

Once a year we are reminded that the film is an art form of the highest potential, and one of the most vital expressions and records of modern society.

In many countries this is recognized all the year round, and film is a major art of that land, aided by private patronage or by government; and great reputations are made which parallel, in our terms, the names of Nolan, and White, and Barassi.

225 C.
Actually only about 4000 of us here in Melbourne have this annual reminder. The remaining 11 million Australians outside are not inclined to recognize any higher qualities of art or culture in the film. When they think of it they have only the image of the most lurid pages of advertisements ever published by the Herald.

While I must mention the dismal level to which commercial film advertising has dropped, I do not want to be disparaging to our commercial theatres. On the contrary, the number of good films now to be seen in the city - admittedly only in the midget theatres - is very encouraging.

I would like to say a word in this context for the great cultural influence of television. It has become a sort of vacuum cleaner, drawing into itself an enormous amount of the world's entertainment pulp of the most moronic and vulgar kind. It has freed a part of commercial cinema from this burden, allowing it to show intelligent films.

Nevertheless, because a great number of people still think of films in terms of James Bond and Elvis Presley they cannot think of it also as

a responsible art, and thus our Government does not begin to take it seriously as a medium of national culture and social significance.

Thus when the Australian film industry lay down sick a few years ago, it was allowed to die quietly, and few people mourned - certainly no State funeral was held. The result, as we all know, is a blank sheet in one place where we should have a visual image of ourselves. And once again: no Australian feature film in this, our own, festival. But if we haven't an Australian feature, we have the next best thing, a Canadian feature: a picture called "Nobody Waved Goodbye": a picture Australia could have made.

Let's look for a moment at Canada. There's a country on the face of it even less likely to produce good films than Australia. It has all our problems plus an even greater neighbourliness and cultural subservience to the United States. But it makes films - internationally recognized fine films; the one we will see in this festival has had rave notices from sophisticated critics in the U. S. A.

Why and how did this happen in Canada? Just one man started it all 26 years ago. He was John Grierson. He went there in 1939 and established the National Film Board. It trained technicians and it produced films. Its documentaries soon became world famous, and now it has successfully turned to features.

We have a model there to follow, and action here on similar lines is long overdue. We need Government acknowledgement of this art, and support of it. Moreover we need training schools, not for training technicians but for training artists in the film: directors, writers, actors. We need at least one university to open a course in the art of the film. (We need all this of course as desperately for the sake of

*can
don't
found note*

*on the other
hand*

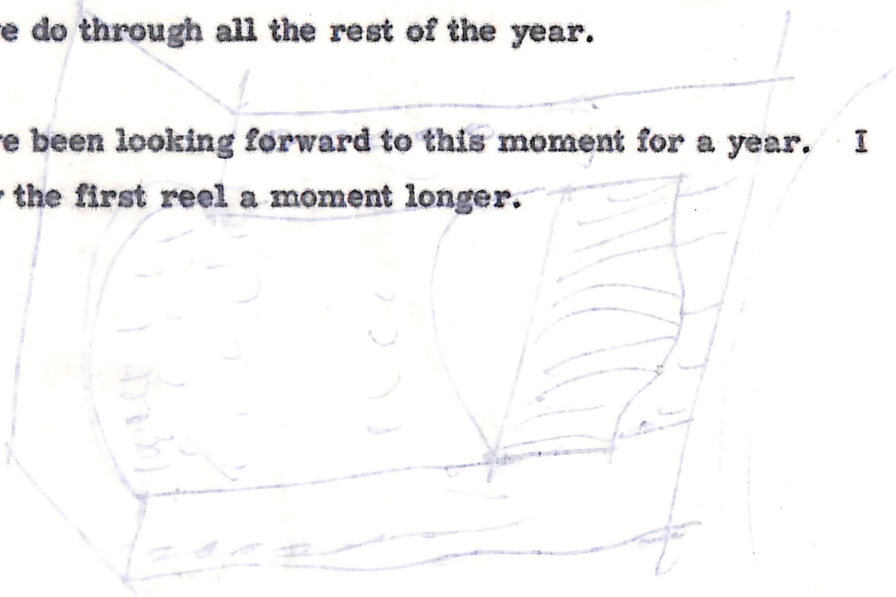
television here as for the cinema.)

In this field as in so many others we are bursting with unrealised and frustrated talent. ~~It is ironic to recall that one of Grierson's first assistants in Canada was Stanley Hawes, an Australian expatriate.~~

But this is no time to mope about all that, for this is once again a cheering, progressive moment: the start of another feast of fine films from other countries where film is still a vital art.

In this ^{fortnight} ~~week~~ we get closer to many other countries, closer to their hearts, than we do through all the rest of the year.

Most of us have been looking forward to this moment for a year. I must not delay the first reel a moment longer.



(television here as for the cinema.)

In this field as in no many others we are bursting with unrealized and frustrated talent. It is ironic to recall that one of Grierson's first assistants in Canada was Stanley Hayes, an Australian experimenter.

But this is no time to mope about all that, for this is once again a cheering, progressive moment: the start of another year of fine films from other countries where film is still a vital art.

In this week we get closer to many other countries, closer to their hearts, than we do through all the rest of the year.

Most of us have been looking forward to this moment for a year. I must not delay the first moment longer.

