

news and reports

.....

Positive Thinking in the Motion-Picture Exhibit Industry

THE DEATH-KNELL of the motion-picture industry has not yet rung, but a few premature taps on the bell were sounded by movie-celebrities Orson Welles and Ben Hecht in articles published in the March issue of *Esquire*. The Welles article "Twilight in the Smog" and the Hecht effort, "Elegy for Wonderland," are both somewhat more than clever claptrap but considerably less than a definitive analysis of Hollywood's problems. The articles (part of a "report" called "A Hard Look at the New Hollywood") represent the negative thinking that is all too prevalent in this area.

For the readers of this *Journal*, the *Esquire* articles are hardly required reading; but for Society members in many areas of motion pictures who do not read the exhibitor trade papers a review of efforts in recent months by exhibitor organizations is in order.

SMPTe members are aware of the Society activities of developing standards (and test films for the industry), devising procedures and reporting on needs (Screen Brightness Committee surveys, reports and symposiums), publishing articles in the *Journal* and special items such as the Wide Screen booklet. The Society's Education Committee has provided the industry with numerous courses in recent years to bring current technologies to sound and other technicians.

Fortunately, the challenge of negativism has been taken up by many segments of the industry and many signs point to the revival of a healthy and realistic approach in facing today's problems. One of the most important moves in a positive direction has been taken by the men who, early in November met to form a united front for the benefit of the industry and laid the groundwork for the American Congress of Exhibitors (ACE). Another example of a positive and realistic approach is that of the Motion Picture Industry Council of Canada (MPICC) which, last Fall, passed a resolution in support of stereophonic sound. The Theatre Owners of America (TOA) has an extensive plan and a study of needs under way. This Society has volunteered its assistance to the TOA and is now in the process of exploring possibilities of specific projects.

Last-Ditch Stand?

ACE has been in existence almost five months and already its influence has been marked in many areas including that of legislation. In addition to flurries of legislative activity in Washington, D.C., on the toll-TV front, upon which the attitude of ACE may have some bearing, the Executive Committee of ACE and its six standing committees have appointed subcommittees to seek clarification from the Department of Justice of the status of block booking, production and distribution by former affiliated circuits, and pooling arrangements.

Launched November 14 at a meeting of exhibitors called by Spyros P. Skouras, 20th Century-Fox President, ACE was established as a permanent organization at the following meeting, held in mid-December. At the November meeting a statement was formulated setting forth the purposes of the group:

"The purpose of the organization is to establish a single organization that will act for exhibition in a manner parallel to the way the Motion Picture Association of America, headed by Eric A. Johnston, speaks for production and distribution. Forming the American Congress of Exhibitors affords the opportunity to America's exhibitors — all of them — to cure

some of the industry's ills and to achieve the highest level of motion-picture entertainment in the industry's history. Every exhibitor automatically is a member of ACE. Theater operators will be called upon to serve on subcommittees which will be formed to probe more deeply into each point of the agenda now in preparation. Each member has the right to speak and therefore the opportunity and obligation to work."

Whatever else has been or will be accomplished by ACE it has certainly dramatized an abrupt abandonment of any head-in-sand policy in favor of the head-on (or nettle-grasping) approach to the problems resulting from changing patterns of behavior on the part of movie-goers.

Crisis Situation

Recognition of a crisis situation in the motion-picture industry was the dominant theme of the organizational meeting of ACE. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Skouras stated, "This is the time which will decide whether our industry lives and prospers or withers and dies."

The situation which brought about the organization of ACE did not occur overnight and is not limited to any one area, nor is it exclusively the problem of the industry within the United States. The introduction to the Society's Progress Report for 1956 (p. 241 of the *Journal* for May 1957) contains an admirably clear and explicit statement concerning the state of the industry and the possible causes of a disappointing lack of progress in the motion-picture field:

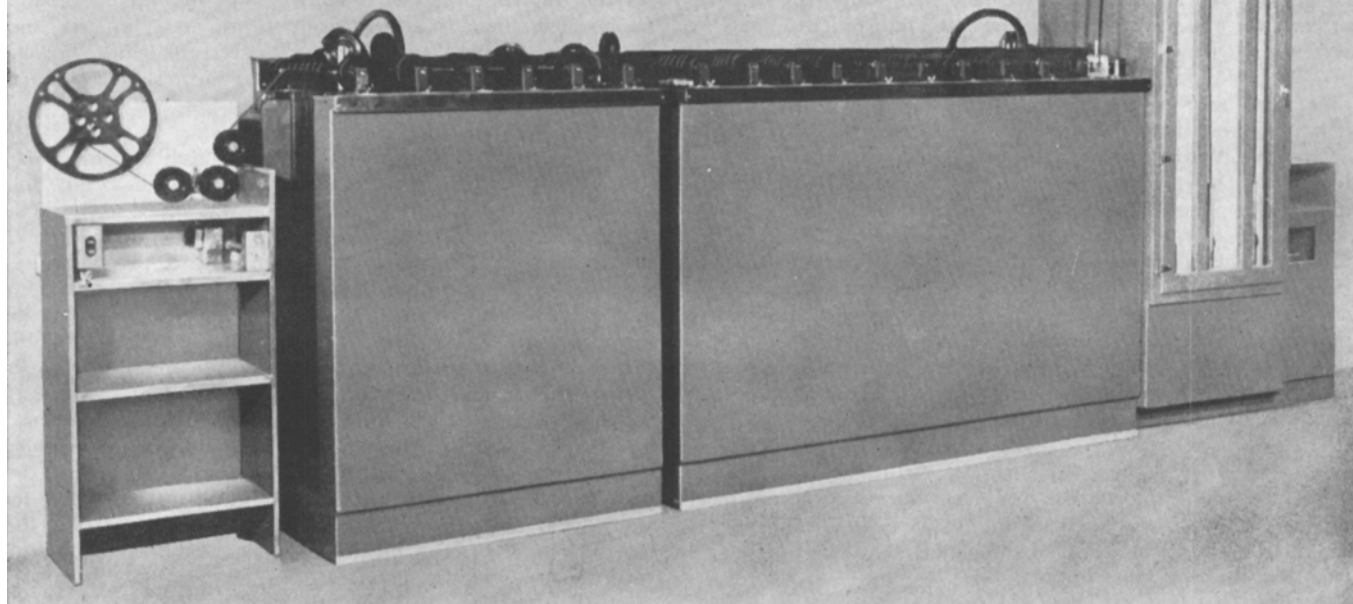
"Every few years something like magnetic recording or wide-screen photography comes along and there are several years of accelerated activity in the motion-picture field; 1956 was not such a year. Wide-screen, stereophonic sound, and magnetic recording had all become routine. Several committee members reported that they were unable to find anything new worth reporting in their field and some said that in the theater field research and capital improvement funds had been cut back: two newsreel companies stopped operation; it was expected that 6000 movie houses would close; for the first time all companies used joint film depots; deals were initiated for studio mergers; but Hollywood was busier than ever, and much of this was the result of television and other activity."

The trend so ably described in the 1956 Progress Report is gaining momentum, and the tide-stemming ability of ACE has yet to be proved. Six main areas of interest have been agreed upon: Post-1948 features on television; relations between producer-distributors and exhibitors; industry-government relations; ways and means to increase motion-picture productions; industry research; and toll television.

One of the main goals of ACE has been the achievement of complete unity among exhibitors and agreement as to aims and methods of accomplishing those aims. Following the initial meeting, an ecstatic editorial in *The Independent Film Journal* (Nov. 22, 1958) described the "inspired meeting" at which: "There was no bickering. There was no name calling. There were no personality conflicts. The bitterness and mistakes of the past were laid to rest. There was no attempt to dictate policies by any one group. At long last there was a realization that all of exhibition was in the same boat. . . ."

Since that editorial was published, this ideal situation seems to be curling around the edges — just a trifle. One of the main problems facing ACE, and one which was, of course,

The **RO-NAN EAEC-16**
CONTINUOUS FILM PROCESSOR
 For Ektachrome, Anscochrome and Eastman Color



**COMPLETELY INSTALLED, SET UP AND OPERATING AUTOMATICALLY
 AT TREMENDOUS SAVINGS IN TIME AND COST**

**ONLY RO-NAN EAEC-16 PROCESSOR
 GIVES YOU ALL THESE FEATURES**

- Processes Ektachrome at 3600 ft. per hour.
- Processes Anscochrome and Eastman Color at 1500 ft. per hour.
- Automatic Flow Rator replenishment at operating temperatures.
- Jet-Tube turbulence.
- Complete and quick rack removal.
- Spraywash system on two sides of film on all washes.
- All valves and pipes corrosion-proof.
- Torque motor takeup assembly.
- Temperatures controlled by dual Taylor recording instruments, within ¼ degree.
- 2000 ft. takeup reel capacity.
- Forced air drying, thermostatically controlled.
- 35mm model available.

The RO-NAN EAEC-16 brings you fully-automatic, top quality continuous processing of 16mm Ektachrome, Anscochrome and Eastman Color Negative and Positive at a cost far below any comparable machine. Built to close tolerance specifications, the EAEC-16 incorporates many exclusive features not found in equipment costing much more. These RO-NAN design features are your assurance of many years of trouble-free operation with a minimum of maintenance. Before you buy *any* automatic film processing equipment... check with RO-NAN first! Our years of experience in the manufacture of film processing equipment can save you much time and money. Write today for complete information and technical specifications.

RO-NAN equipment can be furnished on a lease basis.

RO-NAN can also furnish continuous processing equipment for Kodachrome film in 16/35 and 35mm models. Also available: Mylar splicing equipment, silver recovery units and slitters for 8/16mm film.

RO-NAN
 I N C O R P O R A T E D

Please send complete information on the RO-NAN EAEC-16 Continuous Processor.

Name _____
 Firm _____
 Address _____
 City _____ Zone _____ State _____

6 1 6 1 C E D R O S A V E N U E • V A N N U Y S , C A L I F O R N I A

immediately recognized, is that of possible overlapping or conflict of inter- and intra-organization interests. This problem is one which, apparently, members of ACE and other organizations are making a serious and dedicated effort to solve.

Among the early paeans of praise, the powerful *Hollywood Reporter* (Dec. 9, 1958) sounded a slightly discordant note. "If the 26-member committee of ACE really takes hold of things," the *Reporter* stated, "the industry as a whole will benefit. However, we suggest that each member of the committee confer at great length with the men and women actually running their theaters. . . ."

Divested of the superlatives, it would appear that the formation of ACE represents a sincere attempt by able, responsible men to make a rational approach to a grave problem. Its effectiveness depends on the ability of representatives of the diverse groups within the organization to achieve a unified point of view and also, in some degree, on making the "grass-roots" approach suggested by the *Hollywood Reporter*.

It could also be suggested that along with combatting "evils," such as toll TV, a positive and constructive course of action might be encouraged. The concept of the "positive approach" was suggested by the 1956 Progress Report which related "accelerated activity" in the motion-picture field to new developments, to inventions, new ideas and to better adaptation and application of long-accepted ideas and developments.

The MPICC Approach

The "positive approach" to problems affecting the entire industry may be exemplified by action taken by the Motion Picture Industry Council of Canada. The Resolution approved at the Fall meeting states in part:

"Whereas stereophonic high fidelity is an outstanding improvement over any monaural sound (and) is even more suitable to motion pictures than for home listening, although less obvious; whereas the motion-picture industry pioneered the public use of stereophonic sound and greatly furthered high fidelity, it, therefore, seems a great pity that, having done all this, we are now letting others capitalize on our own efforts. . . . therefore be it resolved that the Motion Picture Industry Council of Canada recommends and strongly urges all theaters that can possibly do so to install modern sound equipment. . . and further recommends and strongly urges all producers and distributors to make available pictures recorded in a modern manner — by modern, the Council means stereophonic magnetic recording and playback."

The MPICC approach represents what is perhaps the most positive of all positive thinking, the ability to recognize new trends and new areas of public interest and to take full advantage of them. Stereophonic sound was added to the ACE agenda for topics to be discussed with heads of production and distribution. The action was taken during the February meeting.

It may be of interest that an objection has been raised to the term "stereo sound." Max Cohen, Chairman of the ACE Committee on Industry Research, said that the committee hopes to substitute a new and more suitable word for the "grossly misused" and "obscure" term, "stereo sound." The new word would refer exclusively to stereophonic sound in the theater.

It is obvious that there will be no quick or easy solution to the problems of the industry, but the enthusiastic welcome greeting the advent given the efforts cited above indicates that the "dying" industry is at present a lively invalid, and that the future may hold some surprises.—R.H.

Academy Awards

A 10-kw lamp and an anamorphic lens earned Class II Academy Awards this year in the Scientific and Technical category and Class III Awards were presented for the development of a high-speed intermittent movement for a 35mm motion-picture theater projection equipment and for a rapid fire semiautomatic compressed air gun, called a marble gun, which is used to simulate bullet effects on a water surface.

Plaques honoring Don W. Prideaux, Roy Leighton, and the Lamp Division of General Electric Co. were presented for the development and production of an improved 10-kw lamp for motion-picture set lighting. The Award-winning lamp is the subject of a *Journal* paper, "Design Improvements in High-Wattage Tungsten Filament Lamps for Motion-Picture and Television Studios" by Leroy G. Leighton and Alfred Makulec (*Journal* pp. 530-533, Aug. 1958). The citation states that the lamp "has doubled the life of its predecessor and maintains higher light output throughout its life. It is stronger mechanically, reducing losses in transport and handling."

Panavision Inc. received an Award for the design and development of the Auto Panatar anamorphic photographic lens. The citation states, "The novel design of these lens substantially reduces photo-

graphic lateral distortion and thereby improves close-up quality and overall definition." The Award was accepted by Robert E. Gottschalk on behalf of his firm.

A Certificate signifying Honorable Mention for a Class III Award was presented to Willy Borberg of General Precision Laboratory for the development of the high-speed projector intermittent movement which, because of a larger shutter opening permits a greater amount of light to pass through the film, thereby increasing screen brightness. "It allows better light distribution on the screen with lower flicker perception, and is a definite contribution to improved projection quality," the citation states.

The Award-winning device represents years of intensive study by Mr. Borberg. Earlier research has been reported in the *Journal*: "Modulated Air Blast for Reducing Film Buckle," pp. 94-100, Aug. 1952; also, "Effect of Gate and Shutter Characteristics on Screen Image Quality," pp. 623-626, Oct. 1957.

Fred Ponedel, George Brown and Conrad Boye of Warner Bros. were presented Class III Certificates for design of a rapid fire marble gun that simulates the effects of bullets striking water.

The Awards were presented during the Academy Award Presentation Ceremonies April 6.

Correction: The Advance Program for the 85th Convention published in the March *Journal* indicated on p. 170 that a Post-Convention Tour on Saturday, May 9, would include Cape Canaveral. This was in error in that the tour is limited to the Technical Laboratory at Patrick Air Force Base.

Education, Industry News

A color film on the subject of infrared spectroscopy was exhibited at the annual Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy held during the first week in March. The film, sponsored by Perkin-Elmer Corp., Norwalk, Conn., and produced by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y., delineates the theory of infrared spectroscopy and shows how it is used in research.

The London *Financial Times* has announced the appointment of an Industrial Film Correspondent to conduct a regular column on industrial and documentary motion pictures. The announcement stated that this is the first such column to be published by any daily newspaper in Great Britain. The paper has also organized a study group for participation in the In-