

**Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939.** PETER MORRIS. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978. 350 p. ill. ISBN 0 7735 0322 6 bd. \$19.95; ISBN 0 7735 0323 4 pa. \$7.95.

As the author makes quite clear at the outset, this is a history of film *making* which only touches on other aspects of film when enterprises are being evaluated and their nature identified. In contrast to the general run of commercial products manufactured for sale, commercially produced films can be viewed as an extension of the archives of the business which created them. They may intentionally or incidentally document the milieu in which the film is being made and, by implication, may have a great deal to say about social attitudes and values. This is especially true of films made by governments, and it is of great importance for us to know, in all cases, the circumstances surrounding production, whether successful or otherwise.

Once Canadian film had ceased to be the stock-in-trade of the travelling showman and had begun to settle in the storefront theatres, the battle for control of the life cycle through production, distribution and exhibit began in earnest. The movie became a commodity like any other; Hollywood quickly learned the lesson of the factory by standardizing its products and securing guaranteed outlets. An unrestricted Canadian market would probably have remained too small and fragile a base to finance Canadian production but to make matters worse, chains of American distributors gradually locked out of the cinemas all but the exceptional Canadian films on both sides of the border. This problem of distribution has remained with us ever since.

Film companies discovered yet another Canadian raw material ripe for exploitation when our snow and ice found a ready market as background.

Unfortunately, the early shorts and features, although often crude and simple, possessed an iconic quality which spread the popular image and stereotypes of Canada around the world. (When, as a family, we emigrated to Edmonton in 1965 my mother wondered whether we would be near a telephone!). Within Canada itself, those mad and/or dissolute French Canadian trappers of the screen only served to deepen our solitudes.

It seems that most Canadians in those early days never really grasped the fact that film making was essentially an *industry* and not just an appropriate activity for gentlemen. On the other hand, the absence of a hard-nosed approach enabled in time a more authentic view of Canada to appear on the screen, although in most cases the runs were all too brief. The best of these early Canadian films were in many ways an extension of the European picturesque and romantic tradition which viewed the unusual from the outside, as in *Back to God's Country* which Peter Morris describes as having "qualities that seem almost modern: the emphasis on living in sensitive accord with nature." Morris also notes that most Canadian feature films were excluded from wider markets not because they were generally bad, but because they were no better than their American counterparts. However, when Canadian producers concentrated on documentaries they met with great success and the best of these have received world wide acclaim. *Nanook of the North*, in contrast to the earlier features, showed northern life through the eyes of a participator for whom the awesome surroundings were quite normal, not bizarre as for the spectator.

The author, in a most perceptive "postscript", takes the view that although adverse economic circumstances have always been prominent in the history of Canadian film, it was the refusal of Canadians to adopt the standards of the "correct" studio-bound conventions and forms imposed by Hollywood which was their undoing. Using the analogy of "correct" Parisian French he asserts that "There was at any given time only one proper way to "speak" a film" and that was in the Hollywood manner.

When Morris deals with the active participation of government in film making through that very Canadian device, the motion picture bureau, he is able to draw upon primary sources in the public records. Elsewhere, he has to rely heavily on film journals and similar literature, but this is understandable given the dearth of record which survives from the private sector.

*Embattled Shadows* is a well constructed work which is, in a way, “a book of the film.” Readers should, where possible, try to see *Dreamland* a compilation film on the early history of Canadian cinema for which much of the research was originally undertaken. Each complements the other though each is, of course, complete in itself. The illustrations are very acceptable and there are two appendixes “A Chronology of Film in Canada 1894-1913” and “A Select List of Canadian Productions 1913-1939.” A title index and general index is also included. Early Canadian films are documents of the first importance and this is an excellent account of how they came to be made; it should be required reading for the “total” archivist.

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**A Catalogue of some Labour Records in Scotland and some Scots records outside Scotland.** Compiled and edited by IAN MacDOUGALL. Edinburgh: Scottish Labour History Society, 1978. xxvi, 598 p. £10.50. (Available, plus £1 postage extra, from SLHS, 4 Preson St., Edinburgh EH8 9QA)

Few authors are so modest that they “undertitle” their publications, but Ian MacDougall certainly chose an unassuming—and somewhat misleading—name for this impressive bibliography of Scottish working class history. In keeping with the new historiographical trends in Great Britain and North America, this catalogue brings together information on surviving records of a host of workers’ movements and activities in one of the birthplaces of industrial capitalism. Complementing traditional sources from trade unions and labour’s political parties are documents, publications and even some artifacts created by friendly societies, cooperatives, educational and research organizations, associations concerned about public health and housing, recreational and cultural groups, and women’s organizations. It is a breath-taking array of documentation which clearly portrays the richness and diversity of working class culture in Scotland. However, this publication represents but one achievement of the eighteen-year old Scottish Labour History Society. As its honorary secretary, Ian MacDougall, described in a short article in *Archivaria* (Summer 1977), virtually no records of this type had been collected by Scottish repositories until the Society set out in 1964 to locate and ensure the preservation of such material. With the moral *and* financial support of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society and the University of Strathclyde (which established a Research Fellowship enabling Ian MacDougall to devote himself to the project on a full-time basis for three years), the Society was able to arrange for the deposit of about three hundred and fifty collections in public repositories. All of this material, plus a substantial quantity which remains in public hands, is listed in this extensive catalogue.

The criteria for inclusion in the bibliography were extremely broad. All working class records located in Scotland, including those relating to other parts of the United Kingdom and to international movements, were included. Some attempt also was made to note material pertaining to Scotland in the custody of major foreign repositories. In addition to the common documentary media such as manuscripts, publications, photographs, film and tape-recordings, more unusual forms including paintings, drawings, statues, posters, postcards, banners and even some three-dimensional objects were listed. To make the