

In one district in the Protectorate the Chiefs made special requests to the District Commissioner for films of the Royal Family to be shown to them when the Mobile Cinema was on tour in their area.

At the moment the Mobile Cinema Van, with an African driver-operator in sole charge, is on tour in the Protectorate. It is stationed at Bo, the Administrative Centre, and from there visits the surrounding districts. Audiences sometimes number a thousand.

Locally made 16 mm. films have proved popular. One audience of Girl Guides kept to their seats and asked the operator to show a film of a Freetown Girl Guides' Party for a second time.

A Film Club has been started in Freetown with membership restricted to the clerical staffs and other employees of Government Departments and principal commercial firms. This Club met regularly in the Schools' Cinema and the members are now anxiously awaiting the opening of the new cinema hall in order that activities may be resumed.

The rainy season is now with us in Sierra Leone and open-air shows will not be possible for the next four months.

Films To Educate Populations

THE function of the Colonial Film Unit as the name implies is the production of films for the instruction and information of the people of the Colonial Empire. Although every colony should in time share in its activities, the overseas work of its professional camera units has, so far, been confined to Africa.

Inevitably the influx of Europeans into colonial territories has created many problems and aggravated others. As an example, the curtailment of inter-tribal warfare and the improved medical, hygiene and other services have caused the death rate to decline and the birth rate to rise with the result that populations in many cases have increased by leaps and bounds. In consequence Africa is faced with problems of land exhaustion and overcrowding which have caused anxiety in so many countries throughout history. Even without this influence the limited agricultural and veterinary knowledge of the people would have resulted in the gradual impoverishment of the soil and heavy death rate and inferior quality in the livestock.

It is equally true that contact with European ideas of social structure, morality and so on, though beneficial in the long run, have caused instability and some bewilderment in the minds of the people. In addition there are grave economic problems which can be solved only by the understanding and co-operation of the masses, who are at present educationally backward.

Native peoples of every land, not least our own, are prone to regard any innovation which cuts across immemorial custom with some degree

of suspicion and resentment and are quite likely to regard benevolent action as oppression. The task which faces the administrators in the Colonial Empire is therefore educative in its widest sense, and they are rapidly realising the value of the moving picture as one of the most important instruments for this purpose.

The specific task of the Colonial Film Unit is firstly to train the colonial people in the technique of viewing and appreciating the moving picture and secondly to produce pictures in that medium and in a suitable technique to further the policies and principles of the individual departments which integrate the overall Government plan.

In company with the chief producer of the Unit it has been my privilege to visit the three main territories of the East African group of colonies to obtain from the Governments by personal discussion, and through a widely distributed questionnaire, suggestions for subjects which they thought could advantageously be dealt with by films. Their value lies in the fact that proposals were made not only by responsible departmental heads, but also by district commissioners and others whose lives are spent among the various tribes, and many of whom have a profound knowledge of the people and their customs and the influence of these customs and ways of life on their thought processes.

The many subjects are so closely interdependent that any attempt to classify them would be only partly accurate but, as might well be expected, sociological problems form a major part. It is generally accepted, for instance, that the people must be taught why shifting cultivation is becoming increasingly unsatisfactory, and why the nomadic existence of some communities must give place to settlement and correct cultivation methods, which at least will permit the retention of existing standards of food production. They must be taught how their unthinking exploitation of forests and other customs give rise to soil erosion which, if allowed to persist, will eventually bring widespread disaster to whole communities. It must be made clear that apparently "repressive" measures are actually designed for the ultimate benefit of the population as a whole.

They must be given an understanding of both native and Government administration methods and be taught to realise that the things for which they pay through taxes are for their benefit. It must be shown how successful social development rests largely in their own hands, in their attempts to obtain higher standards, in their willingness to work, in the improvement in status and efficiency of their husbandmen, and of the women as well as the men; they must be made to realise the advantages of craftsmanship in many fields of endeavour, and that a purely agricultural economy must be replaced by a partly commercial and manufacturing one if the colony is to support all its inhabitants. They must be steered away from a growing snobbishness which leads them to believe that the equivalent of the "black coat" worker is more

important than the manual and practical one, a tendency which is causing some of the best material to drift away from activities where it would be of most benefit to the colony.

Strictly technical subjects to be dealt with may conveniently come under the following headings :

Agriculture. The evils of over-cultivation ; proper methods for improving land fertility ; mixed farming ; explanation of Government schemes of land settlement ; irrigation methods including dams ; the proper use and storage of water ; control of soil erosion ; contour cultivation ; grading and preparation of crops ; the advantages of home and allotment gardening for urban workers ; suggestions for new kinds of crops ; the proper storage of crops and foodstuffs ; co-operative farming and co-operative trading methods.

Veterinary. The major lesson to be taught is that quality is more important than quantity ; better breeding methods ; better grazing methods ; the value of different prophylactic measures in keeping cattle-disease at bay ; growing and storing cattle foodstuffs ; instruction in hide and skin production ; the making of ghee and butter.

Medical. Better housing and town and village planning ; brick-making and tile-making ; various aspects of sanitation, sewage, latrines, fly-borne diseases ; protection of food ; recommendations on balanced diets ; early treatment of disease and the work of clinics ; children, including ante- and post-natal care and cleanliness ; control of rats ; control of common indigenous diseases ; drug taking.

Labour. Showing how the ordinary man can live by the fruits of his own labour ; the link between craftsmanship and earning power ; the dignity of labour ; labour unions ; various aspects of employed labour, e.g., skilled craftsmen at work, controlling complicated machinery, professional men at work ; social welfare in mines and workshops.

Education. Films in physical training and how to play games ; domestic science instructional ; artisan training ; instruction in use of libraries ; instructional films for vocational training in all branches of Government work.

General. There are many requests for films of general interest, e.g., historical records of cave drawings to be found in many places ; records of the growth of simple communities to more complete ones—records to be compiled from time to time as such progress takes place ; films from other colonies and countries showing the inhabitants, customs, and methods, the object being to broaden the horizon of the colonial and break down his marked parochialism ; records of native ceremonies ; newsreels of current events.

It can be seen from the above that the demand for films is enormous and should provide the basis for a most active film production programme for many years to come.