new problem, how are you approaching it, or how you have solved it, whether you have got any new machine or equipment, there are so many things that members want to know of each other, that your further silence will be absolutely unpardonable.

Here is to better shooting—more days and less nights.

JAI HIND.

Yours truly,
THE EDITOR.

Facts About the Film Industry of Great Britain

EXHIBITION

Britain has approximately 4,700 kinemas with an average capacity of 900 to 1,000 seats each. There is one kinema seat for every ten persons in the population, when calculated on the pre-war national census figure. But of these 4,700 kinemas, only 2,000 are considered by the industry to be first-run houses.

The three major circuits have control of 1,063 kinemas between them. The J. Arthur Rank Organisation controls 304 kinemas through Gaumont-British and 317 cinemas through Odeon. Associated British Picture Corporation controls 442 houses.

In the London area there are about 300 first run houses, of which 200 are controlled by the three major circuits.

And the Odeon group owns or has interest in as many as 725 kinemas outside the United Kingdom.

Now what are the facts about kinema attendances?

The absolute peak during the war years was 31,000,000 admissions per week. You should note that this figure is **ADMISSIONS** and not the number of **PEOPLE** who habitually go to a kinema. During recent months kinema returns have shown that the average weekly admission rate has dropped to about 28,081,000, with a seasonal drop to 25 millions.

Last year, in September, the Government published its own analysis of kinema-going habits in the **BOARD OF TRADE JOURNAL**. These are the important points from that document:

Thirty-two per cent of the population goes to the kinema at least once a Week; but 27 per cent of British adults never visit the kinema. School children go more frequently than other sections of the community, 65 per cent of them seeing a film once a week or more. Housewives, who make up 41 per cent of the nation's population form 38 per cent of the total weekly attendance figure.

Only one-third of the film-going public attends the same kinema week in and week out, irrespective of what films are in the programme.

So much for attendances. Now what about the Rs. as. ps. of kinema-going?

The average seat price paid by film-goers, according to the Government report is 1 Re. 8 as.

The net value of the average yearly ticket sales (1,460,250,000) is approximately Rs. 150 crores, British films getting approximately Rs. 32 crores and until the AD VALOREM duty on imported films came into operation last August, Hollywood pictures drew in about Rs. 130 crores at the box-office annually. This money, of course, is absorbed in theatre operation and distribution charges before it can be ploughed back into production.

The U. S. took Rs. 26 crores out of Britain in 1947, for Hollywood pictures, compared with Rs. 10 crores.

About a quarter of the major circuit income is earned by the London area. Total circuit revenue is between a third and a half of the exhibiting industry's annual income.

During the last five years, pictures played on the Odeon circuit have shown a steady rise in receipts in-favour of British product. Average weekly taking in 1943 were Rs. 7590 for a British film and Rs. 8565 for a foreign picture. Last year British pictures averaged Rs. 10410 per week, compared with Rs. 8745 by foreign films.

But large sums of money are pouring from the Industry in the form of Entertainment Tax. This now shows an increase of more than 700 per cent over 1938. This is how the kinemas have paid out to the Treasury:

To March 1947	... Rs. 6 1/2 crores.
„ 1946	... Rs. 6 crores.
„ 1938	... Rs. 84 lakhs.

You can see from this that the 1938 rate was 16 per cent on income compared with a 40 per cent levy in 1947.

RENTING

What about the renting side of the Industry? What are the facts about the past, present and future film supply?

Britain has 40 renting companies. The Kinematograph Renters' Society has a current membership of 19 companies.

There are three major British renters, nine major U. S. renters.

All the renters offered exhibitors 628 feature films at trade shows last year, 155 being re-issues. That can be compared with 561 (89 re-issues) for 1946, 547 (101 re-issues) in 1945, and 553 (110 re-issues) in the 1944 period.

A break-down of the 1947 trade-shows indicates that there were 112 new British films, many of which were of the "featurette" type and by no means first featured and 331 U. S. features. Forty eight of the 155 re-issues were British.

At the time when the AD VALOREM duty came into operation, U. S. renters were known to have 125 films in the U. K. which had not been shown to the public. Sixty of these were classed as top features.

Looking at product availability from the Board of Trade registration figures, the totals for the last three years run like this:

	1945	1946	1947
British Features.	67	83	107
British Shorts.	157	175	195
Foreign Features.	377	355	356
Foreign shorts.	354	301	386

To the year ending March, 1947, kinemas took 20. 9 per cent British pictures from renters.

Currently, renters must handle a quota of 25 per cent long and 25 per cent short British films. Exhibitors, under the expiring Act must show 20 per cent long and 22½ per cent short British films.

The cases of exhibitors defaulting in their legal obligation^s are: 1,120 defaults in 1945, 1,149 in 1946 and 861 in 1947.

The number of films presented in this country can also be checked back through the British Board of Film Censors. The Board with a 1947 income of about Rs. 2 lakhs, at charges Rs.45/- per reel viewing fee examined 1,543 subjects (long and short) during its 1946-47 financial year.

Film stock consumption of the industry amounts approximately to 308,000,000 ft. (Thirty crores) annually, of which it is estimated 30 per cent goes to the newsreels.

PRODUCTION

British studios actually completed 59 films in 1947, 49 films in 1946, and 28 films in 1945. They completed 179 films in 1937, when 21 studios and 64 stages of 550,083 sq. ft. were available.

The Industry starts 1948 with the available feature production space of 23 studios, 67 sound stages and 586,751 sq. ft. of production space. That is an improvement of 19 sound stages and some 150,000 sq. ft. of space on the position early in 1947.

It marks the end of studio expansion until more building materials and labour are made available, except for the A. B. P. C. studio at Elstree which hopes to start up production on its four stages of 60,000 sq. ft. in the summer.

But the seven major studios in Hollywood alone possess 160 sound stages and some 2,406,000 sq. ft. of stage space. The vast Warner Brothers' plant at Burbank is almost as large as the whole British production Industry as it stands today.

British Studio control falls into four main groups:

The Rank Organisation: Seven studios, 28 sound stages and 274,300 sq. ft. of space.

The wholly independent studios: Eleven studios, 23 sound stages, 115,499 sq. ft. of space.

The studios controlled by U. S. and other foreign interests: Three studios, 11 stages and some 160,295 sq. ft. of stage space.

The Sir Alexander Korda group: Three studios, 9 available stages of 96,655 sq. ft.

But if we class only studios of more than 30,000 sq. ft. as being major feature production plants, then the 1948 resources are cut to six studios, 32 sound stages and 400,379 sq. ft.

There are now 7,054 people employed by the Studios, of which 1,852 are technicians, 3,694 constructional and 1,508 clerical and other grades. This figure does not include London office and freelance technical staffs.

The average schedule length for British productions is 14 weeks, based on the 1947 output.

Current production costs for the average type of major feature works out at about Rs. 2½ lakhs for each week the film is on the stages.

KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY,

January, 22, 1948.

Economics of the Motion Picture

By N. KRISHNASWAMY, B.A., Gemini Studios.

The potentialities of the films are manifold. Let me express how vitally important this industry is. Educating the masses, inculcating the spirit of nationalism, enriching their political aspirations, achieving communal concord and lastly reforming the Society, besides entertaining and enlightening the audience after their day's hard work. Having had their birth in this country three decades ago, this industry in India is still in its primitive stage. If we, the cine technicians, the pillars of this industry were to sleep over this, who else will take care of us? You will see for yourself that my approach to this problem is definitely that of a rational, hard-bitten realist who believes that we cannot afford to mark time and indulge in ineffectual stargazing. I am fully aware of the high hills to be climbed up to lift our heads with pride and rank ourselves with the film industry of the other nations and liquidate the economic poverty and social misery that is rampant in this industry. Many in this trade live in a chronic state of destitution, apathy and defeatism and many more, below what is regarded as the "poverty line" in the western countries. No serious minded

industrialist who studies the statistics and the present condition can escape the conviction that this industry is deteriorating in economic strength and that it is threatened with a further serious weakening if the present indifference to this trade is allowed to continue. This must be considered as one of the nation building activities, because the value of this industry in the national aspect is no little. The promotion of this industry is a great development which if vigorously pursued and persisted in, is sure to give improved conditions in and around it.

Should we not devise some methods at least to bring this industry to a high level? This industry, being as it is of national importance, if neglected by the industrialists themselves and the Government, is tantamount to national peril.

Economics plays a vital role in the development and prosperity of every industry.

Finance and Economics go hand in hand and any industry will thrive only if it is well backed by sound finance. The defects of Indian Economy, apart from the lack of proper balance, have been constantly expressed by writers on

economic subjects and are many viz :

- i. Lack of a sound banking system,
- ii. No fiscal policy,
- iii. Superficial touch with the public opinion,
- iv. Lack of a defined economic policy, and
- v. Government budgets sometimes putting obstacles to the economic development.

Many more difficulties have been mentioned by different authors but I have selected only a few of those which have some bearing with this industry. India is the second biggest consumer of raw cinematograph film, next only to U. S. A. On an average as much as 150 feature films are produced in India. The year 1946-47 has marked out from the average by not less than thirty in the number of productions. But now the depression has started. A gloomy wave has set in the atmosphere. Pessimism hangs like a pall over every branch of this industry. Worry and anxiety are largely writ over the faces of the producers and the so-called financiers. Postwar slump is mainly responsible for this catastrophe. Money is getting scarce. During the war period, the film industry, along with the other industries, boomed with the flow of capital from the purses of the war-

made millionaires. People who made quick money during the war imagining that they could amass more wealth, much quicker and easier, got into the Studio floors. Ignorant as they were about the A.B.C. of this industry, they soon saw their money melting away, with the result that a good amount of capital was locked up in reels of celluloid, which are yet to see the light of the carbon arc. Perhaps they never will!

A balanced economy is the symptom of a successful trade. As it stands to day, there is no proper circulation of capital in the Motion Picture industry. The average cost of production of an Indian Picture is four lakhs out of which nearly two lakhs goes to the artistes. In any industry the capitalist who gets his profit invests the same, at least a portion of it, to further develop the industry considering the betterment of not only himself but the industry also. Alas! The same is not the case with the artistes. They on whom a major share is spent, never for a moment reflect upon the possibilities of improving the industry economically. But for a few rightful aspirants who turn out to be producers the others go behind the curtains with their amassed wealth.

In other countries, Governments recognise the high and noble virtues of this industry

and regard it as one of the key industries. This industry pays one-third of its gross collections by way of entertainment tax which contributes a lion's share to the national revenue which also is not ploughed back into the industry. It is high time our leaders change their attitude towards films and show all considerations to foster this trade. The Provincial Governments should follow the practice common in all progressive countries, of protecting the industries within their jurisdiction as far as it lies in their power from foreign competition and of encouraging promoters by granting subsidies, contributing to share capital or guaranteeing for limited period, interest on the private capital invested. This manner of state aid to our film industry on a small scale will give a great impetus to the growth of the filmdom. The seven 'M's' according to leading economists that go a long way in a successful establishment of any industry are Management, Money, Market, Motive Power, Machinery, Men and Material. In this connection, I wish to remind you all about the recent lecture delivered in our association by Com. Venkateswara Rao who advocated the establishment of an Industrial Finance Corporation to whose capital the Government as well as the film magnates will contribute and which in its turn will finance

individual productions. I put forth to all the industrialists that the future progress depends on co-operation and co-operation alone. Where the industry takes the form of a company or partnership concern, it is expected that the partners will not make too much of each other's rights and grievances but endeavour to work in a team spirit. The outcome from an individual producer who is often haunted by a host of creditors in the Studio and outside it, day in and day out cannot be expected to be a success. Such producers, if they join together to strengthen their resources they can surely bring about good productions. But, will they realise this? I answer they have to. If not, they have to quit. I suggest bodies of industrialists because I am conscious that the day of the private industrialist is gone and because groups can accept the implications and responsibilities of planned industrialisation to better effect. Again, it should be remembered that where there is a local competition, continued success could be assured by a constant effort to improve the quality, increase the quantity and reduce costs of production.

RESEARCH LABORATORY

Here I wish to stress on the imminent and imperative need for a speedy establishment of a film research laboratory under

the auspices of our C. T. A. of South India.

I shudder at the thought that the second biggest consumer next only to U. S. A., our India, with all its mineral wealth and intelligence, has entirely to depend upon foreign countries for this industry's raw materials. For this reason nearly Sixty lakhs of Rupees are flowing to swell the bags of the foreign merchants. We should put a stop to this foreign exploitation. Sir M. Viswesvaraya in his 'Planned Economy for India' states that India given the necessary freedom, will be able to produce manufactured goods for export. This is evident from the fact that during the war, when there was little or no competition from Europe she sent out more manufactured articles than either before or after the war. Indians should make India self sufficient and at a later stage try to meet the demands of the other Asian countries also. As far as film production is concerned, India tops the list in this continent. In the manufacture of films too India should take up the lead.

We won't be wrong in expecting the Government's extended hand of help. The exemplary manner in which they are clearing the numerous hurdles that are lying in their path makes us feel certain that they will very soon realise the economic value and the national importance of such a laboratory

when we put our hands to the wheel of progress. Understanding as we do, the difficulties of our Government in taking the initiative to start such a laboratory it must be considered as our rightful duty and privilege to formulate methods and means for the establishment of this noble venture. The technicians can with pride look back at the growth of this industry and feel that their contribution to its growth is in no small a measure. The right motto of our association 'Knowledge is power' does clearly indicate that we are not to rest satisfied with the present knowledge we possess. We, the technicians must aspire more and more. The technicians must climb this ladder still further.

Hence with the following aims and objects a laboratory should be started:

- i. To conduct speedy research on the manufacture of films for photographic purposes;
- ii. To design a plant for the manufacture of films on a large scale;
- iii. To improve the technicalities of this industry;
- iv. To arrange to manufacture all machinery and chemicals needed for the Motion Picture Industry; and
- v. To bring about technicolour film manufacture and

production in India at an early date.

This project will involve an expenditure of a huge amount and I am aware that the C. T. A., with its present small finances cannot afford to undertake this without external help. As such, I suggest that donations from philanthropic persons be collected after starting of this laboratory and

approach to Government be made for substantial subsidies. This laboratory has to be started without further loss of time with a special board or committee selected for this purpose with a competent executive composed of men of integrity, capacity and initiative—under the guidance of a trusted industrial leader as the Chairman.

“ QUIET PLEASE ”

It's nearly four o'clock in the morning. Shooting on the third stage of the big studios at Shepherd's Bush is still going on. The first call was for 8 a.m. and since then until 9 p.m. the studio staff has been hanging about, waiting for the Director to "feel like shooting", and for a script conference called at the last moment. At last, at nine o'clock shooting started.

"Quiet please; quiet for take". There's a rasping edge, tiredness and bad temper in the Assistant Director's voice. Wearily the "sparks" switch on the lights including a couple of bending arcs; the sound-recordist in his stuffy monitor-room stifles a yawn which nearly cracks his jaw; the camera assistants force themselves to be alert in spite of splitting headaches and tired eyes; the chief camera-man hardly sees the scene he is about

to shoot—his wife is ill and this is the third time this week that he will be home in the early hours of the morning; the continuity girl is on the verge of tears; the actors droop—will this final effort release them from the awful monotony and weariness of doing their stuff "just once more"? Only the director is oblivious of all this exhaustion and strung-up nerves. He is slumped in his chair, gnawing his fingers, a look of absorbed determination on his face. He will get this shot perfect or die, even if it means going on till daylight. His car is waiting outside the studio, ready to take him home at whatever time he likes. He forgets the technicians and studio staff—humbler folk, and yet folk whose work he can't possibly do without in making his masterpiece—who must somehow find transport in a cold and foggy winter's

dawn, only to swallow a bite of warmed up food and fall into bed, ready for an early start to answer the studio call for eight o'clock next morning.

"The Bride Forgets", Scene 263, Take 11. The clapperboy claps his clapperboard, the actors act, the lights blaze down mercilessly, the camera turns, the sound recordist records, the continuity girl makes her notes, the director gnaws his fingers..... "Cut!" he suddenly yells. Everything stops; everyone waits anxiously. "Okay"; he turns to the Assistant Director. "Okay boys, wrap it up," shouts the Assistant Director to the floor. Everyone breathes again. Now at last they can go home and call it a day.

That was a picture of what things were like in British Studios around 1933. The industry was hopelessly disorganised. Wages were all over the place; some studios paid

well; others badly. Hours weren't fixed and there was no overtime. Sometimes as many as 70 hours were worked a week, and if anyone objected the Producer shrugged his shoulders and said that in the interests of Art shooting must go on till the Director said stop. And if anyone didn't like it he could go and find a job elsewhere. No satisfaction for tired and overworked men. Moreover foreign technicians and directors were able to come in and take the best jobs at the highest salaries. There was no protection at all for people at home.

Economically Britain was just emerging from the worst slump in her history. Trained and skilled men of every trade and profession were thrown out of work and had to live on the "Dole" or accept wretchedly paid work at any terms employers liked to impose. There was a sense of insecurity in the air; and

to have directors and cameramen and sound recordists and laboratory assistants imported from Europe and Hollywood at high wages was hard to swallow. The reason for this was that the British Film Industry had had a hard knock during the first World War and had lost its pre-eminence. It was ahead of Hollywood before 1914—a fact few people now remember. But production had ceased during war and America had forged ahead; and somehow the industries of Central Europe, of Germany and France and Sweden had organised themselves more quickly when the war ended than had Britain.

Here we had slowly built up a small unambitious industry, making second class features for the home market only. It was not until Alexander Korda came from Hungary that British pictures began to make the grade in a world sense and not a

purely local one. The big Denham Studios were built and Korda, having got British capital to back him, started making films in a big way. Films like "The Private Life of Henry VIII" with imported technicians and creative staff to help him were made. Other film companies, Gaumont British, British Lion, Gainsborough, B. I. P. followed suit. Capital, less shy after Korda's success, backed the infant industry, and thought in terms of "supers", aiming at a world market and costing £150,000 and more instead of "quota quickies" as the cheaper made British films which cost about £5,000 were called.

But the Producers were always nervous, of not making the big returns the capitalists expected, and rather than risk employing unknown British technicians, went for big names from overseas. They also extracted the last ounce of work and

energy from their British employees. The British cinema got a bad name for insecurity of employment and exploitation and only keenness on their craft kept many a cameraman and editor and recordist in the industry. It was commonplace these days to find a cameraman suffering from stomach ulcers and worry. And film-wives felt as neglected and ill-used as doctors' wives, and with reason.

But home talent was seeing things. In the lunch-hour and in breaks between rehearsals and takes, technicians and electricians and carpenters were talking revolution. "Sparks" and "Chippies" were all right. They had Unions they could belong to, the electricians, "the Electrical Trades Union" and carpenters and plasterers "the National Association of Theatrical Employees," now called the N. A. T. K. E.—National Association of Theatrical and Kinematograph Emplo-

yees. But the cameramen and editors and recordists and cutters couldn't join these Unions. There was nothing in existence for them. They would have to form their own.

Two cameramen and a sound recordist of Shepherd's Bush Studios were the pioneers. The recordist's idea was to find an outside organiser, someone who would have experience of such things and the time and opportunity to go round to other studios and contact its technicians. A one-studio Association would be useless; Standardisation of wages and hours, and protection of the industry as a whole was what they aimed at eventually.

He found this man by accident as he was strolling round the Shepherd's Bush market one day. The other instigators in the plot were delighted to hear that they had someone to organise their union—or whatever it was to be—for them. Now

they sat back and breathed with relief.

At the back of a cafe in the Shepherd's Bush area you might have seen a small placard bearing simply these letters—A.S.W. No explanation was given, so apparently none was needed. But if you were a technician and you knew of the mysterious goings on at Gaumont British Studios, you entered the place and with a demand for a large coffee, jerked your head towards the mysterious notice, jerked half a crown out of your pocket and were jerked round to the back of the shop where the proprietor entered your name and address in a note book and your half crown in an account book. You were thus an elected and fully paid-up member of the "Association of Studio Workers." Later this name was changed to 'A. C. T.'—Association of Cine Technicians.

At first there was much enthusiasm and over-

optimism. People thought they only had to pay their dues and their wagepackets would be doubled over night. Doubters refused to join and the Association was only half-supported. It wasn't ready to negotiate with management immediately and its over-sanguine supporters, seeing the same old bad conditions, lost interest and withdrew their support. This was a difficult time but the Organiser and his original supporters went on quietly drawing up rules, drawing up a working policy, and getting new members of real and not a fleeting keenness to add their ideas and moral support. People from other studios joined and soon there was a solid body of energetic members. The most difficult customers to bring into the fold were the freelance editors, cutters and cameramen from Wardour St., but they came in at last. In May 1933 the first General Meeting was held at

which Officers were elected.

Now the managements got uneasy. They saw a threat to their old easy-going ways of exploiting the technician. They began to boycott A. C. T. members. At one studio the Producer in charge delivered an ultimatum and told technicians that he gave them one hour in which to decide whether to leave A. C. T. or the studio. Other studios tried subtler methods of combating the growing Union influence, but without success. Fortunately there were certain stalwart supporters who risked being thrown out of work and boycotted by the studios for their loyalty to the Association. Some being first-rate technicians were indispensable to the producers, so their action only strengthened the A. C. T. without ruining their careers.

At this time there was an internal split on the important issue of whether A. C. T. should

be a professional guild, bent on raising the status of the technician by a system of grading according to age, experience and ability, by running lectures and film shows, by gaining the confidence of studios and Govt. departments, by running an employment agency... or whether it should be a Trade Union, registered as such and able to negotiate on recognised terms with managements. Violent arguments went on, but at last it was realised by most members that only a Union could be competent to improve wages and conditions. So at last, in 1938, A. C. T. was registered as a Trades Union, affiliated to the T. U. C.

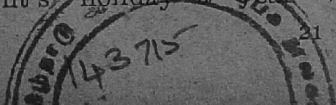
Now it went ahead. It's first agreement—the Laboratory Agreement—was negotiated in 1939. The laboratory staff had been worst treated in the industry, so A. C. T. tackled their problem first. After another four years' harder work the first

General Agreement was negotiated in 1943, covering all film technicians. It has recently been superseded by a new one.

Now the picture has changed. By the terms of this agreement, technicians work a 47 hour week. That means $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours' work on week days, $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours on Saturdays and no work on Sundays. Any time worked after this is paid at over-time rates, and time after midnight, Sundays and Bank Holidays are paid at double time rates. So the cameraman or editor who suddenly has to work 70 hour week because of a rush, is well compensated for his efforts and fatigue.

Standard minimum wages have been agreed upon, and a cost-of-living bonus for lower grade workers based on the cost-of-living index for the day. A week's notice on either side—management or employee—is also laid down and a fortnight's holiday a year

with pay. And very important indeed, provision for the payment of wages during sickness or accident leave. A man or woman who has been employed between three and six months in one studio must get one week on full pay and one on half pay by producing a doctor's certificate. If he has been employed for six to twelve months consecutively in one studio he is entitled to two week's full pay and two on half pay, and if he has worked for twelve months for the same employer he gets four weeks on full pay and four on half pay in one calendar year. The agreement also provided for insurance by the employer for any employee engaged on dangerous work, which includes flying. So you see, film technicians have some measure of security now, thanks to their own efforts and energy in organising themselves and fighting for what they wanted.



In some respects A. C. T. is an extraordinary union, its members range from the extremes of salary grades of £ 2.10 a week to £ 150 a week! and its higher paid members have been among its most loyal supporters and have always fought to raise the standards of the lower paid technicians. They too support the Union's right to strike and pay into its strike fund. And so do Producers who are still members of A. C. T. yet who have become employers themselves. As long as their technical status is confirmed they remain members of A. C. T. in company with their employees. Their position becomes one of divided responsibility both to their staff and to their status of employers.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting the Association of Cine Technicians of India and found that that the same situation had arisen there. Technicians have be-

come Producers and employers, and yet remain active members of their Association. They too, are devoted to the task of raising the status and improving wages and conditions of their fellow technicians, who in many cases are their own employees!

You may ask perhaps whether studio managements other than in these special cases, resent A. C. T. and try to curtail its power and activities as they did in the beginning. And are these higher wages and overtime rates crippling the industry?

The answer in both cases is no. Producers-employers have told me that they prefer to deal with a recognised and responsible body than with individuals. The industry is not being crippled financially and the greater stabilisation of labour and employment to-day, due to improvements won by A.C.T. is more economical than constant change

of personnel. Moreover, producers go to A. C. T.'s employment register for staff and are glad of their recommendation.

But here, perhaps is another question. Is A. C. T. growing too dictatorial as Trades Unions have a way of doing when they become almost 100 per cent in membership and work a closed shop?

Internally this possibility is taken care of to a large extent by the fact that there are only three permanent paid officials. The other officers hold their offices voluntarily and are constantly coming up for re-election. The Governing Body of the General Council is a rank and file body and not controlled by a few powerful Union officials. Nevertheless some members are complaining that A. C. T. is going outside its terms of workers on the fringes of the film business to increase its power. They also complain that they are not always in agree-

ment with A. C. T. policy but are forced by majority rule to conform. This criticism is healthy, showing that members can air their views freely.

But a still more vital question is whether A. C. T. has become too dictatorial with regard to employers? Does it foment strikes for irresponsible reasons? We are seeing something of the same sort happening in the United States to-day. Any human organisation is subject to this danger but so far A. C. T. has shown itself in the main to be a highly responsible body, ready to meet the Producers' point of view and to base its demands on the general needs of the film industry. It recognises that its power must be used to share in the responsibility of building up and preserving the stability of a prosperous industry. Only then will its members be certain of security of employment and opportunities of using their talents to the full.

Finally, A. C. T. has become a valuable factor in determining film policy. Recently it passed a strong resolution condemning the American practice of buying up and destroying foreign films, after making a new version themselves. Such a resolution may not be able to stop this practice, but it is an expression of organised and informed public opinion.

During the war A.C.T. issued policy documents and through the Joint Works Committees formed of representatives of the three Unions who work side by side in each studio, it advised on how to improve and increase production. Works Committees based on the model first set up in Pinewood Studios were in operation in other industries during

the war and greatly speeded up production. The Government, recognising their value, recommended they should be set up everywhere.

A.C.T. has an apprenticeship scheme under way and does not oppose foreign students who want to come to British studios for technical training. It has managed to stop the indiscriminate employment of foreign technicians, but it does recognise the value of allowing them to work in British studios in certain cases, when their specialised knowledge, experience and talent are likely to enrich the industry generally.

B. B. C. Talk by Winifred Holmes. Reprinted from the "Technician." May-1947.

“ABOLISH THE FILM CENSOR”

The Government of India are shortly going to establish an Official Central Film Censoring Authority. This is certainly going to add one more complication to the already complicated Indian Film Industry.

The Indian Films have suffered long under the vagaries of the Film Censor. They were claiming relief from it. And now what happens? A central muzzling authority is going to be created.

The censorship system was established during the days of British Bureacracy to prevent anti-imperialistic films from being produced or shown. But now in a free India, why such a muzzling? Are our present Government afraid of impartial criticism? Otherwise, why this muzzling of the young giant, who has so long been chained up that he is only now feeling the strength of his sinews. Why not allow him time to grow?

In our country we have three strong mass communication mediums:

- (1) The Radio, entirely Government controlled, are their own censors, with the result it acts as His Master's Voice of whatever Government happens to be in power at the time. Our own Prime Minister who wants the muzzling of the film wants the Radio to be released from its official bondage. Why then look with a different eye on the Film?
- (2) The Press—largely in the hands of capitalistic bureacracy, has a well organized association, which was able, to make even the foreign Government bow to its wishes of not pre-censoring news, even during war time. They want the discretion of selection to be in their own hands. They raise hell if censorship is mentioned anywhere within hearing distance of them.
- (3) The Film - it is no man's property, and everybody's plaything, and everybody feels they can do anything they like with it.

Centralising authority is bad in anything, especially in judging products of art and self-expression. If the Government take upon themselves to be custodians of the public morals, they can lay down a code, and whoever breaks it, can be punished.

There can be a central legislative authority, but if it is also made the administrative authority, woe to the producers concerned. Why then talk of separating the judiciary in other walks of life?

The law can state what will offend public taste.

If the public agrees, they can raise the point before a tribunal. And there should always be a chance for appeal.

The film is taking a democratic public vote everyday. It is not like the politician who once he gets into his seat, can change his coat and forget who voted him in and for what. The film has to prove itself everyday, every night before the bar of public opinion. If it either offends or irritates, the public stop away from it. What greater judge of public morals can be than public opinion itself.

I think it is high time the entire industry organised itself and became vocal against the pre-censorship that has been imposed upon it and is trying to be strengthened now.

Let the Government appoint tribunals in all important centres. If any important public body brings a representation to them that such and such a film is offending public taste, or ruining public morals by such and such lapses, let the tribunal call for that particular film, and in the light of the law which has been laid down, judge whether the film is guilty of such specified charges or not, and if guilty, suggest such emendations as are necessary.

This is the logical method that should be adopted.

All pre-censoring of films should be stopped.

The industry should organise itself to that end. Otherwise it will find itself again the slave of red tape and bureaucracy.

And to the Madrasese especially, the red tape will be too far off for him to do anything about it.

—'Ramnoth'

"At a time in contemporary history when freedom of expression is being jeopardized in many parts of the world, I want the film industry to know that the freedom of the screen is an important attribute of our democratic system and must be firmly protected."

—Harry S. Truman

President of the United States of America.

Question for The Month

We are not publishing any answers for this month, since we have not received any. What is it due to? Apathy, ignorance, or is it because you do not want your knowledge to be shared by others? Come on. Buck up. Free India cannot afford to have any of these things. So, here is a question for this month.

"If a character is looking left to right in a shot, should the succeeding follow shot which shows what the character is looking at, pan from left to right, or from right to left? (left and right always meaning left and right of the cameraman when he is facing the scene and left and right of the audience, when they are facing the screen.)"

Report from the Discussion Group

FIRST MEETING HELD ON 28-3-48

Discussion started with the President asking whether any of the members present had seen "The Last of the Redmen" which was advertised as having been taken on some new colour process. Since none of the members present had seen it, discussion on same was postponed to a later date.

This led the members to a discussion of the possibilities of "Kodachrome" and the possibilities of its being used for feature production, and whether Kodachrome 16 could not be blown up to 35 mm. It was found out that though there were no theoretical difficulties standing in the way of the same, practical considerations, mostly of the manufacturers stood in the way of more widespread use of colour. The members also expressed an opinion that the manufacturers could give them more enlightenment on these problems and what exactly were the difficulties standing in the way of a more general use of colour films. The talk next shifted on to a discussion of the relative grain size of 16 mm. and 35 mm. stock, and whether by blowing up from a smaller size, the graininess will not be increased. It was found out, that as far as black and white film is concerned, if the original 16

mm. stock had been developed to a direct positive which used the residual emulsion to form the positive picture, the grain was sufficiently fine to stand enlargement, and it was also remarked that a 16 mm. blown to 35 mm. and completely machine-processed would show much finer grain than the regular 35 mm negative - positive, as processed by our local rack and tank laboratories. Satisfaction was expressed by many members that South India was also getting a few machines, and the studios who had fixed up automatic machines were congratulated on their progressive outlook.

Discussion next centred round certain new releases, and it was brought to the notice of the house that a certain picture had to be taken away after the very first show. Members expressed the opinion that even such pictures should be projected by the Association so that they can try to find out why such pictures failed to click.

This led members to discuss another picture which had not fared so well at the box office. Some members suggested that it was due to the story, while some others equally refuted the suggestion, saying the story was

a very powerful one, and had proved itself very popular on the stage. Many suggested that the story had not been properly understood by the audience, and a few were of the opinion that the dialogues were not quite clear and intelligible, partly due to the language and partly due to taking many important dialogues in long shots, which might not have provided for proper microphone placement.

This led to a discussion of stories suited for general acceptance and the president remarked that straight-line, single thread stories where the objective is clearly stated in the beginning and the plot provides the obstacles, crises, climaxes in the fulfilment of the objective. He also remarked that to be good was the greatest ambition of the largest number of people, and as such stories of persons who faced difficulties in sticking to a principle, whether of being completely truthful, as in the case of Harischandra, or completely dutiful as in the case of Rama, appealed to the largest number of people. Next to that to be happy in life with the woman whom you loved seemed to have the greatest attraction,

and adventure romantic stories stood a close second in popular stories. Stories with a direct objective could also be written based on contemporary characters, and he was of opinion that they will be equally popular. In the picture under discussion, the story had two threads, which made it rather difficult to understand, and which also created difficulties in the telling of it. A member opined that the "Best Years of Our Lives" which was presently running in one of the local theatres, had also a story of that type, and still it was popular and had been acclaimed as the best picture of the year. The President was of the opinion that it was a story of many characters, not many threads, and the problem for the three main characters were the same, getting adjusted and absorbed into normal life. It was suggested that members might see the picture and it may be taken up for discussion at the next meeting.

There was a fairly good gathering and in view of the informative and instructive nature of the discussions, the Secretaries expect a larger attendance at the coming meetings.

Sound Effects for Recordings

(By Ed Ludes, Sound Engineer, National Broadcasting Corporation)

SOUND EFFECTS added to your recordings fill in the thin spots in dialogue and action sequences and pep up the listening interest.

Suppose, for example, you wish to reproduce the noise of a *thunderstorm*, an *explosion*, or the *firing of big guns*. It's simple.

Pour a teaspoonful of BB shot into a toy balloon, blow it up, and then shake. Talking into a short length of hose sounds exactly like a voice from the depths of a well or cave, or speech coming through the engine-room intercommunications system used on board ships. Talking across the open mouth of a water tumbler gives a good imitation of a voice from the end of a telephone. Put a straw in a glass of water and blow gently and you have the sound of water boiling. To make rain, pour salt on a piece of tissue paper held so that salt runs over the surface. A man's hatbox and a package of BB shot are the only items needed to create the pounding of surf upon a beach. Empty the shot into hatbox and tilt it slowly from side to side.

The sound of bells, chimes and gongs is readily reproduced.

Hold a large metal fruit bowl by supporting it with a drumstick, a rubber-faced mallet, or a small metal hammer, any number of tones such as fire and church bells, a chime clock, and cow and locomotive bells can be reproduced.

Two old-style doorbells of the type that will ring as long as the switch button is held down, plus a dry cell attached to a wooden base will give a number of effects for your recordings. Each bell must be arranged so that the clapper of one of the bells will strike both gongs. You'll need this to simulate a telephone ringing, as one bell will not give the correct sound. To portray a rivetting machine, dampen the bell by putting your hand on it. A buzzer sound is made by removing the gong or bending the striker arm slightly so that it does not touch the gong.

For certain comedy sound effects, the studios use what they call a "twang" box, a bow strung with heavy fishline. Hardwood pins supported on cords strung in a square wooden frame make the sound of marching feet when you hold the device in both hands and "walk" it across a table top. It

is raised and lowered at regular intervals as it is walked along. For the sound of the villain stabbing the hero, that is, in effect, the sound-effects man has merely to plunge a knife into a potato placed near the mike.

Many effects, such as the opening of doors and desk drawers or starting a car, are captured by simply holding the microphone close to the actual operation. The sounds made by insects, birds, dogs and chickens are recorded in the same way. The opening of an envelope is 'pictured' in sound by tearing of paper close to the mike.

Twisting the ends of two tin-cans together gives good imitation of opening a safe. Machine noises and the clatter of gears can be produced for entertainment purposes by turning an egg beater. Let the blades beat in a pan of water and you have a speeding motorboat. By striking the bottom of a pan with the revolving blades you have a broken-down jalopy struggling along. An electric sewing machine or the kitchen-mixer motor in operation will sound like an elevator going up or down. Push a roller skate along a board and stop it suddenly against a metal cleat.

This is the opening and shutting of an elevator door.

The swish of a tennis racket past the mike will record like the swing of a golf club. Let the water from a faucet splash into a pan, and you have a waterfall. For top comedy effects, fill a metal pan with scraps of metal, pipe, bottle caps and washers, grasp this "cras tub" firmly and shake vigorously. Squirt water from a Seltzer bottle into an empty pail the stream hitting the side of the pail and you have the sound of someone milking a cow. Use the two halves of a coconut shell to imitate the 'clap' of a horse's hoofs. Crumple cellophane in the hands to get the crackle of a camp fire. Fill a bag with cornstarch, then press alternately on the bag with the thumbs and you get the sound of foot-steps in snow. A bundle of bamboo splints twisted together gives the sound of a forest fire. For the sound of a steam locomotive cover the open top of a wooden-box with light sheet metal in which rows of holes have been punched with a nail. Using a bundle of wires taped together brush over the perforations. With a little practice you can simulate the sound of a starting or running locomotive realistically enough to deceive even a practiced ear.

C. T. A. LIBRARY

At a meeting of the Executive Committee held on 29-2-48 the following bye-laws have been adopted to regulate the lending out of books from the Library.

The Library shall be open during the office hours (from 2 P.M. to 8 P. M.) on all days except public holidays. The books and periodicals can be consulted within the office premises by all members. Persons consulting books from the library shall sign on the register kept for the purpose. Readers shall not make any mark in the books and periodicals.

All members can borrow books, provided :—

1. The member deposits Rs. 5/- with the office (which will be returned after a week's notice by the depositor if he wants to withdraw from borrowing and if no library books are with him.)

2. Each member can borrow one book or one bound volume of a periodical at any one time.

3. Each member can retain the book or periodical with him for not more than a fortnight. After that period an amount of one anna per day will be levied.

4. No one should sub-lend the borrowed books.

5. Those books or periodicals which are difficult to replace shall not be lent out.

6. Books or periodicals can be renewed for a further period of one week provided :—

(a) The renewal application reaches the Librarian not less than two days before the book is due,

(b) No other member has applied for the book or periodical, in the meantime, and

(c) Not more than three consecutive renewals are allowed for the same book.

7. The Librarian may refuse under special circumstances any application for borrowing without assigning any reason.

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