

march, filling in the gaps with bridges. The easy way out would be to take a casual shot of the observant crowd, cut it into short lengths and fill all the gaps. This would not serve the enterprising director at all. Even if he had to stage suitable close shots he would find less obvious filling shots. A father with his small daughter sees something of particular appeal and hoists her on his shoulder. Her excitement catches our interest and in sympathy we are anxious to see what has stirred her. Thus the unusual bridge-shot urges interest forward and heightens the pleasure in the spectacle. If, therefore, bridge-shots are more selective and alive, the editor will have little difficulty in making an interesting story out of the material.

When filming a procession, shots should not be taken from both sides of the moving column, otherwise it will show on the screen changing its direction. Generally in news reel filming there should be a preponderance of medium-close shots and many close shots. They interest the audience in incidents that matter and in personalities, whereas the long shots, being wider in their content, do not show clearly the things that really matter. It is important that when the event concerns some prominent person a good close shot should be available for early use in the film.

(iii) *Filming after the event*

Sometimes things go wrong and an important shot is missed or bungled. It is often possible by gentle persuasion to arrange for a retake after the event. As a rule the subjects are quite as anxious as the director to ensure a good result even if it costs a little trouble.

It is quite a common practice to film bridge-shots after the main filming is done. A little skill and imagination by the director will guide him in the selection of shots that will fill in the gaps in the narrative continuity.

(d) **Editing**

It is the editor's task to make a good news item from the material supplied to him. If there are serious gaps he cannot produce a worthy story. He may be able to smooth out some slips in visual continuity if he has a number of good bridge-shots, but a film of any great interest is impossible unless he has the necessary background material. In other words he cannot manufacture a story if the director has missed it.

## The School of Instruction, Accra, Gold Coast

COLONIAL CINEMA of December 1948 (Vol. IV, No. 4) told the story of the inception and early days of this pioneer school for the training of Africans in film craft.

The course has now come to an end and a further account of what has been attempted and achieved may be of interest to readers.

The immediate aim of the course was to train the pupils to a standard which would enable them to film local events in news reel fashion and also to produce simple instructional films of more lasting importance. Basic instruction was carried out with 16mm. equipment, but the school also had the good fortune to have the C.F.U. 35mm. unit working at close quarters, which afforded them an opportunity to become acquainted with standard equipment.

The course lasted more than six months and the liberally designed syllabus consisted of two main parts.

The first part covered the more technical side of cinematography and included instruction in light and the spectrum, optics, emulsions and colour sensitivity, the chemistry of photography, and shutters. Then followed instruction in the mechanics of cameras and projectors, camera movements, angles of view, pictorialism and picture composition.

In the early stages the practical work was done with still cameras, but the students were soon able to turn their attention to the technique of the cine-camera.

The second part of the syllabus was concerned with the more practical side of film-making and included instruction in the grammar and composition of the film, the social content of films for Africans, the investigation of subjects, and the psychology of the audience.

The educational background of the students, combined with their enthusiasm and general ability, enabled them freely to discuss subjects directly and indirectly connected with the actual making of films. This ability to think scientifically and objectively will stand them in good stead when they come to work in the field.

After two months' training the first film exercise was carried out in the bush under the conditions in which the students would be expected to work when fully qualified. In this way they had practical experience of the pitfalls likely to be met with by the beginner in investigating, script-writing, camerawork and directing. This exercise was so successful in achieving its purpose that it was repeated later.

The climax of the course was reached when the students were split up into three-men teams and sent off to bush locations to make a film independent of the help of instructors. The whole procedure from investigation to the dispatch of the exposed film for processing was carried out by the students themselves, and the finished film when seen in London caused something of a mild sensation, as the results achieved were much in advance of what might have been expected after such a short training.

As we said in our previous article, these trainees were "hand-picked" and this policy of aiming at quality rather than quantity has been

thoroughly justified. Not only have the students learnt a considerable amount of the technique of cinematography but they have also been taught to think in terms of pictures in the manner of experienced film directors and scriptwriters, and to direct their "film purpose" towards a worth-while goal—the betterment of their fellow Africans.

For some time to come their field experience will be in the nature of a continuation to the course. They will have at their disposal the full facilities offered by the staff of the Colonial Film Unit. If they require it, they will receive prior advice on their scripts, and later, when the film is exposed and processed, they will receive constructive criticism and advice which will help their future filming.

## Film is Dangerous

ONE may read an account of a tragedy with emotions of horror, sadness or indignation, but whatever the emotion aroused there is too often the consoling feeling "This couldn't happen to me." People handling dangerous material may easily become possessed of a feeling of self-immunity and neglect precautions necessary for their safety and the safety of others near them.

Normally it is the function of the Local Authority to study the safety of the public and to frame suitable regulations for their protection. In a cinema, for instance, one can see numerous exit doors which open outward at the touch of the hand. Pictures are projected through a port in the back wall and in a second the projection room where the trouble usually starts can be isolated in case of fire so that no flames can immediately reach the auditorium.

It can be said with truth that where there's 35mm. film there's danger. The base of this film is *nitro-cellulose*, which is a highly inflammable material. Wherever it exists, rigid fire precautions are necessary. We are concerned here with the safe storage and handling of films rather than with the possible dangers during their public exhibition.

In practically every Colony there is an accumulation of films of all kinds and the conditions of storage are usually not ideal. There is little need to worry about 16mm. films as they have what is known as an *acetate* base, which is not inflammable. The very fact that they are safety films may create a false sense of security when the necessity arises to handle 35mm. films. Wherever there are 35mm. tins of film, no matter how few, major precautions should be exercised.

One may wonder why all 35mm. film is not made with the acetate safety base. There are sound reasons, for naturally no one for preference wishes to use material that is highly dangerous. Many experiments have been made during the last few years, and it is anticipated that within a reasonable period a 35mm. safety print will be possible with the same clarity, sparkle and toughness as the present nitro-cellulose