



The Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great
Britain and Ireland, Limited.

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Secretary: W. GAVAZZI KING. Telephone: CITY 4452.

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1914.

In presenting the Second Annual Report of the Association, your Committee has again to congratulate the members upon a further increase of membership. Five hundred and fifty additional members have been enrolled during the past year, whilst very few of those who joined in the previous year have failed to renew, the only instances being those of theatres closed or transferred.

**Progress
of the
Association.**

Excellent as your Committee deem this result to be, it is confident that a much larger increase could have been obtained if the present members used their personal influence with Exhibitors who are not at present enrolled. If every present member would only undertake to secure one additional Exhibitor as a member, the membership could at once be doubled. Not only has there been a steady growth in the membership, but the loyalty and enthusiasm of the members has been a most satisfactory feature. In the past year your Association has not only increased in numbers but in influence and authority. There has not been wanting marked evidence of an impressive character that your Association is recognised as a power both in Parliamentary and Local Government Departments. Official communications are now regularly received, and your Association is consulted on important matters affecting the Trade. In other spheres the influence of your Association is also freely recognised. This important development should bring home to every Exhibitor the necessity of being linked up with a national organisation which commands the consideration and respect of those with whom he has to deal regularly in the course of his business.

**District
Branches.**

The development of your Association, however, in its organisation has been most marked during the year now being reported upon. District Branches had been formed in the previous year for Lancashire and District under the title of the Northern Central District; for Northumberland and District under the title of the Northern District; the Midland District had been re-formed under the title of the Birmingham and Midland District; the Glasgow local Association had been absorbed under the title of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch; the Liverpool local Association had been absorbed under the title of the Liverpool and District Branch, and Branches had been formed for Yorkshire and for Edinburgh and the East of Scotland. During the year of this report, a Branch has been formed

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for Ireland with headquarters at Dublin; others for North Staffordshire, for Bristol and the West of England, for Dundee and the North of Scotland, for Middlesex, and for South Wales and District. Arrangements are in progress for the formation of a Branch for North Wales, another for the Home Counties, and for Devon and Cornwall. Altogether there are fifteen branches formed and three projected. It may be necessary to form sub-districts within the areas already adopted by the Branches. Those Branches, your Committee is pleased to report, work in complete harmony with the Central; they most loyally co-operate to carry out the decisions of the General Council. Your Committee desires to record its deep sense of gratitude to the Officers and Committees of the Branches for their zealous work and cordial co-operation. Where all are working so well it might be deemed invidious to select any one District for special mention, but an exception must be made with respect to Yorkshire. Being the last District to be formed prior to the previous annual meeting, the very large membership it has secured, its vitality, and the vigour it has displayed in working for its members' interests, justifies your Committee in holding it up to other Districts as an example to be followed. Your Committee hopes to be able in future reports to chronicle a vast expansion in the various Districts. Upon each Chairman and Secretary of each Branch Association very much depends. The time of these gentlemen must be spent lavishly upon the work if the Branch is to succeed in getting all the Exhibitors in their Districts upon the membership roll.

Joint Agreement.

When your Committee last reported, protracted negotiations had been proceeding with respect to a proposed agreement between the three branches of the trade, the effects of which would have been far-reaching. It will be remembered that in consequence of the Exhibitors' emphatic protest made at the Waldorf Hotel against an agreement which had been entered into between the Manufacturers and Renters, the latter Associations postponed ratification and suspended action until your Committee had in joint conference agreed to all the clauses in the proposed agreement. After meetings which extended over a month, the proposed agreement was entirely abandoned by the Manufacturers and Renters, the alterations insisted upon by your representatives being considered fatal to the objects for which the agreement was devised. In view of the cordial relations which now subsist between all three Associations, and the good feeling which it is desired to maintain and encourage, and of which your Committee has had ample evidences of a convincing character, it is not desirable in this Report to further advert to this matter beyond emphasising in the strongest manner the enormous value to Exhibitors of an Association which can so strongly maintain their interests. The members of your Committee gave largely of their time and devoted the keenest and most determined attention to this matter in order to prevent the interests of Exhibitors being imperilled, and the success which attended their efforts should be the best possible proof that your Association is a live organisation which the Exhibitor cannot afford to be without. A testimony of gratitude and appreciation may fittingly be recorded here to those Manufacturers and Renters who assisted the Association in its efforts.

The Open Market.

Notwithstanding the single inroad which has been made upon the perfectly open market, it has to be recorded with profound satisfaction that the open market has been well maintained, and your Committee does not view with apprehension the growth of the business in the Exclusive as being calculated to effect any permanent change in conditions affecting the free movement in films. Representations have from time to time been made to your Committee upon the subject of the Exclusive, and the matter has had the consideration of your Committee and of the General Council, but the inevitable permutations in a young industry are so great that it has been deemed wisest to await further developments before taking further action.

Film Selection.

Your Committee has until recently issued each month "The Cinematograph Exhibitor's Journal." For some time past it has been under consideration to issue the Journal weekly, or to appoint one of the existing trade papers the official organ of the Association. In connection with your Journal there has been issued each week, and posted to each member, a selection of the best films for specified release dates. This selection, which has met with great appreciation, is carefully prepared by your Editor Secretary from the reports of five viewers. It is capable of further extension, and this matter is having the earnest consideration of a Special Sub-Committee.

Censor's Certificate Free.

By arrangement with the British Board of Film Censors, members of your Association will in future be able to obtain Censor Certificates—the cost of which is 5/- per annum—from your Committee without charge. It is hoped that members will extensively avail themselves of this new concession. The establishment of a film censorship by the Trade has already had an enormously valuable influence; the Home Secretary, the Under Secretary for the Home Department and many important and influential authorities have congratulated the Trade upon taking this step. From the outset this policy had the support of your Committee, and it has three representatives upon the Management Committee.

General Advice.

There are countless ways in which your Association has proved of unique advantage to its members. Your Secretary is daily appealed to for advice of every description, and no pains are too great on his part, and upon the part of your Committee, to see that such advice is sound and reliable.

Legal Help.

In the Legal Department your Association has been of especial assistance. Over forty cases have been brought before your Committee, and wherever such cases have involved a principle of importance to Exhibitors, advice and legal assistance have been freely given. The financial advantage reaped by members has represented some hundreds of pounds, and decisions have been secured in a number of cases which will prove invaluable not only to members, but your Committee must regretfully admit, to exhibitors who are not members. This should be the strongest reason for members of the Association taking especial trouble to bring exhibitors at present outside the organisation into the fold. Those exhibitors who are supporting the

Association by their membership should see to it, your Committee considers, that others who will benefit by their action, are brought into line.

It may be interesting to refer to one or two cases taken up by your Committee:—

Blackburn and Eteson v. Gaumont Company. Decision that irrespective of any clause in a contract, films must be reasonably fit. No custom of the trade obliging hirers to examine and test films before using. Damages £10 and costs awarded to member.

W. H. Lancaster, Alhambra Theatre, Co., Darlington. Prosecution for showing "Sapho" film. Bench found film was not objectionable. Case dismissed.

Imperial Picture House Co. v. Midland Railway Co. Films delayed in transit. Company paid damages £10 and costs.

Clayton and Notts Magistrates. Mr. Clayton held music and dancing license which prohibited music on Sundays, Christmas Days and Good Fridays. Prosecuted for music on Christmas Day. Bench held that music was subsidiary to pictures and dismissed that case and another.

Copyright Music Contract. In its previous report your Committee referred to the contract entered into with the "Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique." Members' fees to the "Société" now amount to nearly £700, but there are still a number of members who have not yet taken up licenses with the "Société." Mr. P. Sarpy, the Agent-General, has now taken three cases into court, in two instances the defendants being members of your Association. In one case the damages and costs total the sum of £70, and in another £65, whilst in the third case, in which the Exhibitor is not a member, the costs and damages amount to £61. It will be noted that in each of the cases cited, had your Committee's advice been taken and the warnings issued to all Exhibitors had attention, those large sums would have been saved. The amounts expended uselessly would have paid not only copyright music fees but the subscription to your Association for thirty years. Complications have arisen in connection with the registration of a new organisation called the "Protection Rights Society, Limited," which has been established to deal with English music, and your Committee is now negotiating this matter and will report to you later. The action of your Committee in making its contract with Mr. P. Sarpy's Society has been amply justified as a piece of wise statesmanship.

Electric Current. In connection with the prices charged for electric current, your Committee has taken Counsel's opinion, and has been advised that only power rates should be charged for Generators and for the projector arc. It may be later necessary to enter into litigation to compel those supplying electric current to reduce their charges. In the meantime, however, a table has been prepared showing the rates charged in different parts of the country, and your District Branches have taken the matter up with Power Companies and Local Authorities, in some cases with conspicuous success, the Edinburgh and East of Scotland Branch having secured a reduction of one penny per unit. This, it will be realised, means to the Edinburgh Exhibitors a saving of many hundreds of pounds, and should appeal to those Exhibitors who require to see a financial advantage before adventuring a single guinea per annum.

Sunday Opening. In your Committee's previous Report reference was made to the work done in connection with maintaining Sunday Opening in London, and to the condition of affairs with respect to Middlesex. Since that Report a large number of Middlesex Exhibitors have joined your Association, and a Branch has been formed. The Sunday Opening Question has passed through many phases. Notwithstanding that deputations had waited upon the Middlesex County Council and an electoral campaign had been carried through, that body decided to endorse a condition upon the licenses requiring cinemas to close. That action was, in the opinion of legal advisers, *ultra vires*, powers having been delegated to the Watch Committee. Your Middlesex Branch thereupon advised its members to open irrespective of the condition illegally endorsed upon their licenses, and for some months past fifty theatres have continued open on Sunday. There seems a possibility of the M.C.C. resorting to local option at the time of making this report.

From many districts throughout the country there comes strong evidence that the demand for Sunday opening is steadily growing, whilst on the other hand opponents are organising and have already been successful in getting cinemas closed in places where it had hitherto been permitted. Your Committee realises that some national action will be needed, but until there are a larger number of Exhibitors enrolled, your Association should not be called upon to pluck the chestnuts from the fire for those Exhibitors who continue to withhold both financial and other assistance.

Licenses and Regulations. The question which has loomed most largely in the councils of your Committee has been that of the action of Magistrates and Local Authorities in imposing upon Exhibitors most unwarrantable, unjust, and harassing restrictions. In many parts of the country Magistrates and Local Authorities, taking refuge behind the power they wield through being in the position of withholding licenses, have been making all kinds of unreasonable demands. Exhibitors have been terrorised in numberless cases into making expensive alterations calculated in many instances to make serious inroads into profits, only to find that their acquiescence merely whetted the appetite for further and worse demands. This has been particularly the case in the Northern Central District. It will be remembered that your Committee, acting upon the decision of your General Council, and after interviewing the Home Secretary, decided to challenge the power of the Liverpool Magistrates to make certain of the regulations they have imposed upon Exhibitors. Expensive proceedings were inaugurated, and the Liverpool Magistrates agreed to state a case in order that their powers might be tested by the Higher Courts. When the case came before the Divisional Court, however, the Liverpool Magistrates successfully pleaded that they had no legal power to state the case they had already stated, having acted upon delegated authority, and not having sat in a judicial capacity. Your Committee, having been further advised, has decided to take another case at the next Licensing Sessions at Liverpool.

£1,000 Fund. This matter has been rightly regarded as of the first consequence, and as litigation of this kind is extremely expensive, your Committee made appeals for a fund of £1,000, towards which some £800 has been received. Your Committee desires to express its cordial thanks to those Manufacturers and Renters who have so generously subscribed to this fund.

Registration of Cinemas. The conviction, however, has been steadily growing that your Association must enter upon a larger campaign. Your General Council has met and passed the following Resolution :—

“That this General Council of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland resolves to promote an amendment to the Cinematograph Act, 1909, substituting registration for license, and embodying all necessary and desirable conditions for safe-guarding the public and securing uniformity of regulations throughout the Kingdom.”

A small Sub-Committee has been appointed to map out the details of a campaign both inside and outside the House of Commons. To carry out the purposes of the foregoing resolution will require both time and money. Your Committee expresses the hope that members will respond heartily to the call for enthusiastic work in raising the necessary funds and carrying out the details of the campaign which will be essential. Unless Exhibitors are content, not merely to be slaves to the varying whims of constituted authority, but are also prepared in many cases to be ruined financially, they will come forward and give all their support to this important movement.

Annual Dinner. The Second Annual Dinner of your Association took place on March 3rd at the Criterion Restaurant, when some 200 guests sat down under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. Ellis Griffith, K.C., M.P., Under Secretary of State for the Home Office, supported by General Sir Robert Baden Powell, Mr. W. W. Jacobs, Mr. H. J. Greenwood (Chairman of the Licensing Committee of the London County Council), and other distinguished gentlemen. The Chairman of the Manufacturers' Association, Mr. J. F. Brockliss, and the Chairman of the Renters' Association, Mr. J. Williamson, honoured the occasion as guests of the Association. The function proved to be, like its predecessor, an unqualified success.

Your District Associations have in many instances promoted dinners, lunches, suppers and dances. Such meetings are developing better understandings amongst Exhibitors and assisting to create that solidarity of purpose which is so essential if Exhibitors are to present a solid front to those who, from one cause or another, seem bent upon making difficulties for the Exhibitor.

On a separate page will be found a number of Resolutions passed by your Committee at various times.

In concluding this Report your Committee desires to express its great appreciation of the very excellent work done by your Secretary, Mr. Gavazzi King, on behalf of the Association during the past year which has so materially helped to raise the Association to its present position, to tender its thanks to the various Chairmen and Secretaries of the Branches, and to all those who have assisted to forward the interests of your Association.

LIST OF RESOLUTIONS.

The Open Market.

It having been brought to the notice of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland that negotiations are proceeding between certain manufacturing and renting firms the outcome of which would have a disastrous effect upon the principle of the open market in films as frequently affirmed by the Association, the following resolution was unanimously passed :—

“That this Association views with great apprehension the action of certain makers or agents in dealing with the whole or part of their products on the exclusive programme system, and earnestly urges its members in the interests of the trade generally to refrain from giving any practical support to such firms.”

Long Films.

“That the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland deplores the present tendency on the part of the Manufacturers to produce excessively long films to the detriment of the short length film upon which the prosperity of this business was built up and depends, it being obvious that the present number of inferior short length films is the outcome of this policy and must ultimately prove to the detriment of all parties concerned.”

Films and Music Halls.

“Having in view the detrimental effect upon the Cinema Hall Proprietors by reason of certain Hirers and Manufacturers leasing films to Music Hall Proprietors throughout the country before giving the genuine Exhibitor an opportunity to tender for the same film, the Executive Council of the Exhibitors' Association earnestly appeals to those interested to refrain from a continuance of this practice.”

Municipal Competition.

“That this Committee is entirely and strenuously opposed to any form of municipal trading in respect to entertainments which is detrimental to Exhibitors, and hereby agrees to oppose by such means as be within its power the York Corporation Bill.”

Bribery.

“It having been brought to the notice of this Executive Committee that renting and manufacturing firms, whilst not knowingly permitting bribery, have taken no definite steps to prevent or check the practice, this Committee earnestly requests every member of the Association to bring before the Executive Committee any case that can be taken up in order to eliminate the evil.”

