

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

PROPOSALS FOR THE
ORGANIZATION OF UNITED NATIONS' FILM ACTIVITIES

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We understand that the setting up of two film divisions within the United Nations Organization is under consideration, one as part of the Department of Public Information attached directly to U.N.O., and the other as part of U.N.E.S.C.O.; we therefore feel that particular care should be taken in defining their respective terms of reference, and in this draft consider the nature and functions of both the proposed divisions.

In brief the distinction which is recommended here between their respective functions is as follows:-

The Film Division of the Department of Public Information should by reason of its position in U.N.O. be concerned with the part which films can play in giving the widest possible coverage to all activities of U.N.O. and of the functional bodies within its framework. It should therefore be responsible for arranging through whatever channels exist in each country for the preparation of film materials dealing with U.N.O. activities and for its inclusion in the programme of the public cinemas of the world.

The Film Division of U.N.E.S.C.O. on the other hand should be concerned with implementing the functional responsibilities of its parent body in the field of educational, cultural and scientific co-operation, and with meeting the film requirements and stimulating and co-ordinating the film activities of the individual United Nations in this field. It should therefore

be responsible for stimulating and developing the production and non-theatrical use of such films on the widest possible scale.

In neither instance is it envisaged that a special U.N. production unit should be set up; instead we recommend that the production services available in the member countries should be used, whether Governmental or non-Governmental. The reasons for this recommendation are:-

(a) A number of countries already have efficient and progressive documentary and educational film units in some cases working through a central organization such as the Federation of Documentary Film Units in Britain, and the National Film Board of Canada. It can be assumed that these units in the different countries bear great good will towards the United Nations concept and would be ready to carry out commissions placed with them by U.N.O.

(b) For the Department of Public Information of U.N.O. or for U.N.E.S.C.O. to set about establishing its own production unit and laboratory services and acquiring equipment (other than that required for the exhibition of films) would appear to duplicate unnecessarily existing production organizations, at a time when equipment and skilled technicians are in short supply.

(c) It would appear that one of the reasons why various organs of the League of Nations failed to make their proper contribution, was that in several cases an international body was created in advance of national developments throughout the world, vide the former International Institute of Educational Cinematography. On the other hand, the general policy of U.N.O., implicit in the title United Nations, would appear to be to place greater emphasis on the contributions which each individual member country can make.

In accord with this modified conception of the way in which international co-operation might be developed, we are of the opinion that in the field of films the production needs of U.N.O. and U.N.E.S.C.O., would best be met by making use of existing documentary and educational production units throughout the world.

In detail the recommendations are as follows:-

The Film Division of the Department of Public Information.

The Division will require a Director with wide international film experience and of a calibre sufficient for him to make contact on the highest levels in both Government and non-official circles, and a permanent secretarial staff. Its staff would not be large, as the Division would not maintain its own production unit.

To achieve the maximum coverage for U.N. activities and the maximum distribution of such material throughout the public cinemas of the world, the Division's main functions should be:-

(a) To obtain, through the newsreel companies of each United Nation, full coverage of all U.N. activities, both for immediate public showing and as the means of establishing a permanent film record of these activities.

(b) To arrange space through the newsreels, through editorialized film magazines such as March of Time and World in Action, and similar trade channels for specific U.N. items.

(c) To initiate and sponsor for theatrical distribution the making of more considered films about U.N. activities by recognized documentary units throughout the world. In commissioning any films of this kind the Division should work through the Advisory Council of the Film Division of U.N.E.S.C.O. (see below).

(d) To discover all the channels which exist in the various member countries for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution, and to maintain close contact with the responsible organizations.

(e) To advise all functional organizations within U.N.O. on the possibilities that exist for publicizing their activities in the public cinemas of the world.

(f) To acquire and maintain private projection theatres at its central and branch offices for the exhibition of films dealing with U.N. activities for showing to U.N. delegates and to visiting parties.

The Film Division of U.N.E.S.C.O.

The Division will require a director of wide experience of the production and use of documentary and educational films, and of a calibre sufficient for him to make contacts on the highest levels in both Government and non-official circles. It will also require a permanent secretariat. It will also require an Advisory Council composed of men and women of standing and wide experience, representing the fields of education, science, information, visual education, and the organizations specifically concerned with the making of documentary and educational films. We feel that it is essential that trade interests representing the entertainment film industry should be excluded. One of the primary functions of this body should be to advise the director on the facilities that exist in each member country for the production of documentary and educational films. It should also be in a position to advise the Film Division of the Department of Public Information on the facilities that exist for the production of information films.

The main functions of the Division should be:-

(a) To provide a central information service on all aspects of the film and of allied visual material, and of their use for educational, cultural and scientific purposes in each

country; to compile and publish lists of available films; and to institute the necessary research.

(b) To facilitate the widest possible interchange of such films for non-theatrical use. The Division should act as a liaison between all the main national libraries. It should not attempt to establish a library comprising all available films, but should only hold copies of any films which it may commission and films directly related to U.N.O. activity. It should, however, operate a central booking service, through which film users in one country could book films from the main libraries in other countries.

(c) To facilitate the exchange of film footage as distinct from completed films. The Division should be able to advise a producer in one country on the uncut footage of film available on a particular subject in other countries.

(d) To initiate and sponsor the production of films of an educational cultural and scientific nature by existing production units, Governmental or non-Governmental, in each country.

(e) To maintain close contact with the principal bodies representing both the producers and users of documentary and educational films in each country.

(f) To facilitate the interchange of film technicians and of those engaged in all branches of visual education.

(g) To acquire and maintain private projection theatres at its central and branch offices for exhibiting its films and those of its member nations to U.N. delegates and to visiting educational, film and other representatives.