

Status of the Archive

The National Film Archive, which until this year was called the National Film Library, is a section of the British Film Institute. It has always been regarded, however, as a distinct entity within the Institute, and its importance has been fully recognised. It has been governed, for example, by a special Committee, responsible directly to the Governors of the Institute, and its Curator, like the Director and Secretary, is appointed to his position by the Governors of the Institute, (whereas all other appointments in the Institute are made by the Director); it is the Archive, not the Institute, which from the very beginning (in 1938) has been regarded as the responsible member of F.I.A.F. It has always had a considerable measure of independence in fact, though none in law.

This year the Governors of the British Film Institute agreed to certain changes which will help to raise still further the status of the Archive, namely:

- (a) That its title should be changed to National Film Archive.
- (b) That its Committee should be dissolved and replaced by a new and stronger Committee.
- (c) That this new Committee should be given full responsibility to act in all matters affecting the Archive's work the only direct control now retained by the Governors being that over finance.

This does not mean that the Archive is now independent in law; it is still part of the Institute, but it has greater autonomy, and is practically independent in all matters within its own field.

Preservation of Government Films

The most important single event of the year for the National Film Archive was the recommendation of a Government Committee, which had been appointed to review the preservation of all Government records, that all Government films of historical and artistic importance should be preserved in the National Film Archive. At present this is only a recommendation, and has not been implemented but even as a recommendation it is a most important and valuable form of official recognition of the Archive's work. Many of the best documentary films made in England (such as those of Grierson, Wright, Elton, Anstey, Rotha, Jennings, Lye, etc.) are Government films, and will shortly, we hope, be entrusted to the National Film Archive. It was partly in order to prepare the Archive for this new extension of its work that the Governors agreed to the changes in its constitution already described.

Acquisitions

During the financial year ending on March 31st 1955 the Archive acquired 108 full-length films, 285 short films and 118 news-reel items; most of these were presented by companies in the film industry at the request of the Archive. From the B.B.C. Television Service was received a complete set of its newsreel negatives for the year ending December 31st 1954.

## Cataloguing

The work of cataloguing the Archive's collection continues although the research required for scholarly and efficient cataloguing in the present state of film knowledge is considerable, and the work is therefore slow and laborious. The second part of the Archive's printed catalogue (Silent Non-fiction films, 1895-1933) is now ready for publication however. A third edition of Rules for Use in the Cataloguing Department of the National Film Archive has been published and has had a considerable distribution, especially overseas.

## Storage

The collection of the National Film Archive is contained in 52 vaults (each holding 500 reels) 40 miles from the centre of London. These vaults are now overcrowded and 28 more vaults are now being built on the same site.

## Stills (Photos)

During the year 8260 stills were added to the Archive's collection, which now amounts to a total figure of 100,000. Considerable use is made of this collection by writers, journalists, film societies, and students, as well as by the film industry. Originals are never supplied, but only copies at a cost of seven shillings each

## National Film Theatre

Every Thursday and Friday the National Film Theatre shows historical film programmes under the general title "Fifty Years of Film". The National Film Archive is solely responsible for the arrangement and presentation of these programmes. During the year 89 separate programmes were shown, from the Lumière films of 1895 to MISS JULIE (1951). For many of the films we were greatly indebted to the assistance of other members of F.I.A.F. and notably to the following, whom we wish to thank most warmly:

Cinémathèque de Belgique  
Danske Filmmuseum  
Museum of Modern Art Film Library  
George Eastman House, Rochester  
Cinémathèque Française  
Cineteca Italiana, Milan  
Cineteca Nazionale, Rome  
Filmhistoriska Samlingarna, Stockholm.

## Archive Employees

It may perhaps be helpful to our colleagues in F.I.A.F. to have a list of the workers in the National Film Archive, who are as follows:

Curator: Ernest Lindgren (to whom letters should normally  
be addressed)  
Curator's Secretary: Mrs. Church  
Acquisitions Officer: Liam O'Leary  
Acquisitions Officer's Secretary: Miss Kalen  
Chief Cataloguer: David Grenfell  
Assistant Cataloguer: Mrs. Chapman  
Stills Officer: Miss Traylen  
Stills Assistant: Miss Brooks  
Film Preservation Officer: Harold Brown  
Technical Assistant: Cedric Pheasant  
Junior Technical Assistant: David Evans  
Technical Secretary: Mrs. Wilderspin.

The present Chairman of the National Film Archive Committee is Mr. Basil Wright.