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Methods of control of commercialized entertainment with special reference to the motion picture, in Worcester and Springfield, Mass

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COMMERCIALIZED ENTERTAINMENT WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MOTION PICTURE
IN WORCESTER & SPRINGFIELD, MASS.)

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METHODS OF CONTROL OF COMMERCIALIZED ENTERTAINMENT
WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MOTION PICTURE
(IN WORCESTER AND SPRINGFIELD, MASS.)

BY
ROBERT B. FLETCHER

Thesis submitted for degree of Master of Science
Massachusetts State College, Amherst
June, 1934

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

That society has a right to protect itself from the harm that may befall it from the actions of certain of its unscrupulous members can hardly be questioned. Else, how can one account for the attempts at regulation and legislation through many generations and ages designed to accomplish this? Man has regulated the size and height of buildings, the speed of vehicles, and set up rules of conduct and standards of safety, all of which are processes of control and are designed for his own protection. Without these controls, serious results would be engendered by people who are willing to exploit and impose upon others for selfish purposes. Exploitation and imposition have been widespread along lines of commercial recreation, and control, here as elsewhere, becomes for society very much a matter of self-defense. Therefore, in order to defend itself from the unscrupulous element, it is compelled to assume the right to control popular recreation.

Though admitting society's right to control popular recreation, it does not necessarily follow that this right must be exercised. Obviously, recreation that is really harmless and does not involve conflict with the mores, needs no control. However, when conflict does appear and harm results, then society becomes obligated to use this right, that is, society

has a duty to itself to control popular recreation.

One cannot live in our present civilization without being impressed with the variety and number of recreational opportunities there are. Some are entirely free, as, many picnic grounds, lake beaches, etc.; others are provided by taxation, as, public playgrounds, band concerts, etc.; still others come under the heading of commercialized entertainment, that is, entertainment conducted for pecuniary profit for the person or organization owning or managing it. It is interesting to observe what one authority has said the proportion of these should be to each other.¹ Of the total recreational facilities in a city, says this authority, 50% should be provided through taxation, 30% through private agencies, and 20% from commercial ventures. The Recreation Survey of the Cleveland Foundation (1920) lists the items of commercial recreation to be found in that city as follows: "There are in Cleveland (population 800,000) 123 motion picture theaters, five combined motion picture theaters, two burlesque theaters, and four theaters of the "legitimate" type. There are 443 billiard rooms, 160 bowling halls, 50 coffee houses, and 115 dance halls. The fact is significant that every week more than half a million admissions to motion pictures are paid".² It is seen from this that commercial recreation, at least, has a very large place in society, and Cleveland is not unlike other cities in this respect. In Social Forces for March, 1927, Mr. H. S. Curtis has stated

that there are 5,121 city playgrounds in the country and estimates that these provide recreation for five million school children.¹⁵ This, of course, is not adequate to provide for all school children, but is a long step in the right direction and again indicates the large place of recreation in our lives.

With the introduction of more leisure time, now enforced by the "New Deal" and the codes of industrial operation, recreation is bound to gain further attention. Where it has had a large place in society, it is due to have a larger place from now on. Actually, unless more attention is paid to this factor in our lives, unless opportunity is given for use of the surplus energy coming from increased leisure, this released energy may be used in a manner destructive to society. Healy and Bronner, in their "Delinquents and Criminals" estimate that poor recreation and street life are closely correlated with some thirty-five percent of the cases in Boston courts.¹ Enforce more leisure time without additional recreational facilities and the result is inevitable. Therefore, as previously stated, recreation has a large place in society and undoubtedly will assume a larger place as time passes.

No one will question the statement that recreation is a necessary element of present-day civilization. But the statement that commercial entertainment is necessary may arouse some question. This is easily answered. When a particular type of entertainment involving expense is demanded by a comparatively small part of the population of a city, that city

is hardly justified in spending money to meet the requirements of this group. Private funds are not available in sufficient amounts in very many cities to make this type of recreation possible. The only means left is through commercialized entertainment. Since public and private funds are not sufficient nor available to supply the need, the commercial element enters and fills the gap. Bowling alleys, billiard rooms, amusement parks, certain musical entertainments and motion pictures are examples of this type of amusement. It cannot be doubted that the commercial element is a very necessary one in recreation; without it, some forms of entertainment would be quite lacking.

At this point, it does not seem out of place to describe briefly the history and growth of one very important form of commercial entertainment, the motion picture.^{4, 5.} The motion picture, as we know it today, is a comparatively new thing, though the fundamental idea involved was known hundreds of years ago. Herschel showed that when a coin is spun on its edge it seems to reveal both sides at the same time. This phenomenon of the eye, called Persistence of Vision, appears when by rapid motion, as of a coin, the retina of the eye retains the image of one side until the other is visible. With this phenomenon as the basis, numerous attempts were made to produce pictures in motion, but none were at all successful until 1888, when Thomas A. Edison made a cylinder

machine that would operate, after a fashion. With the aid of George Eastman, of the Eastman Kodak Company, Mr. Edison developed his machine so that it made use of pictures photographed on strips of celluloid.

The first motion pictures did not tell connected stories. They were not used for drama, as today, but were very brief shorts of moving objects and persons. Not until 1903 was the motion picture used as a medium for showing drama. At that time, a film called "The Great Train Robbery" was made at the Edison Studio and created a demand for more pictures that told stories.

In the meantime, other projectors were designed, some of which were fairly successful and others of which were soon discarded. In 1905 the first nickelodeon made its appearance in Pittsburgh and sold a continuous motion picture program for five cents.

Motion pictures continued to develop until, in 1914, the first metropolitan theater devoted to motion pictures was opened. It was the Strand Theater on Broadway, New York City. From that time until about 1921-1927, no important changes were made in the industry. Of course, methods and apparatus were improved, but not until the introduction of sound synchronized with motion was there any radical change.

Actually, synchronized sound was not a new idea, for though it was new to the public, men of science had been

experimenting with it for many years. In 1894 Edison developed a machine known as the kinetoscope, which was a one-man device with ear tubes for catching the sound. In 1921, engineers of various large electrical companies were working on the problem and in 1926, as a result of their efforts, the first synchronized motion picture, "Don Juan", was shown in New York by Warner Brothers. In six months' time, one hundred theaters were equipped with sound producing apparatus and at present, the motion picture theater without such equipment would be very difficult to find.

Definite knowledge of the size of the industry and its growth can be gained by reference to the following figures. Table one shows the total assets of the motion picture industry in the United States over the period 1921-1930. Table two indicates the value of the annual output of motion picture equipment, including cameras, projectors, scenery, and stage equipment, of the entire United States from 1921 to 1929.

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Table 1.

Total Assets	
1921	\$ 95,969,000
1922	104,797,000
1923	117,593,000
1924	145,930,000
1925	202,249,000
1926	282,829,000
1927	320,695,000
1928	460,956,000
1929	764,566,000
1930	1,001,314,000

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Table 2.

Value of Annual Output of Motion Picture Equipment	
1921	\$ 4,083,000
1923	4,257,000
1925	8,198,000
1927	14,090,000
1929	14,263,000

Of 57,743 motion picture houses in the world in 1929,⁶
20,500, or 28.1%, were in the United States.

Commercialized entertainment, at least in the form of the motion picture, often creates a problem, for it pits the personal financial interests of the promoter against the public interest of the community. The promoter is in the business to make a profit; without a profit, his business must cease. Therefore, he very naturally shows the pictures that will bring him that profit. Herein lies the conflict. Ofttimes, the profit-picture has not been a wholesome film, its character having been anything but moral. In fact, some pictures have obviously been designed to be very immoral. The result is that the picture the manager wants to show often conflicts strongly with the standards of the community, creating the problem which social control methods are planned to solve.

CHAPTER II

NEED TO CONTROL MOTION PICTURES

From the preceding it is unquestionable that there exists a very definite need to control motion pictures. Just what form this control should take is, however, a very definite point of controversy. The choice lies between control by legislation and control by voluntary agreement. In the two cities to be investigated, Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts, both of these choices are exemplified. Worcester motion pictures are controlled by legislation,⁷ or nearly enough to be termed that, and Springfield theaters operate principally under a system of control by voluntary agreement.⁸ The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the present systems of these two cities and to prepare a more effective scheme of control.

In order to obtain material for this study, it has been necessary, for the most part, to rely on personal interviews. The secretary of the organization in each city and the police department of each city were visited frequently for information. In each case records were incomplete, and for this reason, the method of gathering data has involved principally personal contacts.

CHAPTER III

SITUATION IN WORCESTER

Before discussing the particular method of control for motion pictures in Worcester, it would undoubtedly be of value to describe the city itself, with special reference to the number and quality of its motion picture houses. In sociological language, this description would be known as a Pathfinder Survey, and is used for the purpose of portraying the conditions and situation found in Worcester. With such a description in mind, the reader is in a better position to understand the difficulties and problems that must be met, both by the investigator and by the scheme of control under investigation.

Worcester, Massachusetts, is a city of 38.49 square miles which has grown steadily, though not rapidly. The following figures will give some idea of its rate of growth:

Year	Population
1890	84,655
1895	98,767
1900	118,421
1905	128,135
1910	145,986
1915	162,697
1920	179,792
1925	190,757
1927	206,717 (estimated)

The steadiness which has marked this growth probably indicates that the population is fairly permanent, that although there are numerous people leaving the city yearly, there are as

many or more coming in, and this city probably will continue to count as many or more among its permanent residents.

What type of city is Worcester and what are its interests? It has been called the city of diversified industries, and although not situated on any waterway, an undoubted aid to commerce, it is the home of a vast number of manufacturing plants and industries, which, of course, give employment to a large number of working people. Where many people are brought together in a manufacturing city, the problem of what to do with their spare time often becomes acute. In very many cases, the motion picture is the only solution offered.

In certain of the larger cities, we find what is known as the "theater district", a particular area of the city in which the vast majority of motion picture houses have been built. This is only partially true of Worcester. True enough, all of the city's twelve theaters are to be found in the downtown section, but they are not sufficiently segregated in one area to form a "theater district". Instead of being located in an area of three or four blocks, Worcester's theaters are well scattered throughout the business section. Using the City Hall as a center, one theater is located only across the street from it and another is seven-tenths of a mile away. Two are a full mile apart, yet within the business section. If Worcester continues to grow, it is quite possible that a theater district will develop, but at the present time,

that condition is not apparent.

Another fact should be observed with regard to the placing of the theaters in Worcester. Here there are none of the so-called "neighborhood" theaters, found in many great cities. Neighborhood theaters are just what the word implies, houses that are scattered in the outlying districts of the city, and not confined within the limits of the downtown area. Worcester has none of these, all of its theaters being in the center of the city.

In order to serve this city of 200,000 people, there are at the present time eleven motion picture houses and one theater given over to the showing of burlesque, put on by traveling stock companies. These twelve have a combined seating capacity of 19,236 people, and represent several stages in the development of the motion picture house. From a previous paragraph, the reader has learned that the movie industry has developed only within the last thirty or thirty-five years, though some of these buildings date back to the 1860-1880 period. One asks how this can be and the answer is that some of the present houses are merely remodeled "Penny Arcades" (Family Theater) or are theaters which were designed for road shows. A brief comment on each is advisable. They shall be taken in the order of their size (seating capacity). With one exception, to be mentioned later, all of them are equipped for "sound".

The first is the one known as the Fox Poli Theater (35¢),* 214 Southbridge Street, formerly the Palace. It will seat 3217 persons, was built in 1925, and is thoroughly up-to-date in every particular. Where it now stands, the old Grand Theater used to be, but that was swallowed up by the present building. This house shows only first-run picture, or those which have not previously been exhibited in Worcester, and the program is changed but once a week. The clientele of this house comes from the better class of people in the city.

The second largest theater is the Plymouth (25¢), 261 Main Street. This was built even more recently than the Fox Poli (1926), and will seat 2633 persons. However, in spite of its size and modern construction, it shows only second-run pictures⁺ and, in keeping with this policy, changes its pictures twice a week. It depends to a large extent on the patronage of children for its revenue.

The Fox Poli Elm Street Theater (35¢) is the next in size, and will hold 2581 persons. This house was built in 1876, 56 years ago, and obviously was not designed for the showing of motion pictures. As one might expect in a theater

*The figure immediately following the theater name indicates, for the sake of comparison, the price asked for the best seat in the house at the evening show.

#Seating capacities obtained from licenses posted in theaters.

⁺Second-run pictures are those which have appeared once before in the same city or town; a third-run picture is one that has appeared twice before, etc.

modeled for stage productions, there are two high balconies, and several "boxes" placed close to the stage, which are not desirable for the viewing of motion pictures. First-run pictures are shown in this house and the program changes only once each week.

Although the Plaza Theater (15¢), of 22 Front Street, seats 1900 people, it is emphatically not the next theater in importance or desirability. It is sixty-five years old, and is the last-run house in the city, which means that it shows pictures that have been exhibited at least four times before in Worcester. The feature is changed three times per week. The structure was built to care for road shows and as a result, has very high, steep balconies and is not at all modern in design. The class of people that attend are decidedly not the best in the city.

The Warner Brothers Theater (40¢), 62 Front Street, is capable of seating 1600 people at one time. It shows only first-run pictures and changes its program but once a week. It is a comparatively new house, having been built in 1916, is modern in its construction, and can be classed as one of the better theaters in the city.

The Capitol Theater (40¢), 29 Franklin Street, seats 1500 patrons and shows only first-run pictures, changing the show once a week. This is a thoroughly modern house, erected in 1926, and while smaller than some others, is exceedingly

popular. It is easily in the group of better theaters.

The Worcester Theater, of 22 Exchange Street, is the only one in the city which deals with burlesque and legitimate productions. It has a seating capacity of 1344 and is the second oldest in Worcester, having been built in 1868. It was originally designed for its present use, and therefore, one finds high, steep, balconies and gilded boxes near the stage. The class of shows being put on here is not the best, some of them being of an exceedingly low moral standard. This house is equipped to show silent motion pictures but has no sound apparatus.

The Rialto Theater (20¢), 37 Millbury Street, is next in size, having been built to accommodate 1280 patrons. It was constructed in 1917, and is very plain and unpretentious in appearance. It is a third-and fourth-run house, changes its program three times a week, and is located in a section of the city inhabited by foreigners, and the majority of its patrons come from this section.

The Olympia Theater (25¢), of 9 Pleasant Street, which has a long and varied history, seats 1196 people. Originally, the structure was used for a music hall, but in 1891 it was remodeled for stage productions, and was used for that purpose until the introduction of the motion picture, when it was once more remodeled, this time to its present form. This house shows second-run pictures, changes the program twice a

week, and plays to what might be called a second-class audience.

The Family Theater (15¢), at 122 Front Street, the oldest of them all, will accommodate 855 individuals. It was built in 1865, and was used at first as a "Penny Arcade", later as a "Dime Museum", and finally as a motion picture house. At the present time, it shows only third- and fourth-run pictures and changes its show three times per week. The patronage of this theater is drawn from the lower class of people in the city.

The next in size is the Royal Theater (25¢), 623 Main Street, with 780 seats. This is a third-run house and also changes its features three times a week. It has only one floor, with no balconies at all, is very much out of date, having been built in 1889, and is frequented by very many children and a poorer class of adults.

The smallest theater in the city is the Majestic (15¢), at 144 Front Street. This house seats only 350 persons, and obviously has no balconies. It is a third-, fourth-, and fifth-run house and, of course, changes its pictures three times a week. It was built in 1904, just at the beginning of the motion picture activity, and has shown movies since that time.

To some, this Path-finder Survey may seem unnecessary and even a wasteful use of time, but nevertheless, it is the

only proper approach to this particular investigation. The intent has been to give a clear picture of the city and the control problems it has to meet in the everyday operation of its theaters, and if this has been accomplished, the survey has been worthwhile.

CHAPTER IV

PLAN OF CONTROL IN WORCESTER

From the time of the introduction of the first motion picture into Worcester to the time of the organization of the Worcester Board of Motion Picture Review, the motion pictures of this city were reviewed and controlled only by the police of the city. No elaborate system of previews was used at that time such as is used today. When a picture of questionable character arrived at one of the city's theaters a police sergeant and a policewoman were present at the first showing, and if these two representatives of the law discovered in the film a scene which they considered to be of low moral tone, they had the power to order it removed or "cut". This was the customary method employed. Evidently, the system was not considered adequate or satisfactory by a number of citizens, for in 1916 a new organization, "interested in promoting a better social order",¹⁰ made its appearance.

Acting upon the suggestion of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce and the Worcester Woman's Club, Mayor George M. Wright sent letters to eleven leading civic organizations "Interested in promoting a better social order", suggesting that each organization send three representatives to a meeting to be held on November 24th, to consider the forming of a Board of Review of Motion Pictures. The organizations to which these letters were sent are as follows:

Worcester Chamber of Commerce

Worcester Woman's Club

Catholic Woman's Club

Rotary Club

Public Education Association

Public School Art League

Twentieth Century Club

Parent-Teachers' Association

Levana Club

Elementary Teachers' Association

Young Men's Christian Association

On November 24th, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Wallace T. Morley, called the meeting to order. The Mayor was not present at the meeting, but Mr. Morley spoke for him. He stated that the Mayor desired that a Board of Review of Motion Pictures should be formed in Worcester, which board should not be authoritative, but cooperative, in an advisory capacity, with the Chief of Police. (The Board holds the same relative position at the present time.)

It was decided at this time that there should be four officers at the head of this board, a Chairman, a vice-Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Elections were held at once, with the following results:

Chairman	Mr. Chandler Bullock	Chamber of Commerce
Vice-Chairman	Mr. Everett G. Sherwin	Twentieth Century Club

Secretary	Mrs. Arthur W. Marsh	Worcester Woman's Club
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Treasurer	Miss Mary Gaffney	Levana Club
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In asking for this Board, Mayor Wright had requested three representatives from each of the eleven organizations, making the initial membership total thirty-three. The response of these organizations was perfect, for the names of thirty-three persons willing to serve on such a board were sent in. There were twenty-five present at this first meeting, a fair representation when one considers that the organization is purely voluntary.

The question of a name came up at this point and it was voted to call the new group "The Worcester Board of Motion Picture Review". This was later changed, in 1927, to "The Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review", the name which it now holds.

One other item of business came up at this meeting, the decision to have an Executive Committee. It was voted that such a committee should be made up of representatives to the number of three from each of the organizations constituting the Board, each of these three to serve in turn four months. This completed the business handled November 24th, 1916.

Three days later a second meeting was held, this time a luncheon at the former Main Street restaurant of Putnam and Thurston. At this time, Mr. Cranston Brenton, Chairman of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, gave a

helpful talk on the motion picture industry and the experience of the National Board, which had been operative seven years. Since this first address there have been numerous others, some given by local people, and a number given by men and women high up in the motion picture world.

From 1917 to the present time, there have been Executive Board meetings each month, except in January, May, and September, at which times reports have been made concerning the motion picture theaters which have been assigned annually to the three members (see page 34) representing each organization in the entire Board. In January, May, and September, since 1917, there have been meetings of the complete Board, the one in January being known as the Annual Meeting. At these, reports have been given concerning the film programs of the various theaters and the plays of the so-called "legitimate" theater. Reports have also been given dealing with the general conditions found to exist in the theaters, such as lighting, ventilation, conduct of the audience, etc.

Very early in the operation of the Board, the members realized the need for outside information which would enable them to know something of the various films, before they were put on the screen in any of the houses. In order to fill this need, a Bulletin Committee, consisting of three members, was appointed. It was the duty of this committee to read the various trade reviews of motion pictures on their release

and report to the Chief of Police any films that seemed to call for a preview before being allowed public showing. In order to facilitate this work, subscriptions for two trade magazines were taken out at once, the periodicals being "Moving Picture World" and "Motion Picture News". Early in 1927, the Bulletin Committee changed their subscriptions and now rely for guidance on the weekly reports of the independent reviewer, Mr. P. S. Harrison, "Motion Picture News", and "Selected Motion Pictures".

At the end of 1920, seventeen organizations constituted this board. At the present time, twenty-five organizations are members, as follows:

- American Legion
- Boy Scouts of America
- Catholic Woman's Club
- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Independent Order of B'nai B'rith
- Kiwanis Club
- Levana Club
- Monday Evening Club
- Parent-Teachers Association
- Public Education Association
- Rotary Club
- Worcester Boys' Club
- Worcester Business and Professional Woman's Club

Worcester Central Labor Union
 Worcester Chamber of Commerce
 Worcester College Club
 Worcester Council of Jewish Women
 Worcester Drama League
 Worcester Elementary Teachers'
 Association
 Worcester Girl Scouts Council, Inc.
 Worcester Ministers Union
 Worcester Parents League
 Worcester Woman's Club
 Young Men's Christian Association
 Young Women's Christian Association

On January 10th, 1918, by-laws for the Board's operation were presented by a committee chosen for the purpose and, with some discussion, these were adopted. (To appear on a following page.) Shortly after the formation of the Board, it became very evident that a set of standards to guide the activities of the new organization was necessary, and in June of 1919, the Committee on Standards made its report, which was adopted at that time. (To appear on a following page.)

This brief introduction to the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review leads one immediately to a consideration of its present form and operation.

When one first inquires into the Worcester system for control of motion pictures, he is impressed and somewhat

over-awed at its seeming complexity, though, actually, the whole system is very simple, yet very complete. In order to give a clear, concise view of the present structure of the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review, the By-Laws of the organization are presented, as follows:

BY-LAWS¹¹

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review.

Article II. Objects

The objects of this Board are to develop higher standards of taste among the managers and patrons of the theaters; to study conditions in the local picture-theaters; and to prevent the presentation of films that menace the morals of the community.

Article III. Officers

Section 1. The officers of this Board shall be four, namely. a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. These officers shall be elected by ballot at the annual meeting, and shall serve for one year, or until their successors are chosen.

Section 2. On retiring, officers shall automatically become members emeriti of the Board, with the privilege of attending and voting at the meetings of the Board and at previews. Upon request the Secretary shall notify former officers of the time and place of meetings of the Board.

Article IV. Membership

Section 1. The Board shall be composed of three representatives each, from organizations aiming to promote general civic welfare and a better social order. These three representatives shall serve in addition to officers of the Board.

Section 2. The Board shall be limited to twenty-five organizations.

Section 3. The organizations whose representatives compose this Board are the following:

American Legion

Boy Scouts of America

Catholic Woman's Club

Daughters of the American Revolution

Independent Order of B'nai B'rith

Kiwanis Club

Levana Club

Monday Evening Club

Parent Teachers Association

Public Education Association

Rotary Club

Worcester Boys' Club

Worcester Business and Professional Woman's
Club

Worcester Central Labor Union

Worcester Chamber of Commerce

Worcester College Club

Worcester Council of Jewish Women

Worcester Drama League

Worcester Elementary Teachers' Association

Worcester Girl Scouts Council, Inc.

Worcester Ministers Union

Worcester Parents League

Worcester Woman's Club

Young Men's Christian Association

Young Women's Christian Association

Section 4. The membership of an organization shall be cancelled if said organization fails to be represented at three consecutive previews, or regular meetings, notice having been given in writing after the second failure to be represented.

Article V. Committees

The standing committees of the Board shall be an Executive Committee, a Membership Committee, and a Bulletin Committee.

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall comprise one member from each constituent organization, in addition to the officers of the Board. This committee shall have full power to transact all business for the Board. Five members shall constitute a quorum.

Each member of the Board shall serve on the Executive Committee as an active member for four months in the year, the order of such service to be determined by the secretary of each organization.

Any active member who is unable to be present at the Executive Committee meetings should see to it that the report of his theater is made by some other member from his organization.

Any member of the Board may attend the Executive Committee meetings, and may receive notice of such meetings by making request of the Secretary.

Section 2. The Membership Committee shall consist of five members, appointed by the Chairman. Its duty shall be to pass upon all applications for membership, and upon suggestions from the Board, or recommendations from various organizations relative to membership in this Board. Its recommendations shall be made to the Executive Committee.

Section 3. The Bulletin Committee shall consist of three members, appointed by the Chairman. It shall every week examine available announcements of forthcoming films,

and report to the Chief of Police any films that it suspects may violate the standards of the Board.

Article VI. Meetings

The Annual Meeting of the Board shall be held on the second Thursday in January.

Other regular meetings of the full Board shall be held on the second Thursday of May and September.

Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held on the second Thursday of February, March, April, June, October, November, and December.

Written notices of all regular meetings shall be sent by the Secretary. Special meetings, at the request of the Chairman, may be called by telephone.

Article VII. Dues

The annual dues shall be five dollars for each organization represented. Dues shall be payable in January.

Article VIII. Amendments

These by-laws may be amended by majority vote at any meeting of the full Board, provided that previous notice of the intended amendment has been sent in writing to all members.

End

From a careful reading of these by-laws, one should gain a fairly definite picture of the structure and operation of the Worcester Board. Yet to establish further this organization in proper perspective, enlargement upon what some of the by-laws have stated is necessary.

To describe the system best, it is probably necessary to consider first the Bulletin Committee, as it is this committee

that blazes the trail for all others following. As indicated in a previous paragraph, the duty of the committee is to read the reviews of the various new films as they are described in the motion picture trade journals. If the description of coming pictures seems to indicate that a picture will be in any way objectionable, the committee notes this and sends a list of "suspicious" pictures to the Chief of Police. He keeps a list of these and as soon as any manager signifies his intention of showing one of them, the Chief notifies him that he must present a preview of the film to the Motion Picture Board and have it approved by the Board before it can be shown in Worcester. When the Bulletin Committee has put this list of suspicious pictures into the hands of the Police Chief, it has completed its task as a committee.

Of course, pictures which are not included in this list of the Bulletin Committee require no preview. They are not ignored completely (see page 34), but for the time being, they receive no further attention. More will be said of this later. Let us follow the course of a picture which is on the suspicious list, and which is scheduled to be on a theater's program in the near future. The Chief has told the theater manager that he must put on a preview of the film for the Board to see. The manager communicates with the secretary of the Board and sets a date for the preview. This time is

usually the hours immediately preceding the usual morning showing of the regular picture but at times, when conditions require, a preview is given after the last show in the evening, say, at eleven P. M. The secretary of the Board sends notices to the members telling them of the preview and urging them to be present. As this is a voluntary organization, and as all members are not free from their work at some of the stated hours, there is seldom anything like one hundred percent attendance. At one preview at nine o'clock in the morning, there were but forty-five members present out of a possible seventy-five.

Let us take up the matter of previews in some detail, as this is the chief instrument used by the Board to control the showing of motion pictures. In order to guide itself in this matter, the Board has set up definite rules to follow, together with a statement of what it shall use as a standard in judging the merits or demerits of a picture. Rules for Previews will be dealt with first as indicated in the booklet, "Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review By-Laws, Standards and Rules for Previews", 1931, published by the Board.

11

RULES FOR PREVIEWS

Members should take seriously their obligations to the Board of Motion Picture Review, especially as to attendance and proxies.

1. Any member who cannot attend a preview should send as proxy some other member from the same organization which he or she represents.
2. Such proxies shall give to the secretary, upon their arrival at the theater, their names and the name of the organization which they represent.
3. The secretary shall keep a record of the attendance.
4. It is the policy of this Board not to grant a re-review of a rejected film.

Method of Procedure -- Balloting

- A. When the film is silent, or the sound is on the film, a first ballot shall be taken without discussion.
 Question: May the picture be shown in its present form, without cuts?
 Ballots shall be marked either "Yes" or "No".
 A "Yes" majority passes the picture.
 If there is a "No" majority, a second ballot shall be taken to determine whether the picture shall be rejected or cut.
 Previous discussion allowed.
 Ballots shall be marked "Reject" or "Cut".
 A two-thirds majority shall be required to reject a picture.
 When the film is to be cut, the chairman shall appoint a committee of five, including the secretary, to make eliminations.
- B. When the sound is on the disk, one ballot only shall be taken.
 Discussion not allowed.
 Question: "May the picture be shown?".
 Ballots shall be marked either "Yes" or "No".
 A two-thirds majority shall be required to reject a picture,

To one not acquainted with the mechanics of the reproduction of sound synchronized with motion pictures, the two phrases "the sound is on the film" and "the sound is on the disk" probably mean little. Nevertheless, the explanation is

7,4
 simple. In the first case, the sound that is heard from the screen is embodied in markings along the edge of the motion picture film, and as the film passes through the machine, the sound is picked up by a light ray and transmitted to the speaker immediately behind the screen. Having the picture and the sound go together in this way, it is not at all difficult to eliminate objectionable film wherever it may occur. Thus, a picture using this system of sound reproduction may be "cut" just as easily as a silent picture may be.

The phrase, "the sound is on the disk" means, however, that a device much the same as an ordinary phonograph record is used to transmit the sound to the speaker. Instead of the picture and the sound being on the same strip, they are separate, one on the celluloid film and the other on a disk. With this arrangement it is not possible to make eliminations in the disk coincide with eliminations in the film, thus making it necessary to accept the entire film as it is, or to reject it completely. To be sure, it would be possible to cut the film, but in the meantime, the sound for the eliminated part would continue, the screen being dark at the same time. This, therefore, is the reason for making no provision for voting on cuts when the sound is on the disk.

The following is a brief description of a typical preview. The members have been notified, and at a few minutes of nine o'clock, the time set for the showing, they begin to

arrive. The Secretary of the organization stands at the door and passes only members or legitimate visitors into the theater. Promptly at the hour stated, the picture is flashed onto the screen. There are no preliminaries; these people are here only to see the picture and pass judgment on it, not to see a complete show. At the close of the picture, the Secretary passes to the members the ballots to be used in voting on the picture, at the same time informing them as to whether the sound is on the film or on the disk. The type of ballot appropriate to the film previewed, e.g., on the film, or on the disk, is used, and on it are printed the proper questions as shown in the "Rules for Previews": That is, a ballot for use with a film that has the sound on the disk would simply ask "May the picture be shown?" With this type of film, it is not customary to cut, so, therefore, there can be only the one ballot, to be marked either "yes" or "no". With the sound on the film, it is possible to cut, so two ballots are often used. The question on the first ballot asks simply "May this picture be shown in its present form without cuts?" If the vote is in the affirmative, that is the end of it; if in the negative, then a second ballot is passed around, this one having the question "Shall this picture be rejected or cut?" If the result of this ballot indicates merely a desire to have the picture cut, the President appoints a committee of five,

including the secretary, to look after the matter.

If, as a result of the voting, the picture is completely condemned, then it cannot be shown in Worcester. What actually happens is that the secretary of the Board, through the police sergeant present, informs the Chief of Police of the decision of the Board and the Chief passes this decision on to the theater manager. At least one of the policewomen and frequently both, as well as a Sergeant are present during the previews and the film does not go on until one of them is in the house. Also, they stay with the secretary to report the vote and to see that required deletions are made. This immediately raises the question of the exact legal status of the Board but this will be dealt with in a later paragraph.

All of this discussion of previews and cuts brings up the subject of standards. What does the Board consider fitting and proper for the populace of Worcester to see? How far may a picture sink before it drowns itself in a sea of disgust? The Board has answered this question through its Committee on Standards which made a report on this subject, in June of 1919, soon after the founding of the organization. The report follows in full:

11

STANDARD

Report of Committee on Standards, adopted June, 1919.

Society has a right to all the benefits and advantages of the motion picture, but it also has a duty to protect itself

against harmful influences and possible evils. To gain this end, censorship is just and expedient. A worthy censorship must avoid any semblance to a narrow, rigid, Pharasaical attitude. Hence it will be our aim in judging films to find ground where all can meet in general agreement. In this sense, we face a highly constructive work by upholding what is desirable, beautiful and worthy in life.

However, we cannot always hope for united sentiment and action but we shall exercise prudence and charity; prudence, in refraining from giving free nototiety to obnoxious films; and charity, in hesitating to condemn where there is room for honest difference of opinion. The Board of Motion Picture Review has set for itself the critical study of all sorts of films for the purpose of obtaining a knowledge of their moral value and effect, and now has essayed a further step in asking this Committee to outline a few basic principles as guides in forming our judgement of films.

Pictures should present clean, wholesome entertainment or amusement and all parts which tend to debase morals, establish false standards of conduct, or inflame the mind to improper adventure should be eliminated. Films should be judged as a whole, with a view to their total or final effect.

In general the Board considers as undesirable, pictures portraying the following:

1. Contempt for law and authority.
2. Malicious destruction of property.
3. Instruction in the methods of crime.
4. Ridicule or reproach of races, classes, social groups, or religious bodies.
5. Mockery of things commonly held dear and sacred, such as religion, marriage, birth, death.
6. Elaboration of the gruesome or horrible.
7. Scenes of seduction.
8. Scenes in which the body is indecently exposed.
9. Sex-health films.

Important

Special attention should be paid to Subtitles.

Owing to the conditions under which the Board does its work, the fact that other films, as objectionable as a certain one under consideration, have been shown in our theaters, should not be considered a reason for passing an undesirable film. The Board has neither the privilege nor the facilities for previewing all the films in the city, and we should, when we have the opportunity, bar any film which violates the standards of the Board.

To attempt to enlarge upon this report on Standards would be futile. As nearly as possible, it expresses what the Board wishes to set up as its guide in judging the merits of motion pictures. It is, of course, impossible to set up a list of iron-clad rules to be agreed to as well as followed by seventy-five people. What one person condemns, another may condone. Of necessity then, a set of Standards for such an organization must leave room for exercise of individual judgement.

A previous page (20) referred to those pictures which are not previewed by the Board, the pictures that the Bulletin Committee has investigated and found not questionable. It is true that these pictures are given no previews, but one may be sure that they are not completely ignored. At the first showing of a picture in a theater, there is a representative of the Board present, a member of the Executive Committee whose duty it is to make sure that there are no objectionable scenes in the film (see page 20). If there are obnoxious

parts in the picture, the representative of the Board informs the Secretary, who in turn informs the Chief of Police, who, of course, has the real power to act in the case. These representatives are voluntary workers and are not paid at all for their efforts, even paying their own admission to the show they are watching. Each member organization chooses three from within its ranks, who shall serve four months each at this work. Of course, with twenty-five organizations, and but twelve theaters in the city, there is naturally some overlapping, although not as much as might be expected at first thought. Some of the theaters change their shows as often as three times a week. Then again, the representatives from some of the member organizations cannot spend much of their time seeing the first showings. For example, the representatives from the Boys' Club are regular employees at the Club and cannot always be free from their duties there. In checking on the Worcester Theater, the only burlesque show in the city, three (3) men's organizations combine their efforts, as the show here is not considered fit for women to attend. By using the system of previews and the system of watching the first showings, a very rigid check is kept on all the theaters in the city.

The question of the legality of the Board must come to the mind of the reader. One wonders how it is that a voluntary organization can compel the obedience of all the motion

picture managers in the matter of previews and cuts. Actually, the Board has no legal standing whatsoever, as there is no provision made for it anywhere in the set-up of the city government.¹² It was organized to fill a need, and since its organization it has become a very distinct help to the police, for it relieves the Chief of Police and his department of the details of censoring the pictures coming into the city. Because of this, and also because the organization has the backing of prominent people, the Chief enforces the wishes of the Board. It must be understood that in a controversy in a court, the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review would have no legal standing whatsoever. It gains its power only through the courtesy of the Police, and of the city officials. It is evident that this power has not been abused, for it is still retained after eighteen years. It is thought that the Worcester Board is unique, for the reason that it is the only known Board that has the power to enforce its rulings on pictures, and yet really has no legal standing.⁷

The preceding paragraphs describe the present form and operation of the organization known as the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review. Such a description, however, would not be complete without some information to indicate just what it has done since its inception.

The table on page 38 indicates just what the Board has done with regard to controlling the showing of films. It will

be seen that, of a total of 199 films acted upon, 116 or 58.3% were passed, 38 or 19.1% were "cut", and 45 or 22.6% were rejected. In order to give more meaning to these figures, it would be desirable to know exactly how many pictures had been brought to Worcester since the beginning of the Worcester Board's activities. However, it has proved impossible, for several reasons, to determine this nearer than a very broad approximation, which would be too inaccurate to be of any value.

There was one instance where enforcement by the Police was lacking.¹³ In 1932, the Board rejected a picture entitled "Red Headed Woman". The manager of the theater insisted that he could not get another picture in time to take the place of the one rejected and that the rejection of this one would mean that he would have to close for at least part of a week. The Chief allowed him to show the picture, although he required that the film be cut in several places. (This is the only instance that could be found where the Chief did not bear out the ruling of the Board.)

However, the work of the Board has not all been of a negative character. In November of 1931 it took steps towards helping a picture by publicly endorsing it.¹⁴ The General Federation of Women's Clubs asked the Board to help them in their attempt to boost worthwhile pictures. The film was entitled "Way Back Home" and the story was built around

Seth Parker of radio fame. The Board did help, with the result that, with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, when most theaters have many patrons, there was a record attendance.

In December, 1932, the Board was asked to sponsor another film, this one "With Williamson Under the Sea".¹³ A preview was held in order to acquaint the members with the film, and thirty-five letters were sent out to the heads of different organizations interested in better films, A hundred people attended this preview, including those to whom special invitations had been sent

year ¹⁵	passed	cut	rejected	total acted upon
1916-17	3	1	0	4
1918	3	3	0	6
1919	4	2	1	7
1920	2	2	3	7
1921	3	2	3	8
1922	1	1	1	3
1923	4	2	3	9
1924	11	4	4	19
1925	14	4	5	23
1926	1	5	0	6
1927	8	4	2	14
1928	5	3	4	12
1929	7	3	3	13

year	passed	cut	rejected	total acted upon
1930	11	0	7	18
1931	18	1	5	24
1932	9	0	3	12
1933	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	116	38	45	199

In February, 1933, the Board endorsed a third picture, "Cavalcade" and had a hundred window cards printed, advertising it.¹⁶ These cards were distributed throughout the city and a number were placed in store windows in surrounding towns.

A description of the Worcester Board and its activities would not be complete without a supplement of the carefully weighed opinions of various citizens of Worcester who are in a position to know something of the Board's formation and operation. In order to make this information available, several prominent and influential people of the city have been asked to write brief criticisms, which are reproduced here. These are merely opinions and some of them may be very biased (Board members), but they can be fairly taken as indicators of the value of the Board.

One prominent clergyman of Worcester says in his letter, "With reference to the Worcester Board of Censors, it has been difficult for me to formulate an opinion. In general, it might be said that the Board is not entirely satisfactory to

either the moving picture managers or to the general public, which might be an indication of the fact that they are doing a very good job. The probability is that some things get by that might better have been eliminated, but I think, however, that the system works very well, particularly as a moral force. It is hanging over the managers constantly and, therefore, works as a restraint against bringing undesirable pictures to Worcester. Occasionally the Board has prevented the bringing of pictures here that the managers thought ought to be shown.

"It is just possible that there are better methods of handling this problem, but I have never known of one to work better than this one in Worcester."

A well known educator of Worcester says of its plan and operation, "Worcester's system of motion picture control has the distinct value of being a voluntary civic service, performed by citizens who seek only the welfare of the community without any hope of personal reward or the promotion of the interests of any group or special cause. It is without the power of law, but because it represents the best local public opinion, a factor keenly recognized by the Chief of Police, the Board's recommendations are followed, I believe, without exception and without hesitation or delay. It takes valuable time of busy citizens but because of the unselfish sacrifice involved, the service rendered is doubtless the

more effective and the more appreciated. It is my opinion that it meets the situation in Worcester with results that in the main are gratifying."

A man prominent in the literary field says, "I can say in a general way that while these boards have the potential danger of being no stronger than their weakest link, they do give a service to the community which I fear we are not able to trust the motion picture producers to perform themselves at the present time."

A man whose work brings him in contact with many boys of the city says of the Board, "I believe without any doubt that the Worcester Board of Motion Picture Review is a good thing. I think it has been the means of eliminating many pictures which were injurious to children.

Of course, the ideal situation would be to consider pictures from the viewpoint of the protection of the children only and this would be possible if children could be barred from showing of questionable pictures.

The difficulty now is that we must not only consider a film from the viewpoint of the protection of the children but we must also have in mind the rights of adults to see the pictures that they want to see."

A member of the Board writes, "As for myself, I will say that whereas I regret the conditions making necessary the existence of the Worcester Board, and I feel that state or

national control should be sufficient, taking everything into consideration, I believe that the work of the local Board is on the whole necessary and efficient. One excellent factor is the cooperation of twenty-five welfare societies in this work. The worst feature, perhaps, is the difficulty of sustaining interest, and the fact that a few members regard their work as chiefly of a negative character, and vote against practically every preview which we are called upon to judge."

A woman closely connected with the Woman's Club of the city writes, in part, of the previewing system of the Board, "The Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review is made up of three representatives from each of twenty-five organizations in the city. When a picture is previewed and the vote taken, one has a cross section of public opinion on that particular picture."

An influential manufacturer says, "As a citizen viewing the work of the Board from a distance, I would say that by and large my general impression is that they perform a very valuable service to the community and one which might be even greater were it not for the fact that to make any major cuts in feature films oftentimes ruins the continuity and that in turn hampers a minute censorship."

In the letters that these persons have written, they agreed upon at least one thought, namely, that although the

Worcester Board is not perfect, it does operate effectively and does accomplish something of real value to the people of the city.

CHAPTER V

SITUATION IN SPRINGFIELD

The city of Springfield is not different from the city of Worcester in respect to the presence of motion pictures and the problems which they bring. Before discussing the system for control of motion pictures in use in Springfield, let us see what kind of a city it is. Springfield became a city in 1852, with a population of 12,500, and has grown so that in 1933 the inhabitants numbered 151,427 (estimated). The following figures will give some indication of the city's growth in the last thrity-three years.

Year	Population
1900	62,059
1905	73,540
1910	88,926
1915	102,971
1920	120,614
1925	142,065
1930	149,900
1933	151,427

Springfield is primarily a manufacturing center, producing many varied products and surrounded with agricultural communities. These facts probably account for the very mixed population, although approximately three-fourths of the people are native born. It is a community of home lovers and is known as the "City of Homes". The Springfield City Directory, 1933, says, "Springfield is the only city in the area between Boston, Albany, and New York that has developed in a balanced

way along the lines of beauty, education, finance, industry, mercantile and recreation". If it is a city that has "developed in a balanced way along the lines of . . . recreation", then the system of control for the commercial type of entertainment, the motion picture, should be worthy of study.

While not as large as Worcester, Springfield contains fourteen theaters with a combined seating capacity of 19,322, the largest of which will seat 2800 at one time. As in connection with the discussion of the Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review, a brief description of the various theaters is necessary to give a proper understanding of the situation. This, of course, is the Pathfinder Survey applied now to Springfield instead of to Worcester.

Before describing each motion picture house individually, it is advisable to call attention to the fact that the theaters of Springfield are more scattered about the city than they are in Worcester. There is no "theater district" in Springfield at all, no segregation of theaters within a few blocks of each other. However, one finds several placed at a distance from the center of the city, constituting a class of "neighborhood" theaters. In this respect, Springfield is quite different from Worcester, in that Worcester has no neighborhood theaters at all. This fact will be discussed in more detail later.

The largest theater in Springfield is the Paramount (50¢), at 1704 Main Street. This house will seat 2800 patrons is the newest and undoubtedly the most modern of all theaters in the city and shows only first-run pictures changing but once a week. A better class of people attend this house, for it is excellent in every respect.

The Fox Poli (50¢), of 192 Worthington Street, is next in order, having seating facilities for 2500 patrons. Only first-run pictures are shown here, changing once a week. The theater is modern in design, and a very good class of people attend.

The Broadway Theater (35¢), of 101 Bridge Street, seats 1875 people at one time and plays to a good class of people. A first-run show is presented, but it is changed twice a week. Occasionally, some burlesque is added to the motion picture program.

Practically the same size is the Capitol (50¢), of 1368 Main Street, having seats for 1814 people. This, also, is a first-run house, and changes its feature but once a week. It stands among Springfield's foremost, and attracts a good class of patrons.

(Note: As before, the figure immediately following the theater name indicates, for the sake of comparison, the price asked for the best seat in the house at the evening show.)

The Court Square (55¢), closed from time to time, deals only in legitimate stage productions. It seats in all, 1699 people, and is rather old in construction. A very excellent class of people attend these plays.

(The next theater in order of size is one of the neighborhood group, which group will be covered in a later paragraph.)

The Arcade Theater (35¢) of 171 State Street will accommodate 1081. This one is very modern, and enjoys a good class of patronage, although it does show second-run pictures and changes these twice a week.

Only slightly smaller is the Bijou (25¢), of 9 Worthington Street, with a seating capacity of 1000. This is a first-run house, and the feature is changed but once each week. Its construction is far from modern, showing plainly that it was designed for stage productions. It is situated in a poorer part of the city, though it plays to a fair class of people.

At 1670 Main Street Fox's Theater (15¢) is located, a very decidedly old-fashioned and antiquated structure. Only fourth-run films are shown here and they are changed four times a week. A poorer class of people attend, though the theater has undoubtedly seen much better days. The second balcony is now closed, and without it the theater will seat 903 individuals.

The smallest of the theaters in the "downtown" class is the Franklin (25¢), at 341 Chestnut Street. It will accommodate 800 at one time, shows only third-and fourth-run films and changes these three times each week. Although the house is modern in construction, it is located in a poor section and attracts only a fair class of people.

In at least one respect, the theater situation in Springfield is very different from the situation in Worcester, for in the former there are to be found five neighborhood theaters, all under one head, the Winchester Amusement Corporation, while in the latter, as mentioned before, there are no neighborhood houses. These five theaters are placed at tiny centers about the outskirts of the city and are far from the downtown theater district. One of these is 2.1 miles from the center of the city and the others, with one exception, are a similar distance away. Because they are under the same ownership, and because they are neighborhood theaters, the description of the five will be very similar. The largest, the Phillips (25¢), 499 Summer Avenue, seats 1200, exhibits second-run films which are changed twice a week, is a modern theater, and caters to a nice class of people, while many of the patrons are children. The Liberty Theater (25¢), of 739 Liberty Street, is another of the same group. This house will accommodate 1000 people, shows third-

run pictures changing three times, is modern, and also plays to a nice class of people. The description of the Jefferson (20¢), 2645 Main Street, is identical, with one exception, namely, that fourth-run pictures are shown instead of third. The Strand Theater (25¢), of 24 Eastern Avenue, accommodates 1000 patrons, plays third-run films, changing three times a week, is another modern house, and enjoys the patronage of a good class of people. The last of the neighborhood theaters is really not one at all, but instead, is located in the downtown area. The reason that it is classed among the neighborhood group is that it is operated by the same corporation as the four already mentioned. This theater, the Garden (15¢), 1176 Main Street, seats but 650 patrons, and is not attractive either inside or out. The films are fourth-run, and are changed four times each week, more often than in the other neighborhood houses. The people who attend are by no means the better class in the city, the location no doubt partly accounting for this. The entrance is very nondescript and the structure inside, formerly a nickelodeon, is very narrow and old-fashioned. These theaters play a very important part in the work of the Springfield Motion Picture Council, as will be indicated later, and for that reason they have been included in a class by themselves.

CHAPTER VI

PLAN OF CONTROL IN SPRINGFIELD

Previous to March of 1930, the city of Springfield relied on police censorship of motion pictures for control of that branch of entertainment.¹⁹ Without casting reflections on the police of Springfield, many people of the city felt that the censorship was not providing what they would like to see - a good class of motion pictures. Legislation for morals did not operate effectively and censorship did not tend to raise the tone of Springfield's pictures. In an attempt to relieve this situation, the Women's Clubs of Springfield, under the leadership of Mrs. Fred B. Cross, of 34 Pineywoods Avenue of that city, in March of 1930, started a movement to form what is known as the Springfield Motion Picture Council. At the time this movement was started, Mrs. Cross was state chairman of Community Service, a division of the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs. Part of the work that comes within Community Service is directed towards raising the level of the motion pictures; and for that reason, Mrs. Cross was already familiar with the problems concerned. Under her leadership, and sponsored by the Springfield Federation of Women's Clubs, the Springfield Motion picture Council had a rapid growth, so that by October of 1930, sixteen advisors or representatives of Women's Clubs

of the city met at the Springfield Woman's Club at the first Fall meeting of the Council.²⁰ Mrs. Cross had been appointed chairman of that body by the executive board of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, and she in turn appointed the following advisory committee; Mrs. A. A. Packard, Mrs. Luke Stowe, Mrs. C. L. Beckwith, Mrs. James Hale, and the corresponding and recording secretaries, Mrs. S. H. Crane and Miss Gertrude Goward respectively. At this meeting, the results of the summer's activity were reported and a program of work to be accomplished by the Council was outlined. The purpose of the Council was summarized in the words "We want good pictures in Springfield", and a motto was adopted, "Cooperation not censorship makes the best pictures pay best" which indicated the line of endeavor along which this Council intended to work. Censorship had been tried in Springfield and had been found wanting; now cooperation was to be given an opportunity.

Since October, 1930, monthly meetings of the Council have been held from September until May. During the summer a small advisory committee is available to assist the chairman whenever necessary. In May of 1931, the end of the first year of the Council, forty-seven different organizations of Springfield and surrounding towns were members, of which²¹ thirty-two were women's clubs. The Council had not limited its membership to the various women's clubs of the city but

had been willing to admit other organizations, from the outside, who were interested in the general welfare of the city, into its ranks. Some of these other clubs include the league of Women Voters, Scouts, Hard of Hearing League, Churches, Parent Teacher's Associations, Y. W. C. A., schools, Home for Aged Women, College Club, Hampton Club and others. In 1932, from as many as fifteen surrounding towns representatives came to the meetings and previews as members of the Council.

During the first two years of the Council, correspondence was carried on by Mrs. Cross with Mrs. T. G. Winter, Director of Public Relations of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Hollywood, California; with Mrs. A. N. Diehl, Chairman of Motion Pictures, General Federation of Women's Clubs, N. Y. City; with Mr. Carl Milliken and Mr. Will Hayes, Secretary and President respectively, of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. During the last two years this work has been carried on by Mrs. R. S. Crane, the new chairman. This correspondence has dealt with matters studied by the Council, such as the problem of block-booking (the buying of the entire production of one studio over a period of time, with no opportunity to choose and refuse particular pictures), shorts (pictures that complete a program along with the main feature film), undesirable advertising and juvenile features.

At various times the Council has been the means of stopping objectionable pictures, of preventing the distribution of questionable advertising, and, on the other side of the question, the means of aiding especially good shows. (This whole matter will be dealt with more specifically later.)

At the present time, April, 1934, the Motion Picture Council has a membership of thirty-six organizations within the city and six active advisors from surrounding towns. The officers of the Council include a chairman, a vice-chairman, secretary, membership secretary, telephone committee and theater advisors.

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So much for the history of the Springfield Motion Picture Council since its organization four years ago. Now a description of the inside operation of the organization is in order. The Council tries to accomplish its work through cooperation rather than through force or compulsion, and this though carries through all its work. The Council, like the Worcester Board, is a voluntary organization and it, too, has the best interests of the city at heart. The members feel that more can be accomplished by cooperating with the theater managers and supporting good pictures than by simply cutting or condemning completely the poorer shows. This, then, is the basis upon which the Council operates and this though is embodied in its slogan "Co-operation Not

Censorship Makes the Best Pictures Pay Best".²⁰

Perhaps the best way to indicate the method of operation used by the Council would be to repeat suggestions made by the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs, Division of Community Service, which are sent in printed form to each Council throughout the state. Insofar as has been possible, the Springfield Motion Picture Council has followed these suggestions, given as follows:

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MOTION PICTURES

A. OUR SLOGAN

"Co-operation Not Censorship Makes the Best Pictures Pay Best"

B. OUR AIMS

1. Co-operative support of good pictures
2. Development of programs for children

C. OUR PROGRAM

1. A motion picture chairman in every club.
2. Establishment of contact with exhibitors and producers in order that suggestions and wishes of the Federation may be made known directly to the motion picture industry.
3. To keep departments of the Federation advised of motion pictures which they can use in furtherance of their departmental work and to assist whenever practical, to obtain such productions.
4. To classify and to make available to the membership insofar as possible--lists of films of special interest and value in an effort to guide in advance motion picture attendance.
5. To encourage Family Night programs and to give support to programs for children when suitably presented.
6. To encourage every club to devote at least one meeting a year to study of the motion picture in order that the problems which face us and the industry alike may be better understood.

7. With your own club as a nucleus, solicit the interest of every organization in town and organize a Motion Picture Council to work for and support better pictures in your community.

D. FACTS WORTH REMEMBERING

It is estimated that 115 million people go to motion pictures every week.

Due to non-support, some of our finest pictures have been shown at a tremendous loss.

Select your motion picture entertainment as carefully as you do your drama.

If a picture pleases you, tell your friends; if not, tell your exhibitor.

You should also take the trouble to write your criticisms directly to

The Distributors and Producers
of America

469 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Criticisms should also be sent to

Mrs. Thomas D. Winter

(Associate Director of Public Relations
of Hollywood for guidance of directors,
scenario writers and studio executives.)

In the Council's Annual Report for 1932, the recording secretary, Miss Gertrude P. Goward, has summarized in excellent fashion the four ways by which the Council has done its work. This summary is as follows:

The work of the Council has been achieved in the following ways:²²

1. By individual members serving as contacts with local theaters.
2. By study of available literature.
3. By correspondence both with national officials in the film industry and with persons in national and local organizations carrying on similar activities.
4. By direct action in special instances.

Over the last four years, it has been the custom for individual members who have been delegated to theaters to seek interviews with managers, request information concerning

advance booking, urge managers to consult approved preview lists in making up their bookings, draw attention to undesirable block booking, and endeavor to show managers that they can rely upon organized support by maintaining high both in advertising and in choice of films. "Organized support" means just what the words imply. If a manager will co-operate and put on a show especially fine for children or young people, the Council will allow him to use its name in the advertising for that particular show. In the case of the neighborhood houses, the Council asks the managers to show only approved programs for weekends and to put on their sophisticated films during the middle of the week. Then the children, through the members of the organizations of the Council, are urged to attend movies only on weekends and not during the week. On certain occasions, when an especially desirable picture needs some strong publicity and backing, the Council, through its member organizations, is in a position to reach as many as 6000 women by telephone in a very short time to acquaint them with the facts.²⁵ Their united stand in matters of this kind can wield a really potent influence. Furthermore, the women reached by this "grapevine" represent all races and creeds and all social levels, thus making the system much more effective than if only a certain group could be reached. The whole Council, then, makes itself felt by combined pressure against undesirable films and

by combined backing for worthwhile shows.

The question arises as to the source of the Motion Picture Council's information as to films, whether good or bad. Four outstanding sources of this information are used, first, a preview list of satisfactory films put out by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, second, preview lists put out by the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, third, "International Catholic Broadcast", and fourth, "National Board of Review Magazine", a monthly issue. The "International Catholic Broadcast" is sent out each month over station WLWL and then is sent in printed form to key people, as, the secretary of the Springfield Motion Picture Council. The Council has found these lists useful in its work, but does not rely upon any one source alone. They have become very much in demand by clubs, libraries, Y.W.C.A.'s, Chambers of Commerce, churches, factories, etc.

One very important fact must be remembered in connection with the Springfield Motion Picture Council. As the brief survey indicated, there are five neighborhood theaters in Springfield. The item of real importance is that the Council spends more of its efforts in working with the neighborhood houses than with the downtown theaters. It does not ignore the downtown houses, but simply feels that its most effective work can be done with the managers of the theaters on the outskirts of the city. There are several reasons for this,

First, the audiences of the neighborhood theaters are made up largely of children. Second, downtown houses cater to a more sophisticated patronage, an audience not as likely to be influenced by pictures not of the highest standing. Third, the downtown area has mostly first-run houses, and it has proved more difficult for the Council to make its influence felt here than in the neighborhoods. In the first-run theaters, most of the Council's work takes the form of helpful advertising of especially good shows. That is, the Council does not try to influence the manager in choosing his films as much as it tries to aid him by giving his pictures publicity when they are especially deserving. For example, on November 29, 1933, a picture entitled "Little Women" came to one of the city's theaters. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind but that this picture is worthy of commendation. The Council took steps to aid the showing of this film by giving it as much publicity as it could. Club members were notified by telephone that it came highly recommended. At a special club meeting this recommendation was emphasized. Needless to say, the newspaper advertising of the film carried the endorsement of the Council. Study guides had been printed and sent out by the producers of the film, and fifty copies were obtained by the Council and distributed in the city where they would be the most effective. For instance, copies were put into the public libraries, where commercial

advertising is not allowed. (This was possible only because the film was starting on Louisa Alcott's birthday and the library was running a birthday anniversary week in her honor.) The work of the Council with the downtown theaters very largely takes this form.

In the second-run houses and in the neighborhood theaters, the work of the Council deals more with the quality of the pictures, especially over the weekend, than with the advertising of these shows. Recently, in 1933, the Springfield Motion Picture Council, at the solicitation of the Manager, Mr. Kennedy, of the Arcade Theater, a second-run house, started a movement for a Junion Matinee every Saturday morning. Only pictures approved by the Council and designed for children's entertainment were to be shown. This had been done before, in other parts of the country, with considerable success, and the movement was successful here, also.

There is one other body in Springfield that exerts an influence on motion pictures and that is the Police Department, operating through two policewomen. Although they do keep a check on the theaters by seeing the various shows as they come along, they, too, feel that more can be accomplished by tact and cooperation than by use of their police power. To be sure, they can cause a manager to loose his license to operate for a technical or legal mis-showing, but they prefer not to use this method of control. Rather than that, they co-operate

whenever possible with the Motion Picture Council, or leave the matter of motion pictures entirely to the Council. Whenever a particular scene involving obscenity or swearing appears in a film, they order it cut, but the work of raising the general tone of the motion pictures is left entirely to the Council.²⁶ Of course, the Council may appeal to the police to remove or cut a particular picture or obnoxious scene, but likewise this right is held by any person or organization in Springfield.

As the Springfield Motion Picture Council is not in a position to enforce its decisions (as is the Worcester Board) by recourse to law, and because it does not spend as much effort with the downtown theaters as it does with the neighborhood houses, there is not an imposing list of achievements in the line of cuts and rejections, as there is in connection with the Worcester system of control. It must be emphasized that this system is based entirely upon co-operation and that actually the Council has no way to prevent the showing of a particular picture if the theater manager insists upon showing it. Therefore, the data that is obtainable is of a different nature than that coming from the Worcester system, as will be seen upon examination. In the secretary's annual report for 1930 and 1931, what has been accomplished by the Council during those two years is not mentioned.^{20,21} The reports indicate that the Council was still in a formative

stage and was working to gain influence in the city. The 1931 report states that "advertising has been much improved.

Exhibitors have been co-operative as well as the producers and the general public. Advertising in the theater lobbies has been very much changed for the better -- much to the distress of the bill posters in this city".²¹ In the annual report for 1932, something more definite appears. The following quotation dealing with the direct action of the Council is taken from that report:

"Definite action has been taken by the Council several times the past season. Twice undesirable advertising being distributed by local theaters has been stopped, once the Council assisted other organizations in protesting a local show, several misleading or suggestive titles have been changed because of requests, and certain feature pictures obtained by the same method. Because of action taken by Mrs. Cross, a certain film booked to appear with a notable juvenile film was removed as too exciting for children and another more suitable one substituted in subsequent block-booking for the entire country".⁴

The 1933 annual report indicates that the scope of the Council's activities is constantly being widened. The following is a quotation from that paper:

1. Investigated complaints in newspaper articles dealing with movies and reported on same.
2. Investigated four bits of salacious advertising and stopped distribution.
 - "Bureau of Missing Persons"
 - "Police Are Liars"
 - "Footlight Parade" throwaways
 - "Road To Ruin" booklets distributed to High School students - 800 destroyed.

When complaints were made on above theaters, the managers were willing to stop distribution, last two especially.

3. Invited to seven previews by Picture Corporation or managers and to four premier showings.
4. Supported many exceptional and outstanding photoplays, many more than last year, invited to help by the Picture Corporation and more and more by the managers. . . .
5. Invited by Mr. Kennedy, manager of the Arcade Theater, to help in selection of programs for Junior Programs on Saturday morning.
6. Parent Teachers, the Council and other groups cooperated with neighborhood theater managers on family night programs. Outstanding work in building up family attendance credited to Mrs. O. C. Carlson with Liberty Street Theater, a neighborhood house.
7. Advisors telephone names of outstanding films to club members as soon as the Selected Lists are received.³³

The Springfield Motion Picture Council does not attempt to operate a system of previewing for itself, depending entirely upon the Selected Lists mentioned before. If it did institute such a system, it would not have the power to enforce its decisions and its time would be largely wasted. Therefore, the data on the Council's activities can be presented only in the form of part of each year's reports, the part dealing with the actual accomplishments of that year, and not in tabular form, as is the case with the data on the Worcester system.

Due to the fact that the Springfield Motion Picture Council tries to do its work without newspaper publicity (reporters are never admitted to the meetings), comparatively few people of Springfield are familiar with the operation of the Council. Therefore, in writing to various people for criticisms of the Council and its operation, it proved

necessary to confine most of the inquiries to Council members, all of them women.

One woman, prominent in club work in Springfield writes, "I am heartily in favor of the Springfield system of motion picture control.

"The idea is not to censure objectionable pictures, as that is the best advertisement for a picture, with a large majority of the people. We talk about the best pictures which are being shown, or are coming, and expect our delegates at the Council meeting, to take back this information to their clubs, church guilds, P.T.A., Y.W.C.A., and Girl Scouts and urge support of the pictures.

"If we hear of some salacious picture approaching our city we take pains to visit the managers of our moving picture houses and ask them not to book this picture. Of course, this is done quietly and never is known to the public.

"We also are instrumental in having undesirable advertising changed.

"The managers know our Council represents a large number of thinking organizations and they are very agreeable and co-operative.

"We urge patrons of the theater to address their criticisms to the managers instead of to their neighbors, and in this way the managers will learn what is enjoyed and desired by the thinking public.

"We try to urge members of organizations to patronize as many good pictures as possible and thus increase box office receipts for them."

A clergyman of Springfield says, in part, "The Springfield Motion Picture Council is not trying to control motion pictures, but rather is trying to educate the public. Some legislation may be wise, but I am not in sympathy with legislating morals.

"Through the club women, we are trying to educate people to "shop" for their pictures as they shop for commodities. To guide us we receive a folder of selected motion pictures each month. These folders are also posted in churches, public library or other public places in the city.

"We are interested in having the neighborhood theaters put on suitable pictures for the family over the weekend-- and we believe families should be encouraged to attend the pictures and then discuss the pictures afterwards. It is the child who broods and secretly identifies himself with cheap heroes who is hurt. While we know that pictures not any more than bridge or the theater are made for children, still children go. So we encourage our theater managers to be on the look out for children's pictures of the wholesome type."

One of the librarians of the city, not a member of the Council writes, "In Springfield, the Council works very quietly but also very faithfully. They are always interested

in any comments, favorable or otherwise. On such a committee it is of course necessary to have people who are fair in their judgements and broad enough to see the subject from all sides. Some of the public seem to feel that the majority of motion pictures are objectionable; they are prejudiced against them. Others fail to see any harmful influence unless it is most flagrant. In the libraries we have the same reaction toward a certain class of fiction. I feel that Springfield has been most fortunate in the type of women who have been willing to serve on this council.

"As you realize, to accomplish any results along this line, is of necessity, a long, slow process, and must at times, be a discouraging one. The motion picture theaters are in existence to make money, and naturally, are interested in the bookings which pay. It is difficult to get the cooperation of the public.

"It seems to me that in Springfield the Council has accomplished much in toning down some of the advertising in connection with motion pictures. The Saturday morning shows for children at the Arcade Theater are now working out well. One is safe in sending children there; the pictures shown there are beyond criticism, and now the audience is obliged to leave before the theater is open for the regular hours. The Council has also been active in having guides to the various pictures placed where the public has access to them.

By this I mean the Endorsed Motion Pictures, and Selected Motion Pictures, and other publications of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America."

These letters are sufficient to convey the idea that the Council is really operating in Springfield and is accomplishing something tangible and of real value.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF THE TWO SYSTEMS

In comparing the two systems of motion picture control operating in the cities of Worcester and Springfield, it is necessary to keep in mind that one system has been in operation much longer than the other, and, therefore, is much more firmly established. The Worcester Board has been in operation since 1916,¹⁰ a period of eighteen years; the Springfield Council was formed in 1930,⁸ so has had only four years to make its influence felt.

Due to the type of theaters to be found in each city, it is only logical that the "Council" system should succeed better in its own city than if it were tried out in Worcester. That is, the Council is more likely to be successful in Springfield than it would be in Worcester, while the Worcester system might be equally effective in both cities. The reason for this is not hard to find. In Springfield, as mentioned before, there are five neighborhood theaters; in Worcester there are none. The Springfield Council has found through experience that it can do its most efficient work with the neighborhood houses, rather than with the downtown theaters. If, therefore, a plan of voluntary co-operation with the theaters were set up as the system for control in Worcester, it would not be as effective there, due to the lack of neighborhood houses to work with, it being more

difficult to obtain co-operation from the down-town houses. The Worcester Board, due to the power and backing given it by the police of the city, is in a position to control both the downtown theaters and the neighborhood houses, so could accomplish equally effective results where both types are to be found. In Springfield, neighborhood houses and downtown houses exist together and the power of the Board could be efficiently used on both types.

For purposes of comparison, the following table of capacities of theaters is introduced in order to show how these cities are similar or dis-similar in this respect.

Theater Capacities

Worcester		Springfield	
Theaters (12)	seats	Theaters (14)	seats
Fox-Poli	3217	Paramount	2800
Plymouth	2633	Fox-Poli	2500
Fox-Poli Elm St.	2581	Broadway	1875
Plaza	1900	Capitol	1814
Warner Bros.	1600	Court Square	1699
Capitol	1500	Phillips	1200 neigh-
Worcester	1344	Liberty	1000 borhood
Rialto	1280	Jefferson	1000 "
Olympia	1196	Strand	1000 "
Family	855	Garden	650 "
Royal	780	Arcade	1081
Majestic	350	Bijou	1000
		Fox's	903
	19236	Franklin	800
			<u>19322</u>

Average 1603

Average 1380

There is one outstanding criticism to be made of the

Springfield Council which cannot be applied to the Worcester Board. Due to the set-up of the Council being based on women's organizations in and about Springfield, there can be no men on the list of members.²¹ That is, the Council was started and sponsored by the Springfield Federation of Women's Clubs, and the membership has very naturally been confined to members of Women's Clubs and similar organizations, as, Girl Scouts, Y.W.C.A., etc. In contrast to the Council, the Worcester Board has included various civic organizations of the city, without regard to the make-up of their membership. The result is that, with men's organizations included, the Board is naturally much more representative of public opinion as a whole. Since an organization such as either of these should be representative of the whole group concerned, the Worcester Board is constructed on the more desirable plan.

The most marked difference between these two plans of control is to be found, however, not in the superficial appendages but rather in the bases for their operation. They represent two widely different methods of attempting to control commercialized entertainment. The Worcester Board exemplifies the method of control by law, or nearly so, and the Springfield Council represents control by voluntary agreement and co-operation. Each works along a different line of endeavor, two paths leading to the same goal, control of

motion pictures. The Worcester Board represents censorship in a very liberal form, liberal enough, it is hoped, so that it will not become picayune and short-sighted.⁷ To be sure, the Board itself has no legal standing and, therefore, no power of its own, but it does have the powerful backing of the police department of the city, so that in effect, at least, it operates as a legal body and does compel acceptance of its dicta. The Springfield Council, however, attempts to perform its work through co-operation with the managers of the theaters, not compelling them to operate in any particular manner, but rather urging them to show a better grade of films in their theaters. They "enforce" their requests by aiding the theater managers in publicizing the better pictures and refraining from mentioning the poorer ones.

The two systems of control are identical however, in at least one respect, namely, that they are both supported by civic organizations and are both voluntary in nature. The membership of the Worcester Board is drawn from twenty-five different civic organizations within the city and the members are not paid for their services. (Actually, the work involves some expense to them individually, for each member who is assigned to watch the showings of any particular theater, is under the necessity of paying his own admission to the shows that he reviews.) In Springfield, the members of the Council are also members of the clubs they represent, and any work

that they may do for the organization is done on a purely voluntary basis.

It is difficult to compare the results achieved by these systems, due, of course, to the different methods of approaching the same problem and the different aims in view. One operates by a system of previews followed by cuts, rejections or acceptances. The other operates by a system of requests, which, if followed, bring to the managers the active support of the Council. In recent years, the Worcester Board has shown indications of adopting something more than the system of previews to obtain a better class of pictures for Worcester. This can be seen by referring to the matters mentioned on page 37. But as yet, the results of the activities of the Board and the Council are hardly of a comparable nature. Furthermore, although the desire of both the Board and the Council is to raise the general tone of the motion pictures shown in the two cities, yet the individual aims are not quite the same. In Worcester, the Board operates in such a manner as to prevent the showing of obnoxious pictures. In Springfield, the Council tries to influence the managers to plan their programs so that there will not appear on the same bill together, two films of completely opposite standards. The result is that when the Board has compelled the withdrawal of an obnoxious picture, it has completed its work. However, the Springfield Council has not accomplished its aims until

it has influenced the theater manager to plan his future programs whenever possible, so that films of like standards will appear on the same bill. That is, the Springfield Council tries to go a step further in control than does the Worcester Board.

It would have been desirable to introduce some standard of excellence or "control" by means of which a more accurate and definite comparison could have been made between these systems. However, this has not proved possible, due to the lack of any known standard which could have been used for this purpose.

CHAPTER VIII

SUGGESTED PLAN OF CONTROL

Before it is possible to set up a third plan of control for motion pictures, it becomes necessary to consider several factors that do have a considerable influence on such a plan. No two cities can be found that are identical in every way; each city presents its special problems. With this fact in mind, it must be obvious that a plan of control satisfactory in one city might be completely out of the question in another city. Or, a system suitable to one city might, with a few minor changes, be acceptable to a second one. That being the case, it is not possible to draw up a successful, iron-clad plan for control of motion pictures, that will not of necessity be flexible enough to bend to the immediate needs of the city in question. A consideration of several of these influencing factors will be well worth while, even necessary, before a plan of control can be formulated.

The size of the city where the control is to be instituted is a factor of major importance. That is, in a very large city, control by voluntary agreement may be difficult to operate. The theater managers are not as dependent on any one class of patronage in the larger cities, and are likely to turn a deaf ear to any proposals of this nature. In the smaller cities, however, the pressure of civic organizations is more immediate, and the manager finds himself

faced with a proposal which he cannot well avoid without injury to his business. Control by legislation however, is applicable to any city without particular regard to size.

The presence of neighborhood houses makes the system of voluntary control considerably easier to operate. In a city where several of the theaters are placed in tiny centers about the outskirts, these theaters naturally draw on the surrounding neighborhoods for their patronage. This, then, makes these theater managers dependent on the good-will of the neighborhoods for their trade. If the people of the neighborhoods adjacent to the theaters wish to institute a system of control whereby the theater manager agrees to show better pictures in return for a more enthusiastic patronage, they are in a position to do so. Obviously the theater manager is not in a position to do otherwise, and it certainly is to his advantage to be willing and helpful about the whole matter.

In contrast to this situation, in cities where all or practically all of the theaters are located downtown, the system of voluntary control is not as likely to succeed. In this case, the patronage of a theater is not drawn from one particular area and the pressure brought to bear by civic organizations on a single house cannot be as effective.

Obviously, the presence or lack of several strong civic organizations would have much to do with the success of a

system of voluntary control. Theater managers are not going to respond to the requests of a very weak council, but where the civic organizations are numerous and powerful, the managers are, of necessity, going to meet their demands whenever possible. Control by legislation is not dependent upon the strength of civic groups, although the policy to be followed may be very much influenced by the attitude of any such organizations that are in the city.

Furthermore, the aim of the controlling body undoubtedly should be a determining factor in the set-up of that body. If the purpose is merely to prevent the showing of objectionable films, then the system of control involving legislation is quite satisfactory. However, if the aim is to raise the general tone of all programs shown, some system of agreement and co-operation with the managers is necessary. Neither system is perfect. The first prevents the showing of obnoxious films, but allows the showing, on the same program, of two films of entirely different standards, one picture entirely satisfactory and the other just able to pass the censoring board. The second system attempts to bring pictures that are of a like grade together on the same bill, but may allow a few obnoxious films to appear alone. Which of these situations is desired must be taken into consideration in setting up a system of motion picture control.

In view of these various affecting factors, before it is

possible to formulate a plan for control of motion pictures, it becomes necessary to make certain reservations or conditions under which this new control plan is to operate. We must assume a given size for the city, the presence or absence of neighborhood theaters, etc. The sudden growth of the city concerned may make it necessary to discard the old plan of control and adopt a new and better one, but it is not possible in this thesis to take into consideration the effect on the plan that each and every change within the city would necessitate. Let us assume that the city for which this plan is being made is approximately 175,000 strong, that there are few or no neighborhood houses, that the strength of the civic organizations is only normal, and that the aim of this plan is to interfere in the motion picture business only where it becomes absolutely necessary, that is, a "hands-off" policy. This does not mean disinterest, but merely a desire not to try to tell someone how to operate his business.

A plan for controlling motion pictures based on legislative control would be very satisfactory under the conditions specified. The reasons for believing that the legislative type would be more successful than the voluntary agreement method are as follows. In a city of this size, the theater managers do not depend upon the patronage of any one class or section. The people who attend come from all directions

and distances, thus making it difficult to operate a system of voluntary control, for this method needs closer contact between the managers and the people than can be hoped for in a large city. The absence of neighborhood houses further emphasizes this situation, for they are the central point upon which a voluntary control system bases its operations. In order to make this type of control system operate effectively, it is necessary that the members as a whole be enthusiastic and interested in the movement. In the city under consideration, it is assumed that the civic organizations are only normal, that is, some members are very much interested and enthusiastic and others only onlookers. Last, and the most important reason, the aim, as stated, of this proposed system is to interfere in the business of motion pictures only where it becomes absolutely necessary. This aim is met far more by the legislative type than by the voluntary control type.

Under this new plan, the members of the Board would be drawn from various interested organizations within the city, and the number of representatives from each member organization should not be large. Instead of several from each club, there would be one, with one alternate to be available in case of illness of the regular representative. The reason for this is a desire for greater efficiency. As the Board

in Worcester now operates, there is room for members whose greatest interest in the organization is an occasional free show, and other members who either have not the time or not the interest to be present at the previews.⁷ Obviously, those who attend for merely what they can get out of it and those who do not attend at all are just so much "dead wood". With the membership reduced, those remaining would presumably be the more interested ones. That is, with each member organization sending but one representative, they would presumably choose the person most interested in the work. This would result in a gain for the Board and no real loss. Furthermore, a small body is more efficient in other ways. With few people to contact, it is easier to arrange times for previews, times that will be satisfactory to all concerned. With few people on the Board, each person will have more to do, and responsibility usually has the effect of making those involved more interested in their work.

Of necessity, the Police Department should hold a very important, though not prominent, position in this plan of control. The police should remember the fact that the method is designed to be representative of the wishes of the whole city, and should act accordingly. However, their power should be asked, in order to enforce the Board's decisions. With the police accepting and enforcing these, there is no reason why this suggested plan of control should not be highly

efficient in making the everyday movie program of a customarily high standard and acceptable to the thinking public.

As concerns the internal structure of the organization, of necessity, there would be an advisory committee for the information and guidance of the Board in determining which pictures should be previewed and which should not. A President would be necessary, though to act only in the position of chairman, in calling meetings, presiding over previews, etc.. Obviously, a Secretary would be required and this position should be filled only after careful consideration. It is one of much responsibility and many duties, and needs a person with forethought and energy. In order to carry on correspondence, pay for subscriptions to trade-review journals, and similar expenses, it would be necessary to require each member organization to pay annual dues, and in order to care for this money, a treasurer would be needed. Monthly meetings of the Board should be held in order to acquaint the members with what the Board has done and proposes to do in the future.

A system of previews should be a vital element in the activities of the Board. This is the real means of determining whether a picture is as bad as the previewers in Hollywood have painted it and, therefore, perhaps unfit to be shown. Without such a system, the Board would not be able to operate, for it cannot depend on the trade journal reviews alone for its information, for the pictures have not always

proved to be what the previews have described them to be. The matter of cutting pictures would, of necessity, be dependent on the type of sound recording involved, whether "on the film" or "on the disk".

The system of delegating each person on the Board to watch all the films shown by one theater over a definite period of time, is very desirable. This provides a check on all films shown, whether they were previewed or not, and in this manner undesirable scenes in a picture which is otherwise satisfactory, are found out and eliminated. This feature should be incorporated into the set-up of the proposed plan.

Control of this type is not mere censorship with its attendant evil of either extreme liberality or extreme narrowness. It is more than censorship, it is representative censorship. Here the decision does not rest with two or three individuals. The responsibility of seeing that only a respectable class of pictures appears in the city rests in this system, with representatives of interested civic organizations who are not paid for their efforts except in the satisfaction they derive from seeing a good job completed. Censorship of this nature can only be, therefore, a reflection of the opinion of the thinking people of the whole city.

CHAPTER IX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is often customary to make general recommendations to be followed in planning a new system of control. Such suggestions cannot always be used, for situations and conditions in cities and towns are often very different, but they may be an aid in suggesting other devices better suited to the particular problem at hand.

This study has suggested several factors which should be kept in mind in formulating a plan of control for motion pictures. It is necessary to consider the size of the city where the plan is to be used. Neighborhood theaters in a city tend to make a system of voluntary control easier to operate. The strength of local civic organizations is a very important item to be considered. Finally, one must decide what the aim is to be, whether merely to prohibit objectionable films, or to encourage the showing of more uniformly desirable programs. These are merely general recommendations which may serve as a skeleton form upon which a new system of control might be build.

It has not seemed possible to make a definite comparison between the two systems studied or the results that they have accomplished. Each system operates under different circumstances and with different immediate ends in view. The Worcester Board of Motion Picture and Theater Review operates

in a comparatively large city, with all theaters in the downtown section, and works to control motion pictures with a minimum of interference, leaving the choice of programs to the theater managers themselves.⁷ The Springfield Motion Picture Council carries on its activities in a smaller city, with the co-operation of the theaters, especially the neighborhood houses, and attempts to raise the level of motion picture programs by giving strong backing and support to those managers who will work in that direction.⁸ The Worcester plan is designed to control motion pictures by what, in effect, is legal censorship, yet it is representative and liberal in operation. The Springfield method is planned to control motion pictures by securing the co-operation of the motion picture managers in return for the active support of the member clubs of the Council. Each system is a distinctly different method of attempting to bring about the same final conclusion, control of commercialized entertainment.

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