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## Useful Cinema, Film Genres, and Screen Networks: The Story of Canadian Films Limited (1919–1920)

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# USEFUL CINEMA, FILM GENRES, AND SCREEN NETWORKS

LOUIS PELLETTIER

The Story of Canadian Films

Limited (1919–1920)



# BER STRU CINEMATOGRAPH OUT IN ACCES



Early in 1919, an entrepreneur named John D. Tennant organized

a new film production company in Montreal imaginatively named

Canadian Films Limited.<sup>1</sup> Tennant's outfit stayed in business for less

than two years, during which it produced only a handful of rarely seen short films, all

of which are now lost. In short, it was not terribly important. Chance has it, however,

that Canadian Films's papers (after having been randomly split into two collections for

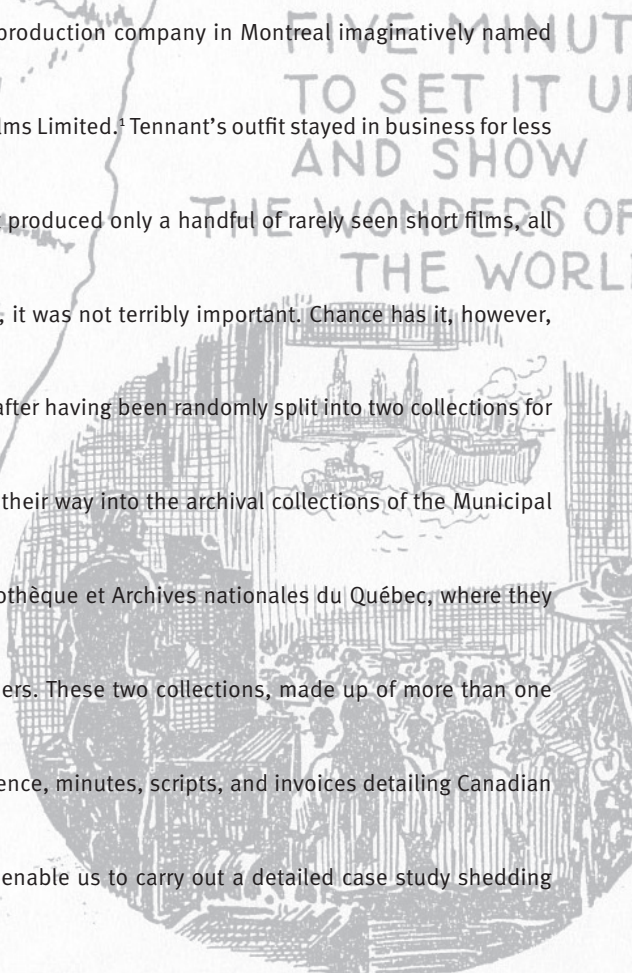
unknown reasons) have found their way into the archival collections of the Municipal

Archives of Montreal and Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, where they

are now accessible to researchers. These two collections, made up of more than one

thousand pages of correspondence, minutes, scripts, and invoices detailing Canadian

Films's day-to-day operations, enable us to carry out a detailed case study shedding



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IT MAKES ITS OWN

much light on a crucial yet underdocumented period in Canadian film history.

Though Tennant's company may not have been the only or—by far—the most important organization attempting to put Canadian content on Canadian screens in these years marked by a strong push toward vertical integration and American control of the nation's film industry, it likely struggled with the same issues as the other, more accomplished Canadian film producers, who have, for the most part, failed to leave much of a record, filmic or otherwise. Canadian Films's story thus grants us fascinating insight into the activities of pioneering Canadian film producers as well as into their evolving relationships with investors, sponsors, and cultural elites. As such, it complements the first surveys of early Canadian film production undertaken during the last few decades by Peter Morris, André Gaudreault, Germain Lacasse, Pierre Véronneau, and Charles R. Acland.<sup>2</sup>

The story of this short-lived company mostly dedicated to the production of industrial, sponsored, and educational films further brings to the fore many of the trials and challenges associated with the early years of what Haidee Wasson and Acland have labeled "useful cinema."<sup>3</sup> Canadian Films's story indeed confirms that whereas commercial narrative cinema had fully entered its classical phase by the turn of the 1920s, contemporary nontheatrical film production and exhibition remained a most decidedly preinstitutional phenomenon. It more particularly lacked a standardized format suited to the needs of nontheatrical exhibitors and sponsors on a budget, as the portable systems using safety base 22mm, 28mm, and 35mm film marketed in the 1910s had all failed to gain wide acceptance. This technological issue contributed to the much-delayed development of nontheatrical screen networks. Canadian Films therefore had to face up to the fact that though many reformers and educators across North America were embracing the educational and persuasive potential of film, most schools and institutions were still unequipped for film projection.

Canadian Films's story will moreover enable us to delve a little deeper into the articulation of film genres and screen networks. The company's leading concern over its two-year life span was to find and/or develop suitable markets for its modest productions. The main difficulty faced by Canadian Films was that though the theatrical market was, for the most part, out of its reach, the Canadian nontheatrical field remained largely undeveloped, despite its sudden growth during the war years. It will be argued that one of the main tactics developed by Canadian Films to circumvent the difficulties brought about by the scarcity of nontheatrical exhibition sites relied on the production of films that could be identified with different genres associated with different screen networks. Canadian Films thus hoped that its productions could be simultaneously or

successively disseminated through different theatrical (commercial moving picture theaters) and nontheatrical (classrooms, boardrooms, etc.) networks. It consequently set out to devise formulae that rendered possible the production of texts permitting a relatively broad range of readings determined by a variety of reception contexts.

My overview of Canadian Films's short life will be followed by a brief inquiry into the history of Associated Screen News, another production company created in Montreal in 1920, which will simultaneously demonstrate the wisdom of this production policy and foreground Canadian Films's unfocused application of it. Unlike Tennant at Canadian Films, Associated Screen News's experienced management understood the importance of planning, of identifying beforehand the combinations of networks through which each particular film would be distributed. Through this policy, Associated Screen News gained the trust of sponsors and investors and managed to contribute to the development of both the Canadian film industry and the nontheatrical film market, while its courageous (or was it foolhardy?) predecessor fell into oblivion.

Of course, Canadian Films and Associated Screen News were not the first film producers to stumble on this commercial tactic relying on the production of polysemous texts. As Rick Altman has demonstrated, even the producers associated with classical Hollywood exploited the fact that genre is not always clearly inscribed in the filmic text itself but is largely a function of the discourse surrounding the film. Altman remarks in particular that "whereas film reviews almost always include generic vocabulary as a convenient and widely understood shorthand, film publicity seldom employs generic terms as such. Indirect references to genre are of course regularly used, but they almost always evoke not a single genre but multiple genres."<sup>4</sup> This practice obviously aimed to avoid reducing a film's potential audience from the outset by explicitly associating it with a specific genre and thus with a reduced niche market.

Canadian Films's eventual decision to launch the production of industrial films seems to have been rather wise, as, according to Frank Kessler and Eef Masson, "between entertainment and instruction, between the picturesque and the informative, between demonstration and attraction, between the cliché and the surprising, (early) industrial films, just like any other types of non-fictional views, can serve multiple purposes."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau have argued that this textual indeterminacy is characteristic of the industrial film genre, which, they claim, remains more than any other "a strategically weak and parasitic form in the sense that it can assume the appearance of other, more stable genres and formats and pass as a scientific film, an educational film, or a documentary for specific strategic reasons."<sup>6</sup> In Canadian Films' case, these reasons were evidently commercial in nature.

Other scholars have attempted to understand the role that context and institutions play in the reception process as well as in the creation and perpetuation of genres. French theorist Roger Odin has argued that a shifting set of constraints, both textual and contextual, governs the production of meaning by spectators. A producer may consciously attempt to downplay textual constraints, but these remain inescapable: a film will necessarily be exhibited in a variety of circumstances that will either trigger or inhibit the use of certain modes of production of meaning and affect by the spectator.<sup>7</sup> Still, by avoiding the markers generally associated with particular genres, or more typically, by combining various markers associated with distinct genres, a producer can make it possible for its films to be more easily disseminated through different channels. Kessler and Masson have consequently argued that “genres should . . . be seen as complex and multi-layered configurations demanding to be understood in terms of historically specific, pragmatic contexts.” They further suggest that “differentiation in the field of non-fiction cinema is often based upon the criterion of the *purpose* or *function* a film is supposed to serve. Denominations such as instructional, educational, scientific, ethnographic, etc. films, and also terms like newsreel or propaganda, refer to the uses these films are being put to, or to the institutional domain in which they are employed. Here, the formal characteristics are more or less irrelevant, the basic assumption being generally that form will just have to follow function.”<sup>8</sup>

That being said, that the various labels denoting nonfictional genres generally eschew direct references to both form and content does not mean that these considerations are entirely overridden by each genre’s purpose or exhibition context. French filmmaker Jean Painlevé, for example, has expounded on the often irreconcilable needs of the audiences for scientific and educational films: whereas scientific film audiences will categorically reject most types of authorial intervention (montage, commentary), educational film audiences will expect the films’ content to be presented in a highly formatted way.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that industrial films with a promotional bent also frequently had a hard time finding distribution in educational institutions or commercial moving picture theaters—as Canadian Films would find out the hard way.

## CANADIAN FILMS AND CANADIAN FILM HISTORY

Very little is known of John D. Tennant’s life and career before and after Canadian Films. That Canadian Films significantly altered its production policy no fewer than four times over the two years it remained in operation suggests, however, that he was relatively new to the film business. Like many of his contemporaries, Tennant likely saw the booming

film business first and foremost as an enticing investment opportunity. Indeed, Canadian Films was formed at the tail end of a long series of stock promotion schemes using the glamour of the burgeoning film industry to lure Canadians into investing into short-lived film companies. A typical case was that of Canadian Photo-Play Productions, a company promoted by an American expatriate, Harold J. Binney, in and around Toronto in 1918–19 (see Figure 1). In its prospectus (of which, interestingly, Canadian Films kept several copies), Canadian Photo-Play presumptuously described its coming dividends as “larger than your wildest dreams—which is saying something.” The company’s actual results must have been something of a letdown for its shareholders, as Canadian Photo-Play’s sole film, *Polly of the Circus* (1919), failed to obtain theatrical release.<sup>10</sup>

Tennant’s dealings with clients and investors often suggest a *modus operandi* in line with that of Binney’s Canadian Photo-Play. Indeed, Canadian Films could be blatantly disingenuous in its reports and public statements to shareholders. Its management claimed, for instance, to control net assets totaling one million dollars<sup>11</sup> as the company was entering its second year of operations in February 1920—a grossly exaggerated figure, as we will see.<sup>12</sup> Still, it would be a mistake simply to write off Canadian Films as yet another stock-marketing scheme seeking to defraud Canadian investors. Unlike most of the other questionable film enterprises marketed to investors in the 1910s, Canadian Films managed to produce several well-received films between 1919 and 1920. This significant fact tends to show that Tennant’s enterprise may have been more of a delusional scheme than a blatant scam. Actually, Canadian Films’s lies and exaggerations seem to have been fed by the major difficulties that arose when the company tried to get its films exhibited. In other words, the occasional dishonesty of Canadian Films’s management appears to have been more the symptom of a situation quickly spinning out of control than the essence of the enterprise.

To Tennant’s credit, one had to be most cunning to survive as a film producer in Canada at the turn of the 1920s. By then, Canadian theaters had been screening U.S. films almost exclusively for nearly a decade, and filmgoers had grown to expect stars and high production values in their moving picture entertainment. Cinema had now fully entered its classical era, and Canadian Films would have had to have been most ingenious to succeed, despite its lack of access to talent and up-to-date facilities as well as its very limited capital and distribution opportunities. Canadian Films’s production policies seem further to have been informed by the failure of the few legitimate attempts to launch the production of feature-length fiction films in Canada during the 1910s.<sup>13</sup> Tennant was no doubt aware, moreover, that the era’s most successful Canadian film producer, Specialty Film Import, concentrated on newsreels and topical and presumably remained



# CANADA'S OPPORTUNITY



HAROLD J. BINNEY

Figure 1. Canadian Photo-Play  
Production's Harold J. Binney.  
Bibliothèque et Archives  
nationales du Québec,  
Canadian Films Limited  
collection, P324.



profitable through its distribution activities (it held the Pathé franchise for Canada).

Tennant obviously believed that a production policy exploiting Canadian themes and resources, yet acknowledging the dominance of imported features, could make Canadian Films profitable. The first component of Canadian Films's production program was, therefore, nationalism. The producer widely advertised that its stated purpose was "to feature Canadian scenery, Canadian subjects and boast Canadian industries whenever possible."<sup>14</sup> Playing on the resentment over the late entry of the United States into the Great War, a Canadian Films representative even managed to put a patriotic twist on Canada's lack of feature film production by remarking that film production had been neglected in Canada "by reason of the fact that Canadians have been so very busy in the last few years that they have had neither the time or [*sic*] inclination to even investigate [film production]."<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, by the late 1910s, Canadian patriotism was an issue for more than Canadian politicians and citizens. To quite a few entrepreneurs—not all of them Canadians—it was also a ripe business opportunity.<sup>16</sup> But patriotism does not in itself qualify as a niche market; one has to find an outlet for it. This constituted the main challenge for Canadian Films, which, from the start, seemingly had a better idea of what it would not release—feature films, which are not mentioned in any surviving correspondence—than what it would actually produce. Tennant's company's only possible course of action was to act tactically by staying attuned to the particular needs of Canadian audiences and by being ready to take advantage of changing circumstances.

At the time of Canadian Films's creation, recent developments in the field of moving images included the rise of educational and propaganda films. The Great War had prompted the Canadian government to employ moving pictures to boost and sustain its war effort. Over the war years, film had been used for recruiting and training as well as for communication between soldiers and the home front, most notably through newsreels and topicals. At home, films were also increasingly being used to educate farmers and promote healthy lifestyles. Several governmental film bureaus were created across Canada to fulfill these purposes, the most important being the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau (established in 1917) and, of course, the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (also created in 1917). At the end of the hostilities, these bureaus' primary *raison d'être* would become the promotion of Canadian industries and tourism.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted, however, that many of the provincial bureaus actually outsourced their productions to private producers, such as Filmcraft and Pathéscope of Canada, both established in Toronto.<sup>18</sup>

The rise of useful cinema over the war years permitted Tennant and his partner

to express the belief that the production of educational, industrial, and sponsored films was about to become a commercial enterprise on par with the production of theatrical fiction films. The company's propaganda consequently hammered home the point that if Canada wanted to avoid conceding nonfiction film production to American interests, as it had done a few years before with fiction films, now was the time to act. Tennant anticipated opposition commensurate with what he perceived to be the vast commercial interests at stake:

We know that there is an awful knock coming down from the United States as they are very loath to give up the supremacy they hold in the film business in Canada. They are taking about \$9,000,000 out of Canada each year for rental of films in theaters and if they can control the Educational films, they will certainly do so, as everyone knows who is in touch with the trend of things, that within the next few years there will not be a school that will not be supplied with films.<sup>19</sup>

Canadian Films's propaganda consequently aimed to turn the company's project into a crusade of national interest. This line of argument did not prove entirely convincing: commentators opined that Canadian Films was deploying patriotic rhetoric to further its commercial interests. To these critics, Tennant replied, "Films can only be made on a commercial basis and nothing will ever take away from the Americans their supremacy in the film business except a well managed and properly financed film company."<sup>20</sup>

Ironically, Tennant's last comment brings to the fore Canadian Films's two main handicaps: its inexperienced management and its insufficient capital (by August 1919, the company had only issued \$4,590 worth of shares).<sup>21</sup> The company's fund-raising difficulties can partly be attributed to the growing skepticism of Canadian investors toward the film business. To a proposition made early in 1919 by Canadian Films, the Halifax Board of Trade had, for example, responded that "it is only a few years ago that a Picture Film Company was organized in Halifax with rather disastrous [*sic*] results, owing, the writer understands, to poor management, and I am afraid the subscribing public have [*sic*] not yet recovered from the shock."<sup>22</sup> The "picture film company" referred to was most likely the Canadian Bioscope Co., whose four-reel feature adaptation of Longfellow's *Evangeline* had been very well received both in Canada and the United States on its release in 1914.

Canadian Films nevertheless benefited from a few valuable assets, the most important being its main employee, Maurice Metzger.<sup>23</sup> Acting as technical expert, camera operator, and lab director, Metzger was in actuality a one-man production team—and a good one at that, if he is to be judged by his other accomplishments before and after

Canadian Films. A bona fide Canadian film pioneer, Metzger had processed some of the footage shot by Joseph Rosenthal's team for the Canada: England's Premier Colony and Living Canada series sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1902 and 1903. He had also participated in the production of the local actualities shot in and around Montreal between 1904 and 1910 by F. Guy Bradford (who had first come to Canada with Rosenthal) and worked as a "technical expert" for the Montreal office of the General Film Co. In 1914, Metzger had been employed by the Premier Film Manufacturing Co. of Canada, a Montreal outfit that managed to release only one topical. After his stint at Canadian Films, Metzger would work for more than three decades for Associated Screen News, where he was most notably employed as a laboratory superintendent and sound engineer.<sup>24</sup> In short, all signs point to the fact that Canadian Films could rely on one employee, at least, who could tackle all kinds of production and postproduction tasks and produce quality work.

### THE FILMS OF CANADIAN FILMS

In winter 1919, Canadian Films first attempted to launch the production of a series of travelogues that, it was hoped, could also function as promotional films for the various localities and industries featured therein. In early February, the company mailed a first round of promotional letters to the boards of trade of several cities located across Canada, from Charlottetown to Vancouver. This not-so-subtle attempt to recruit investors was almost universally turned down. Still, the board representatives who replied generally agreed that "Made in Canada" films could greatly benefit the nation and its industries.<sup>25</sup>

By spring 1919, Canadian Films had a clear plan. It now planned to send a camera operator—presumably Metzger—on a trip from Halifax to Victoria (and "then possibly up the Coast to Alaska"), during which he would be responsible for the production of a series of fifteen "comic-travelogue" one-reelers. The resulting films were to be subsequently released nationwide on a weekly basis.<sup>26</sup> To promote the project, Canadian Films sent a second round of letters to more than sixty municipal boards of trade in mid-April. These explained that cities and towns visited by Canadian Films's camera operator would be expected to cover some of the production costs of the series through the acquisition of Canadian Films stock, as commercial film exhibitors did not tolerate any paid-for advertising in the films they booked. Canadian Films made sure to outline the films' benefits for the participating cities, noting that "each city that gives us sufficient support will receive gratis their local film, the only requirement being that they do not exhibit it for pay. [If the city has] a publicity agent, he can show the film any

place he happens to be, to prospective customers in the forenoon by arrangement with a Moving Picture House, as they very seldom use their theaters in the forenoon.”<sup>27</sup> The producer thus hoped to circumvent one of the main problems it faced, the absence of a national network of nontheatrical screens, through the assignation of a double function to the extant network: theatrical screens would now be noncommercial in the morning and commercial in the afternoon and evening. This would prove to be a lackluster solution.

Canadian Films’s communication to local boards of trade further explained how its projected “comic-travelogues” would take advantage of this dual network: “so that the travelogue will not be dry and uninteresting to children, we propose to introduce just enough comedy to make it attractive, taking it out of the class of dry travelogue.”<sup>28</sup> The idea was that whereas prospective tourists and industrialists would be awed by the spectacle of Canada’s scenery, resources, and industries, others would be entertained by the comedy. Interestingly, it is not too clear, by referring to a “child” audience posited as the travelogue–industrial film audience’s other, whether Canadian Films meant to denote the educational film audience or the commercial moving picture show’s public.

It should be noted in passing that the fiction–travelogue combination was not exactly a new idea. Canadian Films’s proposed films were more particularly reminiscent of the series of twelve films sponsored by CPR and produced by the Edison Manufacturing Co. in summer 1910. Produced to advertise Canada to foreign settlers, the series (which included the “comedy and scenic” *A Wedding Trip from Montreal through Canada to Hong Kong* and the “dramatic and descriptive” *Riders of the Plains*) had received wide theatrical distribution across Europe and North America at the turn of the 1910s.<sup>29</sup> The main difference between the two projects was that while the Edison Co. had dispatched a whole team of professionals to Canada (director, camera operator, actors, and actresses), Canadian Films apparently hoped, in a typical fit of wishful thinking, that its camera operator could recruit and direct local amateurs for the comedic bits. In this golden era of film comedy, where new releases by Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, and Buster Keaton were turning up on Canadian screens on an almost weekly basis, Canadian Films’s comic-travelogues would most likely have been deemed unreleasable by commercial distributors had they actually been produced. But lack of interest in the project on the part of the boards of trade effectively killed the series before Canadian Films’s camera operator could depart for Halifax.

By mid-May, the plan to release weekly comic-travelogues had morphed into a plan to release a weekly *Cameragram* showing “Canadian current events, educational, industrial and travel pictures.”<sup>30</sup> The projected series was obviously inspired by the Canadian newsreel issued twice weekly by Léo-Ernest Ouimet’s Specialty Film Import since



January 1919, the *British Canadian Pathé News*. Canadian Films's fund-raising difficulties, however, prevented it from launching the proposed series in time for the biggest news event of the year: the Canadian tour of the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII), which got under way on August 15, 1919. Canadian Films did attempt to buy footage of the prince's arrival from W. G. MacLaughlan, an independent camera operator based in Halifax, only to learn that MacLaughlan had already been hired by Specialty.<sup>31</sup> The royal visit ended up being extensively covered by the *British Canadian Pathé News* as well as by the first issues of the weekly *Canadian National Pictorial*, released by Toronto's Pathéscope of Canada.<sup>32</sup>

These supply difficulties no doubt largely contributed to the failure of Canadian Films's newsreel project, as not one *Cameragram* issue appears to have ever reached theaters. The projected *Cameragram* series ultimately remains the most blatant demonstration of Tennant's lack of understanding of film production and distribution: only an absolute neophyte could imagine that an independent outfit employing a single camera operator could manage to successfully turn out one full reel of varied Canadian content for nationwide release every week. For the production of its *British Canadian Pathé News*, Specialty Film Import employed several camera operators posted across Canada as well as many independent operators known as stringers. And yet Canadian content rarely represented more than half the content of the issues of the *British Canadian Pathé News*, as Specialty made abundant use of recycled segments originating from the U.S. *Pathé News* and the British *Pathé Gazette*. Pathéscope's *Canadian National Pictorial* did feature Canadian subjects almost exclusively. It benefited, however, as historian Rosemary Bergeron has discovered, from the support of the Canadian government, which granted twenty-eight thousand dollars yearly to Pathéscope and which further permitted the company's camera operators—who were based in Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver—to travel free of charge on the state-owned Canadian National Railway.<sup>33</sup>

The "Made in Canada" segments regularly featured in the *Canadian National Pictorial* may very well have inspired the new scheme devised by Canadian Films in summer 1919. Throughout the months of August and September, Canadian Films sent yet another round of promotional letters—this time, not to towns and boards of trade but to businesses and industries active in Quebec and Ontario.<sup>34</sup> Though the letters still presented the *Cameragram* as Canadian Films's main product, they revealed that the projected series's formula had shifted toward industrial subjects. Tennant now claimed that Canadian Films aimed "to show about 500 feet of News, Educational and Travel pictures, and about 500 feet of Industrial each week."<sup>35</sup> The letters also announced

that Canadian Films had signed a contract with the General Film Co. of Canada, which provided for the distribution of seven prints of each of its productions across Canada: two in Quebec, two in Ontario, one in the Maritime Provinces, and two in the Prairies and British Columbia.<sup>36</sup>

This new campaign targeting industries was far more successful than the previous ones aimed at local boards of trade. Several businesses proved to be at least intrigued by the promotional potential of moving pictures, and a fair number ended up signing contracts with Canadian Films.<sup>37</sup> For sums going from five hundred to one thousand dollars, Canadian Films agreed to produce films varying between five hundred and one thousand feet in length, which generally focused on the manufacturing process of its clients' products. The production of news films soon disappeared altogether from Canadian Films's plans. These deals cleverly instituted dual channels of revenue for Canadian Films, as the producer hoped to collect money both from sponsors and, through its contract with General Films, from exhibitors.

The new scheme forced Canadian Films to be cautious about the ways in which it negotiated the demarcation between industrial and promotional films and more particularly with regard to the ways in which it mixed markers associated with both types of productions. Its preferred strategy relied on the careful placement of signs bearing the sponsors' names in films whose purported goal was to instruct the public on Canadian industries and manufacturing processes. The rationale for this strategy was made explicit in a letter sent by Canadian Films to one of its clients:

We are afraid that we cannot show that any part of [the picture] is produced "through the Courtesy of G.A. Holland and Son, Company," for the reason that we feel almost positive that the theaters would refuse to show that. . . . In our opinion were we to state that the picture or part of it was being shown through your courtesy it would savor too much of "Bill-board Advertising." To show your name in the manner in which we suggest we believe will be much more impressive and not subject to criticism and at the same time thoroughly dignified.<sup>38</sup>

According to Kathryn Fuller, films deftly concealing advertisements were, at the time, still tolerated by audiences across North America, as long as they were found to be entertaining and interesting. The industry-wide ban on paid advertising would only be introduced in the code of ethics prepared in 1922 by Will H. Hays in collaboration with exhibitors' groups.<sup>39</sup> Though engineered in the United States, this ban would influence

the conduct of the Canadian film business in the years following Canadian Films's demise.

The multiple contracts signed with Canadian firms finally permitted Canadian Films to launch its production activities in September 1919, more than six months after the company's creation. Canadian Films's first completed production was a one-reeler sponsored by Canadian Explosives Limited and titled *The Use of Explosives in Clearing New Farms and Rejuvenating Old Ones*.<sup>40</sup> The film has long been considered lost, but an annotated shooting script survives. It reveals a conscious effort on the producer's part to turn this filmed advertisement aimed at a narrow audience of farm owners into something more palatable to a wider audience, most notably through the injection of a strong streak of misogynistic lowbrow comedy. The script thus opens with the following exchange between the protagonist, a farmer, and his friend:

**Scene 1.** *Farmer leaning over fence looking blue and discouraged. Friend strolls along.*

**Friend.** Pretty tough looking farm you have, Tom. Is it all like this?

**Farmer with a snort.** Worse: I'll show you, it's as bad as a mother-in-law with the mumps.

*They walk over the fields. Farmer pointing out the stumps. Rocks. Etc.*

**Farmer despairingly.** The rocky road to Dublin was a feather bed compared to this farm, all I can raise on it is malaria, chilblains and profanity.

**Friend.** Huh, that's easy. Let Dinah do the work.

**Farmer.** Dinah who?

**Friend.** Dinamite [*sic*].

*Pulls out a booklet explaining the great advantages of clearing land with C.X.L.*

*Farmer listens dubiously at first, then becomes interested by degrees.*

**Farmer.** Well Dinah might, but isn't it dangerous?

**Friend.** No. Easy as making love to an old maid. Order C.X.L. dynamite before your wife asks for another new dress. I'll show how it works.

**Farmer brightening up.** Thanks old man. I'll do it right away.<sup>41</sup>

So much for "dignified" product placement. The rest of the script concerns itself with the demonstration of various possible uses of dynamite in agriculture.

In addition to the scene breakdown and dialogues, the extant script for *The Use of Explosives* features some instructions obviously aimed at the film's camera operator (and de facto director), which provide us with a fascinating glimpse of Canadian Films's filmmaking process. The script's author, for instance, explains that

none of the operators should be looking at the camera. J.B.M. [J. B. Moriarty, manager of Canadian Explosives's agricultural division] to be the only demonstrator. Mr. Godfrey to appear as farmer and others as spectators. Be careful that all photographs before and after show the same background. Be careful to place the box of explosives, detonators, E.B. Caps and fuse in such a position throughout the picture so that the labels will distinctly show name and trademark.<sup>42</sup>

The resulting film seems to have been competently made. It was, in any case, declared to be "an A1 production" by Canadian Explosives's sales executives and directors, to whom it had been submitted for review.<sup>43</sup> Canadian Explosives acquired from Canadian Films one copy of the film printed on nonflammable film stock (\$65) and one portable projector (\$225) so that its sales agents could show it to prospective customers.<sup>44</sup> This proved to be a wise decision, as the film's exhibition in commercial theaters was delayed for a full year: *The Use of Explosives* was only released by the Famous Lasky Film Service in fall 1920, after the General Film deal fell through.<sup>45</sup> Even then, there is no way to tell if it was ever exhibited in more than a handful of Canadian theaters.

Starting with its second completed production, *The Cream Industry*, Canadian Films tried to make it easier for commercial firms to sponsor films by devising projects that would feature the products and services of more than one firm, thus permitting multiple sponsors to split the bill. Funding for *The Cream Industry* came from the DeLaval Separator Co., of Peterborough, Ontario (a subsidiary of the Sweden-based multinational), and from the Montreal Dairy Co. The film showed a variety of DeLaval apparatus, including specimens of the company's famed milk separators, in use on a farm and at the installations of the Montreal Dairy Co. Though it was not framed as a paid-for advertisement, the film did make sure to identify various apparatus depicted as "DeLaval's."<sup>46</sup> On completion, *The Cream Industry* was submitted to its sponsors, who declared themselves very pleased with the results, and was exhibited between December 1919 and April 1920 in a few Montreal theaters.<sup>47</sup> This minor success must, however, be weighed against the time and energy spent in the making of *The Cream Industry*. Between Canadian Films's first exchanges with the DeLaval Separator Co. in early June 1919 and the film's first screening in early December, no less than half a year had elapsed. Part of this unseemly delay can be explained by the fact that Canadian Films had found itself stuck in a position where it had to cajole and coordinate multiple participants and sponsors. DeLaval's general manager had, for instance, made it clear that his company would only agree to sponsor the film if DeLaval apparatus could be showcased on J. B. Hanmer's farm, home of a



famous prize-winning cow. But at the time, Hanmer was in the process of overhauling his installations and only half-heartedly agreed to get involved after receiving several increasingly desperate letters from Tennant.<sup>48</sup>

The situation was even worse for *The Construction of Canada's Largest Apartment Building*, produced concurrently with *The Cream Industry* in fall 1919 and showing the rise of the ten-story Drummond building, one of Montreal's first skyscrapers.<sup>49</sup> This particular project was financed by no fewer than eight sponsors contributing sums ranging from \$50 to \$250, including Sherbrooke's McKinnon Steel Co. (structural work), Mott Co. ("sanitary earthenware of all kinds"), and G. A. Holland and Son Co. (furniture). The film's completion was eventually delayed by several months when one of the sponsors refused to pay, even after Canadian Films had agreed to make its trademark more prominent by retaking certain shots. This unseemly delay angered the other sponsors, who soon were threatening legal action.<sup>50</sup>

The delays encountered by Canadian Films in the production of its films proved even more critical in the case of the film it produced for the renowned furrier Holt, Renfrew, and Co. Titled *The Fur Industry of Canada*, this production was yet another advertisement masquerading as an educational-industrial film: according to the extant synopsis, it opened with an extended documentary sequence showing the breeding of silver foxes and the manufacture of cloaks and coats and closed with images of models wearing the latest Holt Renfrew creations.<sup>51</sup> When the film was finally completed in mid-January 1920, some four months after production began in fall 1919, timing was, in the opinion of its sponsor, less than optimal for a fur-marketing campaign. Canadian Films and Holt Renfrew consequently agreed to push the film's release to late summer 1920.<sup>52</sup> This forced Canadian Films to do some retakes on the film's final sequence to bring it up to date with the latest fashion trends for the 1920–21 season and to charge Holt Renfrew extra for the new footage.<sup>53</sup>

Holt Renfrew arranged for the revised version of *The Fur Industry of Canada* to be shown on a vessel of the Canadian Steamship Line.<sup>54</sup> To that purpose, Canadian Films sent the film's original negative to New York so that a 28mm safety film print could be produced by Pathéscope of America.<sup>55</sup> The negative, however, went missing for over a month at customs on its way back from New York (or so claimed Tennant), which thwarted Canadian Films's efforts to have the film released in theaters.<sup>56</sup> Relations between the film's producer and sponsor steadily deteriorated as the former systematically failed to make good on its promises: by October 1920, Holt Renfrew was sending a steady flow of threatening letters to Canadian Films.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, *The Fur Industry of Canada* may have been publicly exhibited only once, before retakes of the final sequence had been

inserted, at the Fur Industry and Wild Life Conference held at Montreal's Windsor Hotel on February 19, 1920. The film's description published on that occasion in the *Montreal Gazette* reveals some curious editorial choices, as the reporter first remarks with a hint of relief that "what happened before [the foxes'] pelts were removed was mercifully omitted" but then goes on to explain that much footage painstakingly depicts the grisly fleshing and tanning process to which the raw skins were submitted.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, the *Gazette* reporter also observed that "the pictures were calculated to show especially the male-part of the gathering the infinite pains that had to be taken before an expensive fur robe was turned out, and explain to them why such luxuries made severe demands upon the bank account."<sup>59</sup> Beyond its implicit celebration of the movie's educational potential, the *Gazette*'s piece thus signaled a certain degree of awareness that different groups—in this particular case, men and women—would likely read the film differently.

The last production completed by Canadian Films in its first year of operation, another industrial-promotional sponsored film titled *One of Canada's Leading Hotels*, might have been saved from some other questionable editorial choices on Canadian Films's part through exchanges between producer and sponsor. Available documents show a definite shift of emphasis between the project first presented by Canadian Films to the Windsor Hotel and the completed film. Here's how Canadian Films first pitched the project:

Many people, not knowing the whys and wherefores, are amazed at the present day prices charged in hotels for rooms and food. They are not aware of the sanitary precautions taken at large expense, the theft and destruction by certain patrons of linen and equipment, the loss of silver and many other such things that occur; and they would be interested to know how goods are received for the kitchen, how distributed and what disposition is made of the garbage and grease. . . . One or two meetings of employees shown receiving instructions and exchanging ideas would be astonishing news to multitudes.<sup>60</sup>

A list of titles prepared for the completed film, however, reveals that, in all probability heeding the hotel management's good advice, Canadian Films shifted the film's emphasis over the course of production from theft and grease disposal to some more glamorous sights such as the chef's "fancy granulated sugar work" and the establishment's celebrated "Peacock Alley and Dining Halls."<sup>61</sup> This still did not help Canadian Films secure theatrical distribution for this production, which, for once, had been completed within a month of the contract's signature on November 26, 1919.<sup>62</sup> *One of Canada's Leading*

*Hotels* seems to have been exhibited just once, in June 1920, to the employees of the Windsor Hotel.<sup>63</sup> In this manner, this film, which had been conceived as a promotional sponsored film and then produced as an industrial film, finally found a limited audience by being made to function more like a home movie.

Canadian Films's continued failure to get its films the wide release it had contractually bound itself to provide meant that it could not go on producing industrial sponsored films for very long.<sup>64</sup> Lack of distribution not only deprived Canadian Films of a much-needed stream of revenue (the producer's representatives often claimed that the sponsors' contributions did not even cover production costs); it also put the company in a difficult position vis-à-vis prospective sponsors.<sup>65</sup>

So why did Canadian Films's seemingly well-crafted productions have so much trouble getting distributed? Part of the answer may lie in Canadian Films's lack of connections in the distribution and exhibition fields, in an era marked by a strong push toward vertical integration—though it must be noted that the same lack of formal connections to distributors and exhibitors did not prevent Associated Screen News from having its films widely exhibited in commercial theaters in the 1920s.<sup>66</sup> It is also rather obvious that Canadian Films's management had grossly overestimated widespread popular demand for industrial films. By the turn of the 1920s, theatrical audiences had long developed a taste for more glamorous and entertaining fare. It is true that, as Fuller has demonstrated, some exhibitors (mostly in small-town theaters and nontheatrical venues) still booked short films dealing with agriculture and food processing or depicting the manufacturing process of various consumer goods. We do know, for instance, that the *Ford Educational Weekly* circulated regularly in the province of Quebec in the late 1910s.<sup>67</sup> A central feature of the appeal of these advertising–industrial films for exhibitors, however, lay in their extremely low rental costs (the *Ford Educational Weekly* could be booked for the nominal rental fee of one dollar per week) and regular release schedules.<sup>68</sup> Canadian Films could offer neither.

## CANADIAN FILMS'S EDUCATIONAL TURN

Canadian Films's distribution issues prompted Tennant to halt the company's filmmaking activities in December 1919. Very few efforts seem to have been undertaken to obtain distribution for Canadian Films's already completed films as Tennant pondered the company's production policy over late fall and winter 1920. Canadian Films's management eventually chose to investigate the educational market, which also seemed to permit the production of films that could be exploited in various noneducational markets. In

a letter sent to a Lennoxville school commissioner as production work on the Windsor Hotel film was still going on, Canadian Films's Dickson, for instance, explained that "even a hotel properly filmed should be of value in schools."<sup>69</sup> This statement suggests that the company's new policy did not proceed from a change of strategy but from a mere change of primary outlet: Canadian Films would now seek new venues where different meanings would be wrung out of its modest factual films, not new ways to make films.

That being said, the company's management also seems to have been aware of some of the pitfalls associated with the production of films with dual educational and promotional purposes. A letter sent by Tennant to Toronto's chief inspector of schools, for instance, reveals that Canadian Films's manager knew perfectly well that such films were likely to be perceived as educational by some viewers and as propaganda by others. The letter addressed to the inspector further demonstrates that Tennant was fully aware that propaganda charges could also be motivated by the ideological content of the company's films. Tennant consequently guaranteed that Canadian Films's educational productions would only deal with a limited list of subjects considered safe: "Our films will be largely for the teaching of Geography, Natural History, Agriculture, Horticulture, Domestic Science and other subjects of like nature. In school work proper we will eliminate all semblance of propaganda religious, political or otherwise, as there are so many shades of opinion on these subjects that to attempt to please one would offend others. The only propaganda that we will spread will be good morals and patriotism to the flag and country."<sup>70</sup>

Canadian history, interestingly, which had been the very first field mined by many pioneer Canadian film producers, such as Montreal's British-American Film Manufacturing Co. (*The Battle of the Long Sault*, 1912) and Halifax's Canadian Bioscope (*Evangeline*, 1914), was not part of the abbreviated list of subjects approved by Tennant. Though this omission may very well have been a direct consequence of Canadian Films's tight production budgets, it is also quite probable that the company's management was aware of the contentious nature of much of Canadian history. The Quebec City Tercentenary of 1908 and the Great War had more particularly exposed significant rifts between the views held by many French Canadians and English Canadians, to say nothing of aboriginal peoples, on the delicate matter of Canada's colonial history.<sup>71</sup> As a commercial enterprise, Canadian Films had nothing to gain by getting mixed up in these quarrels.

Ironically, Canadian Films's educational turn seems to have been spurred by some of the discussions held at the National Conference on Character Education in Relation to Canadian Citizenship, held in October 1919 in Winnipeg, which, according to historians Tom Mitchell and Rosa Bruno-Jofre, had been anything but a politically neutral affair. Most participants at this conference, organized to find solutions to the



perceived crisis surrounding postwar Canadian identity, had promoted a particular strand of “Canadianism rooted in Anglo-conformity and a citizenship framed in notions of service, obedience, obligation and fidelity to the state.”<sup>72</sup> According to Bruno-Jofre,

those who left room to accommodate diversity received little or no attention at the Conference. . . . Winnipeg labour organizations decided not to send delegates but there were participants willing to voice the workers’ view without, however, making an impact on the audience. . . . Delegates from Quebec, especially the Francophones, politely dissented from the national enthusiasm of the Conference. They tried, with little obvious success, to make participants aware that there was another view of Canada. Most participants perceived teachers as playing a powerful role in transmitting an ideology of Anglo-conformity, assimilation, service, social stability, and hostility towards radical change.<sup>73</sup>

But these lofty debates on the subject of Canadian identity and ideals most likely were not responsible for getting Canadian Films interested in the Conference’s project; rather, the producer seems to have been enticed by one particular resolution voted at the conference, which it reproduced in its entirety in a prospectus outlining its educational project:

WHEREAS the effect of the Moving Picture on school children is incalculably powerful for good or evil, and whereas much of what is now offered as entertainment is based upon suggestions that tend to familiarize the minds of children with situations that are sensational and frequently immoral and vulgar.

THEREFORE be it resolved that this Conference direct attention to the vital necessity of developing an active public opinion, demonstrated by attendance at theaters, for the support of good pictures—which can only be hoped for when it becomes good business to exhibit such pictures and also for the strengthening of the hands of the various boards of censorship in their efforts to raise the standard of the Moving Picture industry; and that every effort be made to secure film depicting Canadian and British life and sentiment.<sup>74</sup>

The National Conference on Character Education thus followed the lead of many reformist organizations across North America, which were then coming to realize that film was there to stay and that its appeal to groups perceived to be at risk—immigrants, workers, women, children—might as well be made to serve their causes.<sup>75</sup>

Canadian Films soon got in touch with members of the National Council of the

Conference on Character Education from all provinces to promote and legitimate its new business plan centering on the production of patriotically minded educational pictures. Tennant's letters explain that Canadian Films was in the process of forming an advisory board whose mandate would be to review and approve the pictures it would soon release on the educational market.<sup>76</sup> The invitation was also extended to several ecclesiastics and education professionals across Canada.<sup>77</sup> The list of advisory board members published by Canadian Film Underwriters, Canadian Films's fiscal agents, eventually listed nineteen members (mostly educators) coming from all Canadian provinces, with the exception of Manitoba.<sup>78</sup>


Canadian Films's partnership with the National Conference on Character Education was, however, destined to be short-lived. Irrked to have seen their names printed in a Canadian Films prospectus, members of the Council of the National Conference discussed the project at a follow-up meeting held in Ottawa in February 1920. One of them eventually reported to Canadian Films that "the consensus of opinion of the meeting was that the Council was being used to further the interests of a commercial enterprise in the way of assisting it to dispose of stock."<sup>79</sup> As a result, most council members notified Canadian Films that they no longer wished to be associated with its advisory board. Tennant protested that the list of members of the board had been published "for the only purpose of inspiring confidence" and that this smear campaign was but part of "the American Film interests' . . . concerted fight against this Company."<sup>80</sup> Still, he had no choice but to grant council members their wish.

Gaining the educational community's confidence was not the only hurdle that Canadian Films would have to clear to develop and gainfully exploit the educational market. Another major difficulty was that despite nascent interest for audiovisual educational methods, the vast majority of Canadian educational institutions were still not equipped for moving pictures. Canadian Films would therefore have to sell projectors to schools before it could hope to sell films. Over fall 1919 and winter 1920, Tennant approached several manufacturers of portable film projectors, seeking to obtain a large quantity of easy-to-operate, inexpensive devices. There seems to have been very little discussion around the format preferred by Canadian Films: the safety base 28mm format, then the only viable alternative to 35mm, was quickly dismissed after a Pathéscope projector was tested and rejected, its portability having been deemed "unsatisfactory."<sup>81</sup> Of course, it remains entirely possible that by rejecting the 28mm Pathéscope format, Canadian Films was simply trying not to expand the market of the firm that would have been its main competitor in the Canadian educational film market, Toronto's Pathéscope of Canada. Original production in the 28mm format would furthermore have ruled out the theatrical

# HALLBERG'S WORLD INSTRUCTOR

THE LIGHTEST WEIGHT MOTOR DRIVEN CINEMATOGRAPH OUTFIT EVER PRODUCED  
IT REACHES THE MOST INACCESSIBLE PEOPLE


IN THE MODERN SCHOOL-ROOM  
IT TEACHES BY ELECTRICITY  
5 AMPERES REQUIRED



TOUCH  
THE BUTTON  
AND THE LESSON  
BEGINS

\$2.00. FOR PROJECTOR ONLY 110 VOLTS  
25. EXTRA FOR STEREOPTIC ATTACHMENT  
30. EXTRA FOR 220 VOLTS RHEOSTAT


COMPLETE  
AIR COOLED  
ELECTRIC LIGHT  
PLANT 90 LBS.



SCREEN  
5 LBS.

PROJECTOR  
25 LBS.

FIVE MINUTES  
TO SET IT UP  
AND SHOW  
THE WONDERS OF  
THE WORLD



\$500. FOR COMPLETE OUTFIT  
IT MAKES ITS OWN  
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ONE PINT GASOLINE  
PER HOUR.

**PROJECTS ALL STANDARD FILMS ON 10 INCH 1000 FEET REELS**

exhibition of its future films and thus contradicted the company's policy of producing films meant to be released through multiple screen networks.

**Figure 2. Hallberg promotional leaflet. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Canadian Films Limited collection, P324.**

Canadian Films's educational project would therefore have to rely on 35mm film. Tennant seems to have had no qualms about peddling 35mm projectors that could be used in any location (i.e., that would not be permanently installed inside regulation fireproof projection booths). That Canadian Films planned to print its educational films on nonflammable film was evidently considered sufficient; no thought was given to the possibility that some of these portable projectors might be used to screen nitrate prints obtained from other sources.<sup>82</sup> Canadian Films's technical expert examined many portable 35mm projectors and, for a variety of reasons, rejected machines manufactured by DeVry, the American Projecting Co., Educational Films, Acme, and Hallberg (the latter claiming to have perfected "the ideal outfit for lecturers, tourists, explorers and missionaries") (see Figure 2).<sup>83</sup>

The machine that came nearest to being adopted by Canadian Films was the portable projector manufactured by the Replogle Projector Co. of Chicago. Tennant seems

to have been mainly attracted by the fact that the Replogle projector was one of the few portable machines not under the exclusive control of another agent in Canada. Its low price might also have endeared the Replogle projector to Tennant: whereas most of the other portable machines retailed for sums varying between \$150 and \$225 apiece, the Replogle projector could be obtained for \$90. Tennant entered into negotiations with the projector's maker, Hartley L. Replogle, who, as it turns out, had just been appointed to the Illinois State's Attorney Office (where he would end up playing a leading role in the infamous 1920 Black Sox scandal) and consequently was looking to sell his firm.<sup>84</sup> Negotiations broke down, however, when Canadian Films received its first Replogle projectors and found them to be somewhat temperamental and thus ill fitted to the educational market.<sup>85</sup>

Canadian Films's change of mind over the Replogle projector should nevertheless be situated within the context of the producer's wider problems, of which it might have been more of a consequence than a cause. Tennant and his associates soon realized that their educational film project was, like their sponsored film pursuits, not going anywhere. Canadian Films's evolving discourse on the subject of schools and projectors is indeed revealing. Here is how the producer described its plan to turn Canadian schools into a new market in fall 1919:

We propose now to make a systematic effort to place in every town throughout the Dominion a portable projecting machine. With each machine we sell we will give five reels of non-inflammable film. When we have sold machines to forty towns we will form it into a circuit and will exchange reels weekly between the different schools.

We propose to teach one person in each town to operate the machine; preferably a lady teacher. She can then go from school to school in the City and exhibit the pictures on certain days in the same manner as the music teacher goes from school to school and teaches music. This field is absolutely unlimited as to educational as well as moral results.<sup>86</sup>

At the time of its first exchange of letters with Replogle in November 1919, Canadian Films expected to place "not less than two hundred machines" in Canadian schools during the coming twelve months.<sup>87</sup> For a while, Canadian Films kept up the pretense that a market for educational films was about to be formed: by March 1920, Tennant was still claiming to have Canada's one thousand schools (his figure) "well lined up" for the coming fall term.<sup>88</sup>



An uncharacteristically frank letter sent by Tennant to an enthusiastic educator in October 1920, however, reveals the ever-widening gap between Canadian Films's public statements and its internal assessment of the educational market's commercial potential:

We made a thorough canvass by mail of all schools in Ontario and Manitoba where the population was more than 500. Everyone agreed with us that it was a fine thing to use films in schools, but out of the two Provinces we only received seven replies in which they stated positively that they would install educational films as part of the course. We did not receive one reply condemning film, but none of them seemed willing to invest the requisite amount of money. . . . We could not install an exchange with less than forty schools, and for that reason we dropped the matter, temporarily [*sic*] at least.

We have quite a number of educational films, but the films are of no value without a projector and any reliable Portable Projecting Machine would cost laid down in Canada about \$250. That is very little compared to the benefits derived from the use of same, still it seems to take a personal interview to convince them.

We are now producing for the Theater Exchange, and while we will be glad at any time to go into the question of educational work, we believe that the school boards are not yet ready.<sup>89</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Canadian Films could not accomplish what even the mighty Edison Manufacturing Co. had failed to achieve with its Edison Home Kinetoscope and its impressive catalog of reduction prints in the first half of the 1910s.<sup>90</sup> Though Canadian Films's failure may seem to have been predicated on its choice of a film format too expensive for schools, too bulky for "lady teachers," and presenting serious safety issues, one should remember that the appearance of 16mm film in 1923 did not result in the sudden spread of audiovisual technologies in schools, colleges, and universities. Canadian Films's own inexperience as well as the educational world's lingering mistrust of film—and sheer inertia—also contributed to the project's hasty demise.

## BACK TO SPONSORED FILMS

At the conclusion of its educational episode, Canadian Films had not engaged in film production in months. To help turn things around, the company was reorganized in

March 1920, a little over a year after its creation. John D. Tennant retained his position as manager, but Ernest F. Würtele, an accountant and estate agent, replaced J. M. Tresidder as president. H. S. Couper, E. W. Dawson, and J. S. Stanford (of Stanford's Limited, butchers) were either appointed or renewed in their position as directors. A limited amount of money was raised by the sale of stock to small-time investors.<sup>91</sup>

The new board first tackled the issue of the company's current quarters, which were both too small and ill suited for winter work. The manager and directors resolved to look into the construction of a new building to be used as a film studio and laboratory. Soon, a lot had been located in Montreal West, an architect hired, and plans drafted.<sup>92</sup> The latter described an ambitious three-level structure containing offices, developing rooms, vaults, a projection booth, dressing rooms, makeup rooms and stars' rooms, a scenic studio, and a vast "six set" studio. Some of the plans' features, such as the stars' rooms and the "directors and orchestra balcony" overlooking the studio, either indicated a forthcoming turn to fiction film production or were simply put there to impress investors (see Figures 3 and 4). Ever the optimist, Tennant hoped that the new building could be completed for less than thirty-five hundred dollars.<sup>93</sup> Somewhat unsurprisingly, the building project stalled before construction got under way.

The films produced in 1920 by Canadian Films were generally less ambitious than the first group of films produced by the company over summer and fall 1919. In most cases, they were simple jobs contracted and supervised by outside organizations. Canadian Films first produced a series of medical films and lantern slides for Dr. Edward Archibald of McGill University, who was then seeking a cure to pancreatitis. The films and views documented two vivisection operations conducted on a dog and a cat.<sup>94</sup> Archibald was charged \$855 for 855 feet of positive film and \$26 for 26 lantern slides—not a bad deal for Canadian Films, which had received commensurate sums for the much more ambitious sponsored films it had produced the preceding year.<sup>95</sup> Tennant subsequently tried to get Archibald interested in a bigger project involving the making of "a complete film library of different operations." Despite Tennant's claims regarding the film library's likely "immense benefit to science as well as . . . to McGill University and ourselves," the project remained unrealized.<sup>96</sup>

The vivisection films were followed in June 1920 by the filming of a fire-extinguishing liquid demonstration held on Montreal's Champ-de-Mars by the Canadian Foamite Firefoam Limited. The resulting film was shown privately to the officials of the sponsoring organization but was never exhibited in commercial theaters. Canadian Foamite Firefoam declined to have the footage included (at the rate of one dollar per

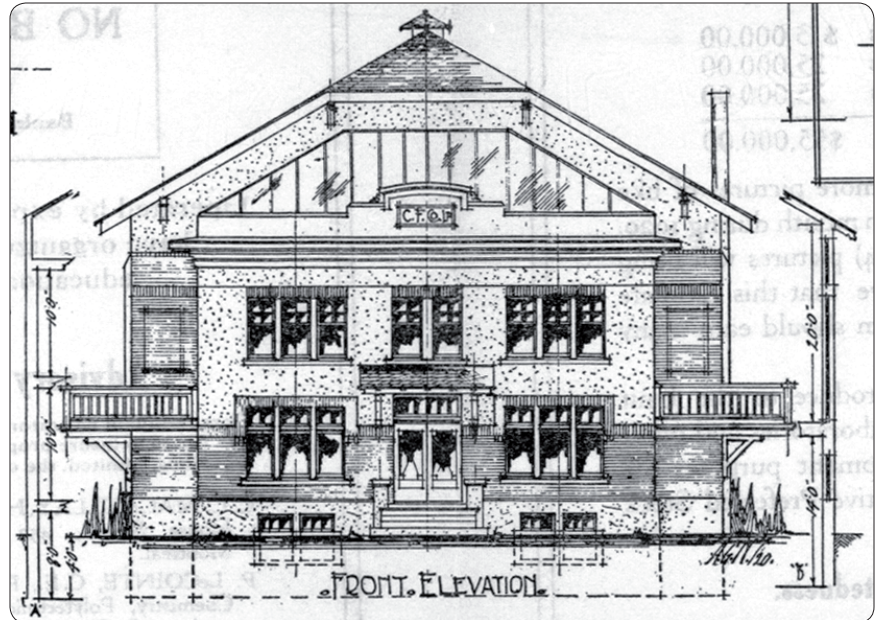


Figure 3. Proposed studio, Canadian Films, front elevation. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Canadian Films Limited collection, P324,D1.

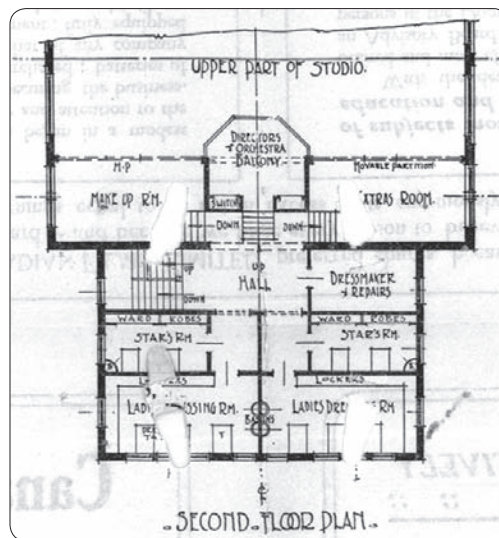


Figure 4. Proposed studio, Canadian Films, second floor. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Canadian Films Limited collection, P324,D1.

foot) in the sole issue of Canadian Films's screen magazine *Here and There*, which was eventually released in September.<sup>97</sup>

In July, at the request of the Bell Telephone Co. of Canada, Canadian Films completed a Canadian version of *Speeding the Spoken Word*, a two-reel sponsored film produced in the United States some time before 1918. The film was recut and retitled to include such gems as "when we go behind the scene in the telephone world, we enter a realm that is full of interest."<sup>98</sup> New interior and exterior shots of Bell's Montreal plant were also photographed and inserted. A distribution deal for the Canadian version of *Speeding the Spoken Word* was signed with the New Era Film Co. in September, but it remains impossible to ascertain if the film was ever exhibited in theaters. A Canadian version of the U.S. production *Wonders of Wireless* prepared by Canadian Films for the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. of Canada in August 1920 also seems to have failed to reach theaters.<sup>99</sup>

The last film completed by Canadian Films was also one of the first ones for which a contract had been signed, back in September 1919.<sup>100</sup> Various referred to as *The Story of a Blouse* or *Your Blouse: From Factory to Home*, the film was sponsored by the D'Allaird Manufacturing Co. Work on this final Canadian Films production was completed sometime around October 1920. According to a surviving script, *The Story of a Blouse* deployed a fictional premise—a tour of the D'Allaird factory by a mother–daughter duo—to painstakingly describe the thirty-nine steps involved in the making of D'Allaird blouses. The tour guide, Miss Choquette (played by an actual D'Allaird employee), treats the duo to various remarks dealing with fabrics, manufacturing, and D'Allaird's sizeable contribution to the Canadian economy. Miss Choquette, for instance, proudly remarks that "Canadian buttons are used exclusively on all our output. . . . The establishment of D'Allaird factories has given a wonderful impetus to button making, which is gaining by leaps and bounds in our country." The inconsistent tone of many of the intertitles drafted in the script hints at the writer's struggle with the film's prosaic subject matter. Miss Choquette's comments at times refer to the book of Genesis ("You see our work is divided up more than Joseph's coat among all his brethren") or strive for a poetic view of the manufacturing process ("The eyes are the windows of the soul and button holes are the soul of a blouse"). Some of her lines express a naive view of working conditions and class relations ("The one great interest in life for this girl is tucks—that is all she does"), while others contain wisecracks that might just as well have come out of the mouth of the Canadian Explosives salesman featured in Canadian Films's first production ("The cloth is cut quicker than a profiteer guts a poor acquaintance").<sup>101</sup> Despite the time and

effort that went into its making, *The Story of a Blouse* failed, just like the Bell and Marconi films before it, to circulate in commercial venues.<sup>102</sup>

### A COMEDY OF ERRORS

Seemingly distraught by its difficulties in getting its films into theaters, Canadian Films announced in May 1920 that it would launch a series of twelve one-reel comedies to be produced concurrently with its industrial sponsored films.<sup>103</sup> The new project was much more straightforward than the company's previous schemes in that it did not involve the corralling of sponsors or the selling of projectors. Only the first title of the planned series ended up being produced, and it may very well be that the most comical thing about it was not the comedy it featured but—as film historian Germain Lacasse has discovered—an incident that occurred during its production. In the afternoon of July 6, the Canadian Films crew traveled by car to a rural area located north of Montreal to shoot a scene involving five masked bandits. The crew's day in the country was cut short, however, when the costumed actors surprised farmer Adélar Cardinal, who thought that his family was about to be attacked. Unable to explain the situation to the French-speaking farmer, the crew members were quickly forced to flee when Cardinal called his neighbors to the rescue. Emboldened by their numbers, the locals climbed in an automobile and gave pursuit to Canadian Films's team. The latter fortunately rode in a faster machine and thus managed to escape unharmed. In its report on the incident, *La Presse*—Montreal's leading French daily newspaper—noted that though the mysterious bandits had thankfully been put to rout before they could commit their horrible crimes, the inhabitants of Sainte-Dorothée were bracing themselves for their return.<sup>104</sup> Canadian Films's employees eventually had to meet with police detectives to explain that they were not fearsome criminals but simple "film artists."<sup>105</sup>

Distributed under the title *Hicks and Vamps*, this sole comedy completed by Canadian Films was privately exhibited to journalists on August 5, 1920. It then premiered on September 12 at Montreal's Imperial Theater, a prestigious movie palace operated by the Keith-Albee chain. Subsequent bookings in a few minor Montreal theaters netted Canadian Films a grand total of seventy-five dollars.<sup>106</sup> Published reviews were at best lukewarm. *La Presse*'s reviewer did show some leniency toward this local production, commending the film's clear photography and use of local scenery. The acting was described as being a little rough but nevertheless showing promise.<sup>107</sup> *La Presse* incidentally emphasized that *Hicks and Vamps* had been produced by Canadian actors and



technicians. This statement, however, remains impossible to corroborate, as most of the actors and technicians involved in the production of the film are not identified in period sources. Theater advertisements only credit one actor, “Fatty Kanuck,” and Canadian Films’s papers name only the film’s director, Fred Bezerril.<sup>108</sup>

Interestingly, Bezerril’s sole other known film credit is for an acting turn in *The Lonely Trail*, a five-reel feature that has—mistakenly, it would seem—been credited to Canadian Films by Peter Morris in his seminal history of Canadian cinema before 1940. According to period sources, *The Lonely Trail* was shot in 1921 “in the timbered districts close by to Trois-Rivières, Quebec,” as well as in the Kahnawake Mohawk reserve located on the outskirts of Montreal.<sup>109</sup> Its backers clearly intended to profit from the notoriety of the film’s lead player, Indian guide Fred K. Beauvais, who had just been involved in the infamous Stillman divorce case.<sup>110</sup> Somewhat predictably, the film was rejected by the Quebec Board of Censors and widely condemned by the press in the United States, where it was briefly exhibited in early 1922.<sup>111</sup> The film’s eventual failure to make much of an impression at the box office, however, appears to have been largely attributable not to its scandalous subtext but to its more prosaic lack of storytelling skill and entertainment value. Indeed, *Moving Picture World*’s review accused it of “[committing] the crime of killing moving picture entertainment,” while *Variety* called it “the saddest bit of screen production shown anywhere near Broadway in a long time.” Both reviews singled out the “awful” acting, with *Moving Picture World* noting that the man playing the “heavy” (most likely Bezerril himself) was “about the poorest excuse for an actor ever.”<sup>112</sup>

*The Lonely Trail* was attributed by Morris to Canadian Films on the basis of a later comment made by its director, one Julian Rivero.<sup>113</sup> Period documents corroborating Rivero’s assertion, however, have failed to turn up. On the contrary, the Canadian Films collection held by Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec and the Municipal Archives of Montreal suggests that Canadian Films had ceased all activities by winter 1921—at least half a year before the start of *The Lonely Trail*’s production. The company’s correspondence more particularly reveals that founder John D. Tennant had severed his connection to the company on or about November 1, 1920. Canadian Films was officially declared insolvent a few weeks later, in early December.<sup>114</sup> A company representative finally announced in February 1921 that Lieutenant Colonel H. A. S. Würtele, brother of President Ernest F. Würtele, who had replaced Tennant as manager, had also resigned and that the company had closed its plant “pending reorganization.”<sup>115</sup> This appears to have been the end of Canadian Films.

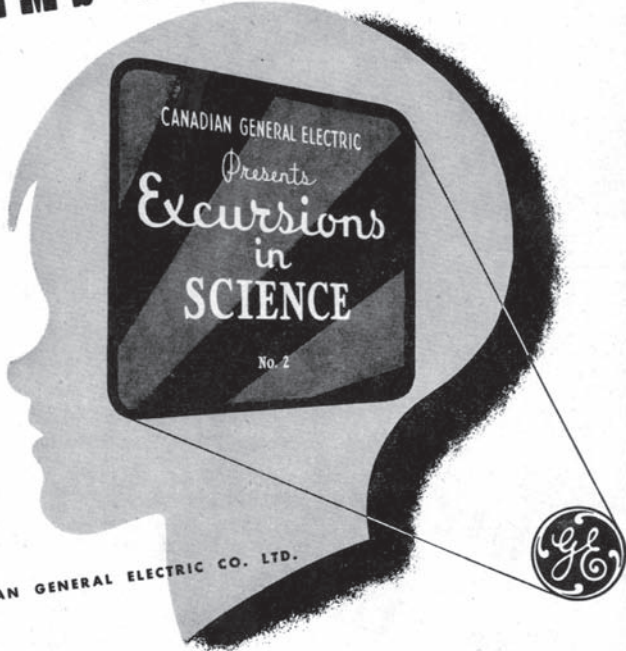
## THE RISE OF ASSOCIATED SCREEN NEWS

In summer 1920, just as Canadian Films was shooting what would turn out to be its last few productions, a new film production outfit, Associated Screen News, was established in Montreal. It would quickly become the leading Canadian private film producer. Associated Screen News's enduring success (it remained active until 1957) rested on the production of theatrical shorts (*Canadian Cameos*, *Kinogram Travelogues*, *Camera Rambles*); the production of nontheatrical educational, industrial, and sponsored films; and its laboratory services, which were used by many U.S. studios for the preparation of Canadian release prints (see Figure 5).<sup>116</sup> It also operated film rental libraries in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver and—through its Benograph branch—sold 16mm projectors and other film apparatus.<sup>117</sup> In short, Associated Screen News did many of the things that Canadian Films had first proposed doing, and thrived.

So why did Canadian Films fail? The collected evidence suggests that insufficient capital and inexperienced management vastly contributed to making Tennant's firm a nonstarter. Associated Screen News was supported by Canada's largest company, CPR, which was its majority shareholder. It moreover benefited from the skilled management of Bernard E. Norrish, who had first launched and supervised the federal government's film bureau.<sup>118</sup> Norrish hired skilled technicians, such as Canadian Films's Maurice Metzger (who would remain in Associated Screen News's employ until the 1950s), but also recruited talented filmmakers such as Gordon Sparling, who had learned his trade at the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau and at Paramount's New York studio (see Figure 6).<sup>119</sup>

But Associated Screen News's success was not entirely predicated on its internal organization. Unlike Canadian Films, Associated Screen News also benefited for most of its life span from a more fully developed nontheatrical market. Though it is true that some of its productions were hits in both theatrical and nontheatrical markets (such as its shorts featuring Archibald "Grey Owl" Belaney: *Grey Owl's Little Brother* [Gordon Sparling, 1932] and *Grey Owl's Strange Guests* [Gordon Sparling, 1934]), Associated Screen News did not have to compromise by producing films that were meant to be successively disseminated through several screen networks; in other words, the profitability of most Associated Screen News productions was not dependent on their crossover potential. Unlike Tennant's firm, Associated Screen News could tailor its production to the needs of a specific market and hope to get a wide release in the screen network serving it. Indeed, in a 1932 article on "commercial movies," Gordon Sparling hammers home that "a study

# FILMS FOR EDUCATION



BY CANADIAN GENERAL ELECTRIC CO. LTD.

Films are proving a vital force in modern education. Canadian General Electric is one of the blue-chip companies sponsoring films for this purpose. An excellent example is their "Excursions in Science" series for classroom and adult educational use.

Photographed in black and white, each 10-minute 16 mm talking film describes laboratory tests, shows practical applications that demonstrate the magic of science.


Such films improve understanding of our technological age. More than that, they provide an excellent public relations medium—"Excursions in Science" stresses the value to the community of the great research activities of General Electric.

\*\*\* Plan the use of motion pictures in educational-public relations—for your company and industry . . . A.S.N. offers complete film service, from scenario to distribution.

*We will gladly send you "The Importance of Moviology in Modern Business"—to use as a guide in planning your motion picture programme.*

*Associated*

CANADA'S PIONEER



MONTREAL & TORONTO

*Screen News*

MOTION PICTURE STUDIO

Figure 5. Print advertisement for a series of sponsored educational films distributed by Associated Screen News. *Canadian Business* 21, no. 10 (1948): 105.

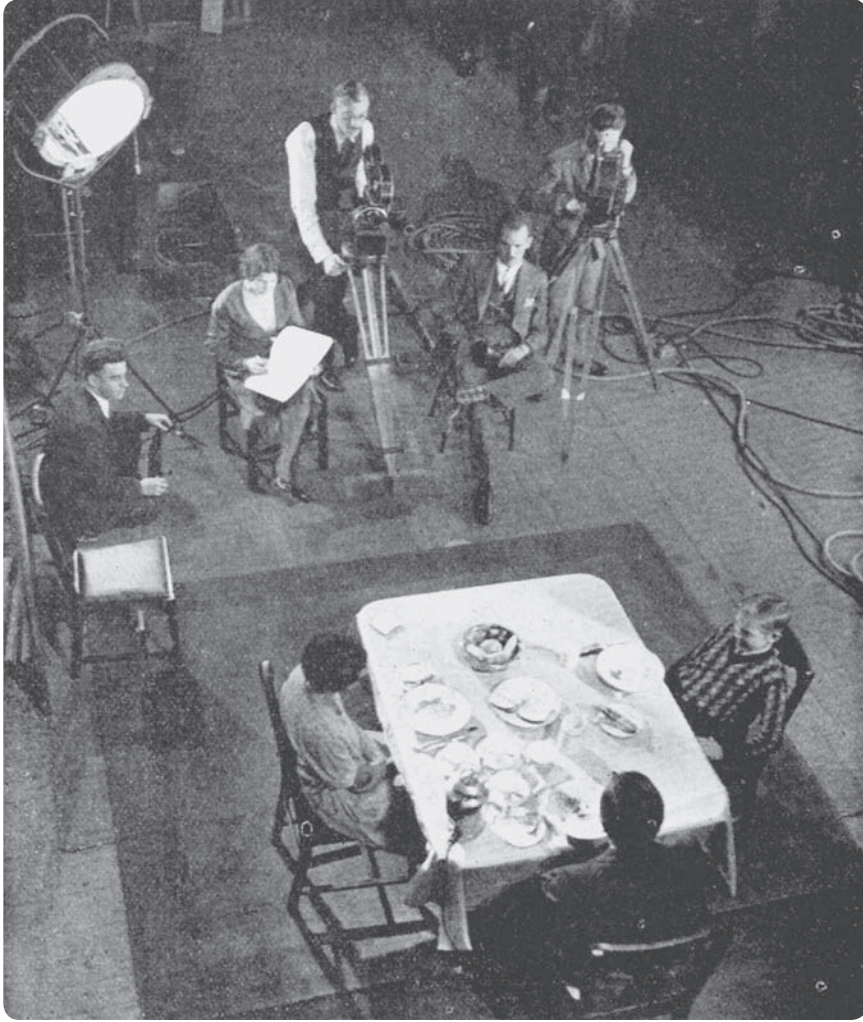


Figure 6. Gordon Sparling at work on a sponsored film. Sparling, "Movies Tell the Story," *Commerce of the Nation* 5, no. 8 (1932): 13.

of the most suitable outlets is of as great importance as the construction of the scenario.”<sup>120</sup>

A comparison of Canadian Films’s *The Story of a Blouse* (1920) and Associated Screen News’s *The Miracle of a Locomotive* (1928)—both process films—is quite telling. As we have seen, the *Story of a Blouse* script suggests

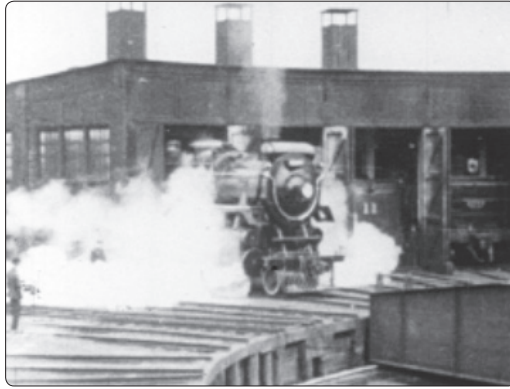


Figure 7. Frame from *The Miracle of a Locomotive* (Associated Screen News, 1928). Cinémathèque québécoise.

that the completed film’s lack of a commercial career might have been partly caused by its makers’ insistence on showing the full thirty-nine steps involved in the making of a D’Allaird blouse. As a result, this film, too brief to function as a training tool, was too tedious to be bothered with by commercial exhibitors and was thus prevented from performing its advertising function. *The Miracle of a Locomotive*, on the other hand, still remains an engaging production. Produced for theatrical release by Associated Screen News, the film deals with an exciting subject: the making of the Commonwealth’s largest locomotive, “from pattern shop to the rails.” It was skillfully edited by none other than Terry Ramsaye and is full of images of gigantic molds and presses and glowing molten metal. The film’s final sequence is particularly spectacular: it shows the majestic locomotive coming out of the shops, letting out a cloud of steam and then darting on the rails for a trial run (see Figure 7). The locomotive runs over the camera, concealed in a pit dug between the tracks, for the film’s grand finale.

It is only through these spectacular—and at times somewhat hammy—scenes that the two main functions of the process film identified by Hediger and Vonderau become operative. First, by framing *The Miracle of a Locomotive* as a piece of entertainment, Associated Screen News enabled it to reach the mass audience that it needed to fulfill its mercantile function, which was to give testimony to the quality of the CPR’s fleet. Second, these visual records situated the film in an educational tradition going back, once again according to Hediger and Vonderau, to Diderot’s and Alembert’s eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie*. Just like that of the *Encyclopédie*, the film’s profuse visual documentation of the production process of a locomotive was (quite obviously) tailored to the needs of an audience having no intention of participating in the process. In other words, it was not intended for practical purposes.<sup>121</sup>

Through its skillful uses of photography and editing, *The Miracle of a Locomotive*

manages to create drama from an industrial subject. In doing so, it brings forth one of the main reasons why “useful cinema” has largely been written out of film history: the very limited use of cinema’s expressive tools by many educational, industrial, and sponsored films. Quite a few of the films falling under these categories were conceived as simple visual records or didactic tools and consequently did not rely on *mise-en-scène* or editing to guide the reception process and generate meaning. They depended, instead, on external elements, be they a printed manual or the explanations of a lecturer or instructor. Taken out of their intended reception contexts, that is, devoid of these adjuncts, they can become quite opaque (which partly explains the repeated uses of educational, industrial, and sponsored films’ images and tropes by avant-garde filmmakers and, more particularly, by artists working with found footage). Though these practices constituted an entirely legitimate use of film, they have resulted in a tendency to situate this particular strand of filmmaking outside the field of inquiry of film studies, which has long primarily been interested in film as a narrative form of expression and in the filmmaker as an auteur. The situation of educational, industrial, and sponsored films can thus be likened to that of early fiction films, which also depended on external agents (a lecturer, the viewer’s previous knowledge of the story) and have consequently been dismissed as “primitive” and thus have been glossed over in film histories for many years.

Canadian Films did intend to produce films that would stand on their own, that is, that would rely on their formal properties rather than on external agents to guide the reception process. The company lacked a clear idea, however, of whom its films were intended for. This indecision prevented it from devising the right mixture of genres for each of its productions. Evidence tends to demonstrate that though film genres and categories can indeed be combined, various reception contexts will require some genres to be subordinated to others. The educational side of the process film *The Miracle of a Locomotive*, for instance, was most likely accepted by theatrical audiences because the spectacle offered by the film was deemed entertaining. Similarly, the slight comedic side of *Grey Owl’s Little Brother* was tolerated by the educators who frequently presented it because it was made to serve the film’s educational content. It should also be noted that in every reception context, some genres would routinely be rejected. Promotional films, for example, were frowned on in most theatrical and educational contexts. Associated Screen News did manage to get an advertisement for CPR past theatrical audiences with *The Miracle of a Locomotive*, but only by framing it as a routine process film and by making the film’s few explicit references to CPR appear incidental. Canadian Films, with its blatant advertisements for dynamite, blouses, and apartment buildings, did not stand much of a chance to get its films exhibited in theaters.



*The Miracle of a Locomotive's* success, finally, points to yet another possible cause of Canadian Films's failure. Associated Screen News could get sponsored films shown in schools and commercial theaters because it preferred the soft-sell approach, but also, more importantly, because it employed creative individuals who knew how to effectively sugarcoat the films' messages. The few extant Canadian Films scripts as well as the failure of the producer's sole title framed as pure entertainment, *Hicks and Vamps*, suggest that Canadian Films's personnel were somewhat less gifted at humor and storytelling. Canadian Films's story thus serves as a useful reminder that though educational, industrial, and sponsored films must be treated on their own terms (most notably by paying attention to the networks and uses to which they were destined) if they are to be given a fair shake by film history, issues of narration and aesthetics are not always irrelevant when dealing with them. Political economy and market studies can only explain so much.

## NOTES

I am most grateful to Carolina Lucchesi Lavoie and JoAnne Stober for helping me gain access to some of the documents used in my research. Many thanks also go to Charles Acland and the two anonymous readers who provided much constructive criticism of this article and to Timothy Barnard, who helped revise it for publication. This project was funded by research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

1. Canadian Films was incorporated on March 17, 1919. It had actively been seeking out customers since at least early February of that year, however. Fact sheet, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Canadian Films Limited collection, P324 (hereinafter BAnQ); Halifax Board of Trade to Canadian Films, February 7, 1919, BAnQ.

2. Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895–1939* (Montreal, QC: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1978); Germain Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes: le cinéma muet au Québec* (Montreal, QC: Cinémathèque québécoise, 1988). André Gaudreault, Germain Lacasse, and Pierre Véronneau have collaborated on the Silent Era Quebec Filmography Project (<http://cri.histart.umontreal.ca/grafics/fr/filmo/default.asp>), while Charles Acland has initiated the Canadian Educational, Sponsored, and Industrial Film Project, whose database will be made available online in 2011.

3. On the category of useful cinema, see Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

4. Rick Altman, "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," in *Refiguring American Film Genres*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 7.

5. Frank Kessler and Eef Masson, "Layers of Cheese: Generic Overlap in Early

Non-fiction Films on Production Processes," in *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, ed. Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 83.

6. Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, "Record, Rhetoric, Rationalization: Industrial Organization and Film," in Hediger and Vonderau, *Films That Work*, 46.

7. Roger Odin, "Sémio-pragmatique du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel: Modes et institutions," in *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual: Theory and History*, ed. Jürgen E. Müller (Münster, Germany: Nodus Publikationen, 1994), 39.

8. Kessler and Masson, "Layers of Cheese," 75–76.

9. *Jean Painlevé au fil de ses films* (La Sept/GMT Productions, 1988).

10. Canadian Photo-Play Productions prospectus, BAnQ; Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 83–84.

11. Throughout, dollars are Canadian dollars.

12. Statement of Canadian Films Limited, February 20, 1920, BAnQ.

13. The long list of Canadian film producers missing in action includes Montreal's British American Manufacturing Co. (1912–13), Halifax's Canadian Bioscope (1913–14), Windsor's All-Red Feature Film Co. (1914), and Toronto's Conness Till Film Co. (1914–15). Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 47–54.

14. A. A. Dickson to the Secretary of the Board of Education, Victoria Harbour, Ontario, December 2, 1919, BAnQ.

15. Canadian Films to H. A. Wilson, Montreal Cottons Ltd., May 2, 1919, BAnQ.

16. Evidence suggests that John D. Tennant might have been a U.S. citizen. A letter to the Beta Theta Pi Club of New York (December 18, 1919) indicates that somebody at Canadian Films, most likely Tennant, had graduated in 1905 from Knox College (Galesburg, Illinois) (BAnQ). Moreover, Tennant is not listed in pre-1919 editions of Lovell's Montreal directory.

17. Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 131–37, 149–52.

18. Ibid., 143–49; Anke Mebold and Charles Tepperman, "Resurrecting the Lost History of 28mm in North America," *Film History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 146.

19. J. D. Tennant to Prof. H. T. J. Coleman (Queen's University), February 23, 1920, BAnQ.

20. J. D. Tennant to Rev. J. A. Richardson, March 1, 1920, BAnQ.

21. J. D. Tennant to W. A. Wilson, August 27, 1919, Montreal Municipal Archives, Canadian Films Limited collection (hereinafter MMA), BM54,D2.

22. E. A. Saunders, Secretary, Halifax Board of Trade, to Canadian Films, February 7, 1919, BAnQ. See also Wallace L. Higgins, Charlottetown Board of Trade, to Canadian Films, February 13, 1919, BAnQ.

23. Canadian Films, income tax return for the year 1919, BAnQ. Maurice Metzger received \$1,680 for the twenty-eight weeks he spent working for Canadian Films in 1919.

24. *Filmographie des "vues" tournées au Québec au temps du muet*, <http://cri.histart.umontreal.ca/grafics/fr/filmo/viewrec.asp?lang=fr&id=324>; prospectus, Premier Film Manufacturing Co. of Canada, BAnQ; H. H. McArthur to Hye Bossin, March 31, 1951, Library and Archives Canada,

2000–0012, Container 4, Hye Bossin File; Gordon Sparling, “The Great Canadian Movie,” lecture presented at the University of Toronto, December 11, 1951, Canadian Film Institute collection, 2000–0012, Container 7, General Histories File; Gerald G. Graham, *The Birth of Canadian Film Technology* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), 71–72.

**25.** See the following replies to Canadian Films’s inquiry: A. P. Simard, Industrial Commissioner, City of Vancouver, to Canadian Films, February 24, 1919, BAnQ; E. A. Saunders, Secretary, Halifax Board of Trade, to Canadian Films, February 7, 1919, BAnQ; Wallace L. Higgins, Charlottetown Board of Trade, to Canadian Films, February 13, 1919, BAnQ.

**26.** J. D. Tennant to D. K. Walker, May 21, 1919, BAnQ.

**27.** Canadian Films, copy of the letter sent to the boards of trade in the Canadian West, April 11, 1919, BAnQ.

**28.** Ibid.

**29.** *Edison Kinetogram* 2, no. 5 (1910): 4; 2, no. 4 (1910): 4.

**30.** J. D. Tennant to the J. L. Mathieu Syrup Co., undated, BAnQ. The earliest mention of the Cameragram series in Canadian Films’s papers appears in a letter from J. D. Tennant to A. W. Wilson dated May 16, 1919 (BAnQ).

**31.** Canadian Films, telegram to W. G. McLaughlan, August 5, 1919, BAnQ; W. G. McLaughlan, telegram to Canadian Films, August 11, 1919, BAnQ.

**32.** Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 61.

**33.** Rosemary Bergeron, “A History of the Newsreel in Canada,” *The Moving Image* 7, no. 2 (2007): 27–31.

**34.** A partial list of companies contacted in August and September of 1919 can be consulted in BAnQ.

**35.** J. D. Tennant to McKinnon Steel Co., Sherbrooke, September 1919, BAnQ.

**36.** J. D. Tennant to Geo. Phillips and Co., August 28, 1919, BAnQ.

**37.** For a list of companies interested by Canadian Films’s proposal, see J. D. Tennant to W. A. Wilson, August 27, 1919, MMA, BM54,D2.

**38.** Canadian Films to G. A. Holland and Son Co., September 26, 1919, BAnQ.

**39.** Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-town Audiences and the Creation of Movie-fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 84–85, 94.

**40.** Canadian Films Questionnaire, undated, BAnQ. The film’s shooting script bears the title *Farming with Dynamite*, which, interestingly enough, was also the title of a film distributed by du Pont de Nemours and Co. in the early 1920s (*Wid’s Year Book*, 1920–21, 169). There is no way to tell if this is a coincidence or an indication that Canadian Films’s first production actually circulated outside Canada, or if this situation points to a possible case of plagiarism.

**41.** *Farming with Dynamite*, dramatis personae, MMA, BM54,D2.

**42.** Ibid.

**43.** J. B. Moriarty to Canadian Films, October 20, 1919, BAnQ.

**44.** Canadian Films, invoices sent to Canadian Explosives, November 26, 1919, and February 18, 1920, BAnQ.

45. J. D. Tennant to Ed. English, Famous Lasky Film Service Ltd., October 12, 1920, BAnQ.
46. William F. Breyfogle to J. D. Tennant, August 21, 1919, MMA, BM54,D1.
47. Montreal Dairy Co. to Canadian Films, December 9, 1919, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to DeLaval Separator Co., April 13, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1; W. R. Breyfogle to J. D. Tennant, May 20, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1; *Montreal Daily Star*, December 20, 1919, 24; *Moving Picture World* 43, no. 2 (1920): 243.
48. W. R. Breyfogle to Canadian Films, August 15, 1919, MMA, BM54,D1.
49. A detailed list of shots and titles, identifying sponsors, is included in BAnQ's Canadian Films Limited collection.
50. J. D. Tennant to Mott Co., December 10, 1919, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to McKinnon Steel Co., May 17, 1920, BAnQ.
51. *The Fur Industry of Canada*, synopsis, BAnQ.
52. Canadian Films, contract with Holt, Renfrew, and Co., September 10, 1919, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to Holt, Renfrew, and Co., January 13, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films to Holt, Renfrew, and Co., June 21, 1920, BAnQ.
53. Canadian Films to Holt, Renfrew, and Co., June 21, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films, invoice sent to Holt, Renfrew, and Co., August 10, 1920, BAnQ.
54. Holt, Renfrew, and Co. to Canadian Films, May 22, 1920, BAnQ.
55. Canadian Films paid US \$61.13 to have the 960' 35mm negative copied unto 768' Pathéscope positive. Pathéscope of America, invoice sent to Canadian Films, August 4, 1920, BAnQ. Toronto's Pathéscope of Canada treated Canadian Films as a competitor and consequently declined to prepare the 28mm print of *The Fur Industry of Canada*. Pathéscope of Canada to J. D. Tennant, June 25, 1920, BAnQ.
56. J. D. Tennant to Holt, Renfrew, and Co., October 2, 1920, BAnQ.
57. Holt, Renfrew, and Co. to Canadian Films, October 23, 1920, BAnQ.
58. "Pictured Making of Fur Garment," *The Gazette*, February 20, 1920, 6.
59. Ibid.
60. A. A. Dickson to Windsor Hotel, November 21, 1919, MMA, BM54,D2.
61. *One of Canada's Leading Hotels*, list of titles, MMA, BM54,D2.
62. Canadian Films, contract with the Windsor Hotel Co., November 26, 1919, MMA, BM54,D2; Canadian Films to *Keeler's Hotel Weekly*, December 27, 1919, MMA, BM54,D2.
63. John D. Davidson to Canadian Films, September 7, 1920, MMA, BM54,D2.
64. Canadian Films, contract with the Windsor Hotel Co., November 26, 1919, MMA, BM54,D2.
65. See, e.g., J. D. Tennant to Mott Co., December 10, 1919, BAnQ.
66. The epoch-making agreement between Adolph Zukor's Famous Players-Lasky and Nathan L. Nathanson's Famous Players Canadian Corp. was signed on February 5, 1920. See Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Toronto, ON: Garamond Press, 1990), 57–58.
67. Files of the Bureau de censure des vues animées de la Province de Québec, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Régie du Cinéma collection, E188.

68. Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 83–85.
69. A. A. Dickson to W. H. Abbott, School Commissioner, Lennoxville, Quebec, December 12, 1919, BAnQ.
70. J. D. Tennant to the chief inspector of schools, Toronto, Ontario, January 13, 1920, BAnQ.
71. See, e.g., H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
72. Tom Mitchell, "The Manufacture of Souls of Good Quality: Winnipeg's 1919 National Conference on Canadian Citizenship, English–Canadian Nationalism, and the New Order after the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 4 (1996–97): 21, quoted in Rosa Bruno-Jofre, "Citizenship and Schooling in Manitoba, 1918–1945," *Manitoba History* 36 (1998): 26–28.
73. Bruno-Jofre, "Citizenship and Schooling," 26–28.
74. The resolution contains another section on the censoring of film posters and advertisements. Quoted in undated Canadian Films Prospectus, BAnQ.
75. Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-twentieth-century America* (Berkeley: University Press of California, 2004), 12–14; Ronald Walter Greene, "Y Movies: Films and the Modernization of Pastoral Power," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 21.
76. J. D. Tennant to Tom Moore, President, Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, January 3, 1920, BAnQ.
77. J. T. M. Anderson to Canadian Films, January 7, 1920, BAnQ; Louis Bourgoin to J. D. Tennant, January 19, 1920, BAnQ; Margaret Boyle to J. D. Tennant, December 29, 1919, BAnQ; Jean E. Brown to J. D. Tennant, December 29, 1919, BAnQ; Austin Ireland, letter to Canadian Films, February 20, 1920, BAnQ.
78. Canadian Film Underwriters, Advisory Board of Canadian Films Limited, undated, BAnQ.
79. W. G. Carpenter, Superintendent of Schools, Edmonton Public School Board, to J. D. Tennant, March 15, 1920, BAnQ.
80. J. D. Tennant to P. LeCointe, École Polytechnique de Montréal, March 5, 1920, BAnQ.
81. J. D. Tennant to the Replogle Projector Co., November 6, 1919, BAnQ; Pathéscope Co. of America to Canadian Films, December 5, 1919, BAnQ.
82. J. D. Tennant to the Protestant Board of School Commissioners, December 11, 1919, BAnQ.
83. Ray Film Co. to Canadian Films, October 28, 1919, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to the Replogle Projector Co., November 6, 1919, BAnQ; Educational Films, temporary prospectus for the new Rotary projection machine, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to United Theatre Equipment, January 9, 1920, BAnQ; J. D. Tennant to United Theatre Equipment, March 2, 1920, BAnQ; American Projecting Co. to J. D. Tennant, February 19, 1920, BAnQ.
84. In fall 1920, several members of the Chicago team were found guilty of having thrown the 1919 World Series. See Lewis Thompson and Charles Boswell, "Say It Ain't So, Joe!" *American Heritage* 11, no. 4 (1960), <http://>

- [www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1960/4/1960\\_4\\_24.shtml](http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1960/4/1960_4_24.shtml); Hartley L. Replogle to J. D. Tennant, January 5, 1920, BAnQ.
- 85.** J. D. Tennant to Hartley L. Replogle, January 20, 1920, BAnQ.
- 86.** Canadian Films, undated prospectus (most likely November or December 1919), BAnQ.
- 87.** J. D. Tennant to the Replogle Projector Co., November 6, 1919, BAnQ.
- 88.** J. D. Tennant to United Theatre Equipment Corp., March 2, 1920, BAnQ.
- 89.** J. D. Tennant to J. M. Shuttleworth, October 9, 1920, BAnQ.
- 90.** The 22mm Edison Home Kinetoscope had been introduced in 1912 and discontinued when a fire destroyed much of Edison's plant in December 1914. Most of the rhetoric deployed by its marketing campaign had focused on its educational potential. See "Edison and the New Education," *Talking Machine World* 8, no. 2 (1912): 42; Ben Singer, "Early Home Cinema and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope," *Film History* 2, no. 1 (1988): 37–69.
- 91.** Minutes of a meeting of the directors of Canadian Films, March 1, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films to D. S. Perrin and Co., March 22, 1920, BAnQ; Ernest W. Würtele to J. D. Tennant, November 30, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films, sale of stock certificates, BAnQ; *Lovell's*.
- 92.** Minutes of a meeting of the directors of Canadian Films, April 14, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films to V. W. Dawson, July 14, 1920, BAnQ.
- 93.** Minutes of a meeting of the directors of Canadian Films, June 15, 1920, BAnQ; Alfred G. Nosworthy to Canadian Films, September 29, 1920, BAnQ.
- 94.** J. D. Tennant to Dr. Edward Archibald, March 25, 1920; descriptive list of films and slides, MMA, BM54,D1.
- 95.** Invoices sent by Canadian Films to Dr. Edward Archibald, November 4 and 19, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1.
- 96.** J. D. Tennant to Dr. Edward Archibald, March 25, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1.
- 97.** Canadian Foamite Firefoam to Canadian Films, June 23, 1920; July 22, 1920, MMA, BM54,D3; Canadian Films to Canadian Foamite and Firefoam, June 25, 1920, MMA, BM54,D3; Ronald Press and Advertising Agency, invoice for twenty-one titles for *Here and There*, BAnQ; Files of the Board of Censors of Moving Pictures of the Province of Quebec, September 11, 1920, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Régie du cinéma collection, E188.
- 98.** Canadian Films to V. W. Dawson, July 14, 1920, BAnQ. The contract between Canadian Films and the Bell Telephone Co. of Canada had been signed on January 16, 1920 (see copy in MMA, BM54,D1). *Speeding the Spoken Word* was mentioned in *The Rotarian* 10, no. 6 (1917): 674. The intertitle is from Bell Telephone Co. of Canada to Canadian Films, April 22, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1.
- 99.** J. D. Tennant to the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. of Canada, August 19, 1920; October 9, 1920, BAnQ. Files of the Board of Censors of Moving Pictures of the Province of Quebec, August 5, 1920, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Régie du cinéma collection, E188.
- 100.** Canadian Films, contract with D'Allaird Manufacturing Co., September 2, 1919, MMA, BM54,D1.
- 101.** Script, *Your Blouse: From Factory to Home*, MMA, BM54,D1.



102. D'Allaird Manufacturing Co. to Canadian Films, January 26, 1921, MMA, BM54,D1.
103. J. D. Tennant to Estelle Cuffe, May 12, 1920, MMA, BM54,D1.
104. "Cinq bandits masqués causent un vif émoi dans Sainte-Dorothée," *La Presse*, July 8, 1920, 13, quoted in Lacasse, *Histoires de scopes*, 63–64.
105. "Des artistes de cinéma et non de terribles bandits," *La Presse*, July 9, 1920, 9.
106. "Une représentation d'un film canadien," *La Presse*, August 6, 1920, 3; Imperial Theater advertisement, *La Patrie*, September 11, 1920, 21; Canadian Films, invoice sent to the Imperial Theater, October 7, 1920, BAnQ; Arthur St-Germain to Canadian Films, October 9, 1920, BAnQ; Canadian Films, invoice sent to Passe-temps Theater, November 17, 1920, BAnQ.
107. "Une représentation d'un film canadien."
108. Canadian Films's papers nevertheless reveal that five persons were hired for the production of *Hicks and Vamps*. Imperial Theater advertisement, *La Patrie*, September 11, 1920, 21; minutes of a meeting of the directors of Canadian Films, July 15, 1920, BAnQ.
109. "Beauvais to Star in Broadway Movie—'The Lonely Trail,' Written by the Indian Guide, Will Be Presented Here Soon," *New York Times*, December 22, 1921, 18; "Producers Reject Beauvais Picture," *New York Times*, December 23, 1921, 18; Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 295.
110. In 1921, James A. Stillman, chairman of National City Bank, accused his wife, Anne Urquhart Stillman, of having had an affair with Fred K. Beauvais, an Indian guide she had met while summering in Quebec. The sensational Stillman divorce case made headlines for months. See, e.g., "Asks Medium's Aid for Mrs. Stillman," *New York Times*, May 16, 1921, 10; "Beauvais Confers with Mrs. Stillman," *New York Times*, January 6, 1922, 10.
111. The film had been submitted to the Board of Censors by Specialty Film Import. The reason given for the rejection was that the main character was involved in a scandalous affair. Files of the Board of Censors of Moving Pictures of the Province of Quebec, August 5, 1920, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Régie du cinéma collection, E188; Files of the Board of Censors of Moving Pictures of the Province of Quebec, August 5, 1920, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Régie du cinéma collection, E188.
112. "'Indian Guide' Feature 'Will Die If Let Alone,'" *Variety*, January 6, 1922; Fritz Tidden, "'The Lonely Trail' Has the Distinction of Being the Worst Picture That Has Screened Itself This Way in Years," *Moving Picture World* 54, no. 2 (1922): 205, quoted in Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 295.
113. Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 295.
114. Canadian Films to Ernest F. Würtele, December 15, 1920, BAnQ.
115. WCS to D'Allaird Manufacturing Co., February 5, 1921, MMA.
116. "Screen News of Canada Made by Newly Organized Company," *Moving Picture World* 45, no. 4 (1920): 475, quoted in Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 223.
117. "To Discontinue Film Rentals," *The Shawinigan Standard*, March 31, 1954, 4.

- 118.** "Canadian Pacific Owns Control of Screen News," *New York Times*, January 29, 1937, 27; Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 132–33, 222.
- 119.** *Business Screen* 14, no. 1 (1953): 90; "With Associated Screen News: Gordon Sparling to Direct and Edit Commercial Films," *The Gazette*, July 23, 1931, 27.
- 120.** Gordon Sparling, "Movies Tell the Story," *Commerce of the Nation* 5, no. 8 (1932): 13.
- 121.** Hediger and Vonderau, "Record, Rhetoric, Rationalization," 44–45.