

Readers may be interested to know something about the movements of other past members of the Unit. Geoffrey Baines is with the Nigerian Film Unit, as also is Fred Lagden. Wally Hewitson has left the sunshine of Kenya for the attractions of Canada and we hear that Messrs. Innes and Harper-Nelson are once more in Kenya.

The Producer, Mr. Sellers, hopes to pay a visit to the West Indies in September and it is more than likely that he will be present for talks with the State Department at Washington on his way home.

A report on
The Use of Disney's Hookworm Film
with an African Audience in the
Western Province, Uganda

by NORMAN SPURR,

THE film was originally made for a South American rural population and it employs the well-known techniques which have made Walt Disney famous throughout the world. The film is a teaching film with a central character called 'Careless Charlie'. Using the personal commentary method, the commentator tells Charlie why he is ill, how he can be cured, and how he can remain cured. In order to remind the audience that the film is not a record of actuality, the artist's brush is introduced into the picture frame, and is shown forming the outline of the figure. A simplified diagram of Charlie's intestine is drawn, and hookworms are shown therein. The effect of the medicine upon them is vividly illustrated. The final part of the film showing the digging of the latrine follows the traditional cartoon method. A spade appears in the sky, the hole is dug in one fantastic whirl, the shelter builds itself, and the grass for the roofing and sides of the hut, falling out of Charlie's hands as he trips over a stone, miraculously wraps itself round the framework of the hut to form the finished shelter.

Due to the generous co-operation of the Public Affairs Officer of the American Consulate in Nairobi, this film was borrowed to show to peasant audiences in Uganda through the Public Relations and Welfare Department. By good fortune there was a Conference of Welfare Officers and Demonstration Teams at the time of the arrival of the film in Kampala. The film was shown to them and was well received, but it was thought that rural audiences would be confused by it. The opinion of such an audience, the majority were themselves Africans, was to be respected.

On the other hand, in a period of eighteen months, I had seen in the commercial cinemas of Lagos, audiences, hostile to the cartoon form to the point of booing, accept with equanimity, understanding (to judge from the laughs at the right places) and even delight, a cartoon which showed the usual thick-lipped exaggeration of the negro.

Out of curiosity 'HOOKWORM' was shown to a very small group of Health Officers, and one of them, an African Doctor in charge of the Health Centre, Mengo, thought audiences would understand. The obvious answer was to try it out.

Again circumstances were favourable. The Welfare Officer of the Western Province was undertaking intensive propaganda against hookworm in certain areas. He was most willing to try out the film if for no other reason than to 'eliminate the guesswork'.

For convenience two places were chosen. One a Gombolola at Igorora, as this was reasonably remote from the general stream of life, and the other a tin mine at Kafunzo. In both cases the Provincial Medical Officer had already made arrangements to give treatment.

Propaganda at the mine was restricted to talks by the undermanager a day or two before the showing of a film and the visit of the M.O. Igorora had been the scene of much more intensive propaganda which had extended over a period of time. This finished two or three weeks before the film was shown to the community, but a Health Officer had remained behind to supervise the finishing stages of water protection and latrine digging. All that remained was for the people to come for treatment.

Before the film could be shown it was necessary to translate the original sound track into the Lunyankole language as it was necessary to give a running commentary through a microphone and loudspeaker during the showing of the film.

Experience in West Africa and Uganda had taught us that commentaries must be kept short if they were not to lose the battle for attention when visuals were stimulating and interesting. To listen and see at the same time and understand both is not an easy task for peasant populations. The original commentary of approximately 870 words was reduced to 539, and this when translated came down to 467 words.

Table 'A' illustrates the kind of change that was made.

It was feared the audience might not accept the drawn figure of 'Careless Charlie'. To assist in understanding, a preparatory talk was given prior to the showing of the film in which reference was made to their own folk tales in which animals spoke and behaved like human beings.

HOOKWORM was shown first with a commentary in the local language, and then shown again, but this time without any commentary whatever. This was to allow the audience to talk more freely about what they saw, recapitulate as it were, and also enabled two observers to overhear comment and note it down. By this latter means, it was hoped that we might really find out what kind of impact the film made. To question the people would bring little more than the polite remark which the person concerned thought we wanted.

As an auxiliary to the observers a disc recorder was set up, and its microphone placed over a single group of people. This failed to yield as good a result as we had hoped owing to:

- (1) The jumble of voices.
- (2) The mixture of tongues which were not always familiar to the translator in Kampala.

However, some comment was distinguishable, so the experiment with the recorder did not prove completely abortive. Comment was as follows:

Aha, this monster widens its mouth.

It wants to swallow him.

Look at its big teeth.

What a wonder these intestinal creatures have teeth.

This huge thing baffles me still.

He is going. No, he has postponed his journey, hopeless man!

(This last remark was made when Charlie refused to leave the tree to go for treatment)

and finally,

I swore for it this morning.

The observers (a) and (b) were asked a series of questions after their return to their H.Q. and the questions and answers are set out in Table B.

What result did the film bring? At the mine there was no means of checking the effectiveness of the propaganda as the workers were stopped as they came off shift and were given treatment without very much choice. At Ingorora attendance was voluntary, and it was estimated that there was approximately a 100 per cent turnout for treatment on the morning following the film show.

It would be foolish to conclude, from the data collected, that the 100 per cent turnout was due to the film. In view of the intensive propaganda by other means it was not possible to assess in any exact manner the effectiveness of the film; but there is no question that it made a deep impression, and coming as it did just before treatment, served to summarize in a vivid and unforgettable manner the salient points.

The major purpose of the experiment was to note the reactions of the audience to a cartoon form of teaching, and we had some success in achieving this objective. It would seem that as long as the film followed a reasonably normal narrative tradition, or explained itself when there was any departure from the normal, e.g. when Charlie's skin is removed and his intestines revealed, then the audience accepted the technique. However, when the film introduced a traditional cartoon comedy approach, e.g. in the building of the latrine, this was put down to European magic. It would seem the audience approached the film literally. Despite the observers' view to the contrary, some were confused by the big close-up, but due to the brilliant choice of the visual image and associated action, the movement of the throat as the hookworm sucked at the wall of the intestine, there is no doubt that the audience knew what was happening.

One interesting point emerges. Although the film was made for a rural population remote from East Africa, because it dealt with a disease which has similar symptoms wherever it be found, and similar remedies, the film was of value. So true do I believe this to be, that I am not at all sure there would have been a tremendous gain in perception had the character and background been African. This is obviously an opinion and applies only to this and similar films which are dealing with fundamentals. Gaumont British's 'LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE' is another example.

It is to be regretted that there was no means of assessing the effect of previous propaganda. How new was the subject to the people? It was certainly not a case of being without knowledge. One would like to know what kind of reaction an audience would give to the film if it had never heard of the disease although suffering from it. (In fairness to the film it was designed as part of series in which the earlier films made elementary principles of health plain.) Every allowance must be made for propaganda given by other means, for what the audience of itself brings to the screen is of equal, if not greater, importance than what the screen brings to the audience. Making every allowance, this film proved to be a valuable teaching aid, and for subjects such as HOOKWORM, or for erosion problems, which do not reveal themselves except over a period of years, or for the creating of emotion from the inanimate, e.g. statistics, it would appear that the cartoon form has much to recommend it and that further experiment with African audiences is very desirable.