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REGULATING AND MEDIATING THE SOCIAL ROLE OF
CINEMA IN SCOTLAND, 1896-1933

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In memory of my father Uwe-Frank Bohlmann

Abstract

This thesis examines how early cinema's social function was mediated by local and national institutions as well as civic agencies in Scotland between c. 1896 and 1933. It proposes a social-historical approach that is based on extensive archival research of documents such as local newspapers, town council minutes, education authority minutes and Scottish Office records. As an empirical and historical study it focuses attention on the social-historical circumstances of cinema exhibition and reception as proposed by New Cinema History.

The thesis' main argument is that institutional responses fell into two categories - constraining and constructive strategies to negotiate cinema's role in Scottish society. Parts 1 and 2 discuss strategies of control which sought to limit cinema's social impact as a commercial institution while the third part is concerned with attempts to redefine cinema's social purpose through the creation of alternative film cultures and exhibition practices.

The first part identifies for the first time the specificities of the legal and administrative framework within which cinemas were allowed to operate in Scotland before 1933. It contends that the legal basis of the framework was determined by the Scottish Office's relationship with Britain's central government, and that its application by local licensing authorities depended also on the dynamics of municipal power structures. A further argument is that Scottish licensing authorities were more resistant than their southern counterparts to interfere with the content of film shows and exercised control mainly through the regulation of the cinema space and negotiations with local cinema trade bodies.

Part 2 analyses British national debates about the legitimacy of cinema as well as film's potential for education, providing a discursive context for the practices explored in the first part. Centring on the 1917 and the 1925 Cinema Commissions, it focuses especially on the perceived link between cinema-going and juvenile crime and film's usefulness as a teaching aid. These themes are explored from a Scottish perspective incorporating local debates from Edinburgh and Glasgow. This part maintains that the discourse about the negative effect of children's cinema-going and the debate on the potential teaching value of films were connected in that they both constructed the child as an impressionable spectator that required institutional guidance and protection.

Part 3 considers two constructive endeavours to shape early cinema's social role in Scotland. It engages with the field of Useful Cinema and argues that this must not be confined to particular films or technologies but must include cinema exhibition practices that were religiously-, educationally- or politically motivated. First, municipal cinema is discussed as an alternative exhibition practice that tried to expand the role of the municipality as public service provider and match the ambitions of its organisers with the taste of local audiences. Second, the diversity of attempts to mediate cinema's social role is once more illustrated in the case of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society's cinema and film work. This is explored diachronically and demonstrates that the Society's engagement with cinema corresponded to broader contemporary debates discussed throughout the thesis. This part illustrates that the boundaries of cinema's social function were constantly shifting during the period under consideration and that constructive strategies to define it anticipated characteristic strands of cinema culture emerging in Scotland subsequently.

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A thesis is never the product of the author alone but is just as much the product of the army of people who help shaping it. First of all I would like to thank my supervisors Prof John Caughie and Dr María Vélez-Serna for their interest and encouragement as well as their criticism and patience as editors. As we worked together on a number of smaller tasks in relation to the project, I would also like to thank them for being great colleagues who made work fun. This gratefulness extends to the other researchers working on the project: Dr Trevor Griffiths who has helped me to understand the intricacies of the Scottish legal tradition and the background of the Independent Labour Party in Scotland, and Caroline Merz who has always been a stimulating and helpful colleague. I am also grateful to Dr Ian Goode, Dr Ian Craven and Prof Karen Lury for giving me the opportunity to teach and for encouraging me to further my research and explore future paths in academia.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction: Researching the social role of cinema

This thesis explores how early cinema's place in society was mediated by civic institutions and similar social formations in Scotland through examining a number of case studies from a social historical perspective. National institutions like the Scottish Office and local agencies such as town councils and education authorities were instrumental in delineating cinema's role. They left archival traces that can tell us much about how the Scottish establishment viewed the expansion of cinema as a popular pastime and their attempts either to regulate it or to redefine its social purpose.

Scotland inherited distinct legal, educational and political structures that remained distinct despite the union of Parliaments in 1707. The present work aims to identify these structures and to examine the specific responses to early cinema created by them. In particular, it investigates the contributions of local and national authorities, sometimes supported by the Scottish film trade and sometimes opposed by it, in delineating cinema's role and controlling its influence where its impact was perceived to be most pronounced. It examines attempts by municipalities, educational agencies and the Co-operative movement to utilise cinema for communal purposes and develop film as a medium for education, publicity and instruction, because these formed an important part of the institutional discourse on cinema.

The main argument put forward in this thesis is that the mediation of early cinema's social role in Scotland included both constraining strategies and constructive strategies. Constraining strategies attempted to limit cinema's impact, particularly on what were perceived to be vulnerable parts of society, while constructive strategies aimed to create functions outside of the commercial realm, for example, as a teaching aid or a vehicle to forge civic identities. It is suggested that these types of responses were to some extent connected within a broadly defined framework of regulation. The multiplicity of responses is reflected in the structure of the thesis: Part 1 addresses practices regulating cinema's social role as commercial entertainment. As the core of the piece, Part 2 analyses investigations into its social impact and explains how constraining and constructive strategies to control this were connected. Part 3 closes the thesis by illustrating the creation of alternative functions for early cinema on two case studies.

While the present work emphasises specific Scottish and local connotations, it aims to put those distinctive characteristics into the transnational context of cinema historiography and contribute to a body of work referred to as New Cinema History. Its fundamental argument is that an understanding of the social role of cinema requires the empirical examination of local socio-historical contexts. This shift is essential to the approach taken by the present work.

1.1. New Cinema History

New Cinema History has been defined as a history of cinema and cinema-going that accentuates the study of film distribution, exhibition and reception contexts. This signals a movement away from a Film Studies which places priority on the analysis of film texts towards a Cinema Studies which places emphasis on the understanding of the social experience of 'going to the movies'. In one of the key collections, *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*¹, Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes identify this shift in emphasis:

We are proposing a distinction between what might be called film history and cinema history: between aesthetic history of textual relations between individuals or individual objects, and the social history of a cultural institution.²

A case is made for a cultural and social history of movie-going which includes the location and the nature of cinemas, what kind of audiences these were likely to attract, and the role of exhibitors and distributors in shaping the experience of cinema.

Published in 2011, *Explorations in New Cinema History* is a continuation of this project as well as an exploration of new concepts, methodologies and geographical territories.³ The featuring case studies investigate local exhibition venues and practices, for example, through mapping cinemas and analysing film distribution and

¹ Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes and Robert C. Allen, eds., *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007).

² Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes, introduction to *Going to the Movies*, 2.

³ Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, eds., *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011).

programming.⁴ Others research the popularity of films by analysing sets of box office figures or, in the absence of these data, by using a statistical method developed by John Sedgwick (POPSTAT) for the analysis of the first-run of films in relation to the number of seats in a cinema.⁵ Finally, cinema reception is explored using qualitative methods such as oral history interviews or archival research into contemporary institutional discourses as offered in this thesis.⁶

New Cinema History brings together an array of methodologies to study film distribution, cinema exhibition and reception and the present work is inspired by this programme. However, as the field has so far bestowed most attention to the cinema industry itself, the thesis makes a case for conducting more research into institutional responses to cinema. It is argued here, that analysing these is equally important in understanding the social experience of cinema because such responses formed the structures within which cinema was allowed to operate and determined how it was integrated into local cultures. Another reservation regards the field's alleged 'Newness'. New Cinema History did not arise out of a vacuum. The need for the development of a more empirical strand within film studies that would challenge the dominance of theoretical analyses of films had been expressed since the 1980s.⁷ David Bordwell and Noël Carroll's *Post-Theory* was an important intervention in this respect. Its editors and contributing authors attempted to redefine film studies by developing a form of 'middle-level research' that combined empirical research with 'piece-meal theorising', rather than confirming a meta-narrative through textual analysis.⁸ This thesis shares Bordwell and Carroll's scepticism towards theory-driven

⁴ See following examples: Jeffrey Klenotic, "Putting Cinema History on the Map,"; Clara Pafort-Overduin, "Distribution and Exhibition in the Netherlands, 1934-1936,"; Mike Walsh, "From Hollywood to the Garden Suburb," all in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

⁵ John Sedgwick, "Patterns First-Run and Suburban Filmgoing in Sydney in the mid-1930s,"; Peter Kraemer, "Hollywood and its Global Audiences," all in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

⁶ Annette Kuhn, "What to do with Cinema Memory?,"; Daniel Biltereyst, Phillippe Meers and Lies Van de Vijver, "Social Class, Experiences of Distinction and Cinema in Postwar Ghent,"; Paul S. Moore, "The Social Biograph: Newspapers as Archives of the Regional Mass Market for Movies," all in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

⁷ A social-historical approach alongside an aesthetic, technological and economic film history has been proposed, for instance, in Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (Boston, MA; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 65-186.

⁸ David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, *Post-theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 26-29.

approaches and sees itself as an empirical and historical investigation. Nonetheless, it does not refuse theory as such, which it believes can help to order empirical phenomena in a useful way. Ideas about cinema's social impact are particularly relevant as the following section shows.

1.2. Cinema's Social Impact

Early in the twentieth century, German intellectuals tried to understand the emergence of cinema as a cultural phenomenon and began to conceptualise its role in modern societies. Some of the ideas proposed by them can be helpful in relating the empirical findings to broader debates about early cinema. One important aspect that will crop up repeatedly in this thesis is the power of film as a visual and mass-communicative medium and connected to this cinema's assumed impact on social behaviour. Psychologist and philosopher Hugo Muensterberg was one of the first to argue that film was a powerful social-psychological force. Stressing that its mass communicative and 'suggestive' features could edify or corrupt spectators (whom he assumed to be passive and absorbing), he hypothesised cinema's influence on society as a whole to be significant.⁹ The sociologist Emilie Altenloh was equally interested in the social function of cinema. In her doctoral thesis of 1914, *Zur Soziologie des Kinos*, she approached this problem from a sociological perspective and with empirical tools.¹⁰ Rather than constructing an ideal-type spectator like Muensterberg, she conducted interviews and analysed questionnaires that addressed the cinema-going habits and film preferences of various social groups in the German town of Mannheim. She concluded that cinema appealed to all social ranks and that the relationship between cinema and spectator depended on contextual rather than textual factors such as class, occupation and gender.¹¹ Her methodology anticipated what New Cinema Historians would value and recommend almost a century later, albeit from a sociological perspective. Altenloh's work contributed valuable insights into the role early cinema played in the lives of spectators. The present work looks

⁹ Allan Langdale, ed., *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: a Psychological Study and Other Writings* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2002), 89-99.

¹⁰ Emilie Altenloh, *Zur Soziologie des Kino: die Kino-Unternehmung und die sozialen Schichten ihrer Besucher* (Jena: Diederichs, 1914); see also Emilie Altenloh, "A Sociology of the Cinema: The Audience," *Screen* 42, No. 3 (September 2001): 249-93, <http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/42/3/249>.

¹¹ Altenloh, "A Sociology of the Cinema," 260-287.

at its function from the perspectives of institutions and agencies, which, unlike the perspective of the audience, left a large number of archival footprints for historical inquiry.

An aspect of particular relevance in trying to understand institutional responses to cinema is the international hierarchy of the film trade, which, by the late 1910s was weighted towards Hollywood as film production centre.¹² Considering that a majority of films seen worldwide originated in the United States, cinema can be regarded a cultural phenomenon that transcended local and national culture. The problem this represented was pinpointed by essayist Siegfried Kracauer when he described cinema as an agent of ‘American-style mass and media culture’ that cajoled audiences into accepting the primacy of American values.¹³ As will become apparent below, some British and Scottish authorities were, indeed, concerned about the Americanisation of culture through cinema which sometimes served as justification for attempts to halt this process. Other European countries reacted similarly by attempting to discipline film distribution and exhibition. Such case studies are described in the collection *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*, edited by Richard Maltby, Phillippe Meers and Daniel Biltereyst.¹⁴ In Hungary, for example, cinema was initially promoted by liberals and film professionals. But, as Anna Manchin explains, after the First World War it was accused of watering down Hungarian identity by nationalists and conservatives, a discourse resulting in the introduction of official censorship in 1920.¹⁵ Another response was the invention of an alternative socialist cinema as Pavel Skopal demonstrates for the Czech Lands.¹⁶ A further imaginable reaction was the gradual assimilation of ‘Americanism’ into

¹² How this dominance was achieved is described in Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907-34* (London: BFI Publishing, 1985).

¹³ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2011), 41.

¹⁴ Daniël Biltereyst, Richard Maltby and Phillippe Meers, eds., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity: New Perspectives on European Cinema* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁵ Anna Manchin, “Imagining Modern Hungary through Film: Debates on National Identity, Modernity and Cinema in Early Twentieth-Century Hungary,” in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

¹⁶ Skopal, Pavel. “The Cinematic Shapes of the Socialist Modernity Programme: Ideological and Economic Parameters of Cinema Distribution in the Czech Lands, 1948-70,” *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

traditional national cultures as Biltereyst et. al suggest happened in Belgium.¹⁷ This thesis offers an approach that likewise combines a focus on a particular national context with considerations of cinema's wider significance as a cultural phenomenon.

Cinema's convergence of local, national and global structures seems particularly relevant in countries without a high film manufacturing output. Canada, for instance, imported most of its films from the United States during the early cinema period. But as Paul Moore points out, based on national legislation determining how cinemas were integrated and skilful showmanship that was in touch with local audiences, the country developed a distinct cinema-going culture.¹⁸ In Scotland, too, a characteristic cinema-going culture emerged without the existence of a significant film production sector. The Scottish case is further determined by its position as a small nation within a larger state, which is discussed in the next section.

1.3. Cinema in Small Nations

One of the benefits New Cinema History offers is that scholarly attention can be given to geographical settings where cinema came to play an important social and cultural role without playing a major part in producing films for the international market. This focus allows for non-hierarchical investigations of the particularity of early cinema in specific localities. The emergence of cinema in small nations and regions has interested historians in different contexts. The 'Enlightened City' project, for instance, asks how film exhibition was organised by a variety of institutions in Flanders - the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium - and to what extent their activities as exhibitors can be seen as attempts to regulate cinema-going.¹⁹ The

¹⁷ Daniël Biltereyst et. al., "Negotiating Cinema's Modernity: Strategies of Control and Audience Experience of Cinema in Belgium, 1930s-1960s," *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

¹⁸ Paul S. Moore, "Nationalist Film-Going without Canadian-made Films?," in *Early Cinema and the "National"*, eds. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini and Rob King (New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 2008). This is based on Paul Moore's more comprehensive book on the topic: Paul S Moore, *Now Playing : Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

¹⁹ Fund for Scientific Research - Flanders, 2005-2007. University of Antwerp & Ghent University, *The 'Enlightened' City: Screen Culture between Ideology, Economics and Experience. A study on the Social Role of Film Exhibition and Film Consumption in Flanders (1895-2004) in Interaction with Modernity and Urbanization*, Accessed September 26, 2015, <http://www.cims.ugent.be/research/past-research-projects/-enlightened-city>.

researchers gathered a mass of archival data on cinemas managed by different social formations like the Catholic Church, socialist groupings, liberals etc., and contrasted this with audience experiences through oral history interviews.²⁰ The project found that the Catholic Church, for instance, controlled the programmes offered to their constituency by operating their own cinemas, and so compensated for the non-existence of a statutory film censorship system in Belgium. While such ambitious triangulation is beyond the scope of this thesis, the archival research into institutional responses has proven a fruitful approach, and reveals parallels between the Catholic Church's cinema activities in Belgium and strategies in Scotland. The geographical size of Belgium and the diversity of its regions are to some extent comparable with those of Scotland. Such parallels can only be drawn up to a point, of course, as Scotland's culture and position within the British state bears significant idiosyncrasies that shaped its relationship with early cinema.

A small nation that is closer to Scottish governmental structures and culture is Wales. In *A Social History of Cinema in Wales, 1918-1951*, Peter Miskell argues that Welsh communities in the Southern coastal towns often socialised in cinemas and were, therefore, termed 'American Wales'.²¹ Researching the locations and architecture of cinema venues, analysing the popularity of cinema statistically and discussing film criticism alongside censorship debates, Miskell's study has evident parallels with New Cinema History.²² This thesis seeks a stronger connection with the academic discourse currently surrounding the expansion of cinema history.²³ Moreover, the comprehensiveness of Miskell's account is achieved at the expense of more detailed archival research. Focusing on a shorter time period and on the role of

²⁰ See Biltereyst, Meers and Van de Vijver, "Social Class, Experiences of Distinction and Cinema," in *Explorations in New Cinema History*; and Biltereyst et. al., "Negotiating Cinema's Modernity," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

²¹ Peter Miskell, "Pulpits, Coal Pits and Fleapits: A Social History of the Cinema in Wales, 1918-1951," (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aberystwyth, 2000), 4, <http://cadair.aber.ac.uk/dspace/handle/2160/3300>. See also Peter Miskell, *A Social History of the Cinema in Wales, 1918-1951: Pulpits, Coalpits and Fleapits* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 1-20.

²² *Going to the Movies* was published in 2007, a year after Miskell's book appeared. The PhD thesis the book is based on was submitted in 2000.

²³ The most recent expression of this was the Glasgow conference "What is Cinema History?" organised by HoMER (History of Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception) Network and the Early Cinema in Scotland project and took place in June 2015: *Homer Network*, "What is Cinema History?," accessed September 26, 2015, <http://homernetwork.org/meetings/>.

institutions and agencies in shaping cinema's social role in Scotland, the present study pursues this more detailed analysis in order to tease out the diversity of institutional responses to cinema.

1.4 Regulating Cinema's Social Role

1.4.1. Controlling Film Exhibition

Film censorship constituted a substantial part of cinema regulation. Contending that a static definition of censorship does not do justice to the multifaceted web of relationships negotiating it, the present work supports a dynamic view of this regulatory strategy. The resulting complexity is pronounced in free market democracies where censorship is based on shifting dialogues between governing agencies and the film industry and does not simply work from the top, the regulatory institutions, downwards to the fields of production, distribution and exhibition. As Biltereyst showed for Belgium and Julian Petley demonstrated for Britain, its non-statutory nature does not mean that this type of censorship is less severe than state censorship.²⁴ Like these authors, this thesis defines cinema censorship as an interactive discourse that engages a variety of institutions and agencies in a constant conversation over the boundaries of legitimate filmic representations.²⁵

It is important to bear in mind also that, during the early cinema period institutional responses to cinema as a new form of commercial leisure were still in formation, which means that the discourse surrounding censorship was more volatile than in later periods.²⁶ The British parliament had passed no statute that directly addressed censorship, so the practice was incorporated into other regulatory procedures, the most significant among them being the licencing of venues.²⁷ Institutions and agencies involved in regulation included the Home Office, the British

²⁴ Daniël Biltereyst, "Film Censorship in a Liberal Free Market Democracy: Strategies of Film Control and Audiences' Experiences of Censorship in Belgium,"; Julian Petley, "The Censor and the State in Britain," all in *Silencing Cinema: Film Censorship Around the World*, eds. Daniël Biltereyst and Roel Vande Winkel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁵ Daniël Biltereyst and Roel Vande Winkel, introduction to *Silencing Cinema*, 3-4.

²⁶ Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909-1925*, Cinema and Society (London: Routledge, 1988), 1.

²⁷ Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 48-90.

Board of Film Censors (BBFC), film trade organisations, local authorities, and for Scotland the Scottish Office, as well as other, non-governmental pressure groups. Pioneering work on censorship practices was carried out by Annette Kuhn in her 1988 book *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, which describes censorship as a power play between different institutions and organisations. It argues that by excluding films containing messages about abortion, sexual diseases and birth control from commercial screenings, censorship bodies defined the function of cinema as inoffensive entertainment, not a platform for addressing difficult moral issues.²⁸ In emphasising the productive features of censorship as a demarcating discourse, Kuhn's work made an important intervention into an academic field that had hitherto defined censorship as a system of prohibition.²⁹

Kevin Rockett's *Irish Film Censorship* is another major study on censorship. This comprehensive volume analyses Ireland's rigid censorship practices through which the Irish state and the Catholic Church attempted to deny its citizens suggestive and subversive film content since the passing of the Censorship of Films Bill in 1923. Rockett argues that the severity of Irish film censorship was rooted in Ireland's early need to reposition itself in a post-colonial framework. American films expressing modern and secularised values which were felt to undermine Irish identity were targeted by the Censor. Irish censorship was a discourse clearly defined by a political and religious agenda, which makes it a useful example for the contextualisation of the Scottish scenario.

Before the independence of Ireland in 1923, the interplay between British and Irish regulative organisations moved along similar lines to those in Scotland, yet the outcomes were different. For example, a perceived lack of official film censorship of content led Dublin Corporation to use the Cinematograph Act of 1910 (set up to enforce fire safety regulations) as an administrative measure to prevent the screenings of films deemed to be undesirable such as the 1910 *Johnson-Jeffries* boxing match (Motion Picture Patents Company, 1910) or *From The Manger to the*

²⁸ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 119-125.

²⁹ Ibid., 4-8. A similar post-structural approach to early cinema censorship is presented in Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema Movies and Censorship in Early-twentieth-century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3-11. Similar to Kuhn, Grieveson defines censorship as an interactive discourse between the film industry and regulatory forces about cinema's role in society focusing on Chicago.

Cross (Kalem, 1912).³⁰ As Trevor Griffiths' *Cinema and Cinema-Going in Scotland* attests, the visual display of male bodies coupled with an interracial dynamic displayed in the first film as well as the commercialisation of religious matters apparent in the latter example were issues debated in Scotland also.³¹ However, the film screenings were not boycotted as determinedly as in Dublin, where the rigorous policing of individual venues began to blur the lines between cinema regulation and film censorship.

Rockett and Griffiths indicate that the control of cinema space was an important part of how cinemas were regulated. Nonetheless, this aspect has failed to attract the same scholarly attention as censorship. There are but a few British studies focusing on the regulation of cinema space. In his article 'Penny Pleasures II: Indecency, Anarchy and Junk Film in London's 'Nickelodeons', 1906-1914', Jon Burrows looks at the regulation of audience behaviour in the penny gaffs of London's East End. He maintains that the Metropolitan Police had pressured the Home Office to usher in the Cinematograph Act in 1909 to provide a tool for the Police to withhold licences to cinemas it deemed suspicious.³² The Metropolitan Police was also the focus of an article by Paul Moody, who holds that the force regarded molestation of children and juvenile crime as problems directly linked to the cinema space.³³ Offering a non-metropolitan focal point, Miskell establishes that Welsh authorities handled cinema regulation similarly to those in England, but that their stance on Sunday opening diverged: throughout the first half of the twentieth century cinemas in Wales remained mostly shut on Sundays.³⁴ Sunday opening was a recurrent issue throughout the UK, and, Griffiths argues, it epitomises Scotland's uneven and at

³⁰ Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship: a Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), 34-52.

³¹ Trevor Griffiths, *The Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland, 1896-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 60-61.

³² Jon Burrows, "Penny Pleasures II: Indecency, Anarchy and Junk Film in London's 'Nickelodeons', 1906-1914," *Film History* 16, no. 2 (April 2004): 172-197, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815450>.

³³ Paul Moody, "'Improper Practices' in Great War British Cinemas," in *British Silent Cinema and The Great War*, eds. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

³⁴ Miskell, "Pulpits, Coal Pits and Fleapits," 205-220.

times regressive response to cinema as an agent of secularisation and modernisation.³⁵

This thesis expands this body of research and, similarly, pays attention to the regulation of cinema as a social space rather than as a textual practice. It analyses broader debates about early cinema's social role from a Scottish perspective. The first part of the thesis, 'Regulating Early Cinema', describes the legal and administrative framework for film exhibition and analyses regulatory practices in Scotland's two main cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Chapter Two starts off by sketching out the broad lines along which film exhibition was allowed to take place in Scotland, engaging in particular with the role of the Scottish Office. Drawing mainly on secondary material, the chapter's purpose is to give an overview. However, the discussion of the Scottish Office's involvement is based on a hitherto neglected Precedent and Rule Book. It argues that the legacy of a separate legal system and the political desire to retain Scotland's local administrative power produced a framework that omitted any clear rules on how to control cinema's social impact, limiting the power of Scottish authorities to censor film content. Adopting a broad perspective, the chapter is intended as an introductory piece to the more detailed case studies discussed in Chapter Three.

Exploring the cases of Edinburgh and Glasgow during the 1920s, Chapter Three exemplifies the type of regulatory practices the Scottish framework brought about. One of its main purposes is to draw out the similarities and pinpoint the differences in the respective approaches. The chapter draws on town council minutes, education authority minutes and local newspapers. It contends that regulatory practices in Scotland were partly defined by the boundaries of Scottish law and were partly the result of negotiations between local and national interest groups. As will become apparent, voices criticising the absence of effective censorship practices in Scotland were particularly prominent in Glasgow. The criticism did not achieve a change of the legal and administrative framework in the period under consideration but led to a number of alternative strategies to regulate cinema, which are addressed in chapter five.

³⁵ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 10, see also 138-177.

The second part ‘Assessing the Social Impact of Cinema’ considers debates about the legitimacy of cinema, the perceived link between cinema-going and juvenile crime and the didactic potential of films. Chapter Four discusses the 1917 Cinema Commission, the first comprehensive investigation in Britain to examine cinema’s negative social impact and potential benefits for education. Based on a detailed analysis of the Commission Report as well as newspaper commentary of it, the main objective of this chapter is to give a synopsis of the key themes addressed by the commissioners and to discuss them with a particular focus on Scotland. The argument is that the Commission typified a broader societal discourse on cinema. This discourse included critical anxieties, the trade’s response to these anxieties, and the interests of progressive reformers in developing film as a tool for instruction and propaganda.

Chapter Five pulls together national and local debates on the use of cinema for education, focusing on two initiatives conducted between 1917 and 1933: the National Council of Public Morals’ second Cinema Commission, and an experiment undertaken by Glasgow Corporation’s Education Committee in 1932 and 1933. The contents of both initiatives were published as reports - *The Cinema in Education* (1925) and *The Film in the Classroom* (1933).³⁶ These form the main research material for this chapter. It argues that the discourse about the negative effect of children’s cinema-going and the debate on the potential teaching value of films were connected in that they both constructed the child as an impressionable spectator. As will become apparent below, this connection was particularly strong in Glasgow during the 1920s and early 30s. During that time, Glasgow’s Education Committee went to enormous lengths in its unsuccessful attempts to establish a compulsory local and national censorship system and, at the same time, rather more successfully, it also piloted one of the country’s first experiments on using films in schools.

1.4.2. Useful Cinema

As the focus of Chapter Five has already indicated, this thesis is not only concerned with prohibitive strategies of control but promotes a wide definition of regulation. As

³⁶ The National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema in Education* (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1925); The Corporation of Glasgow, Education Department, *The Film in the Classroom: Report by Special Sub-Committee on Visual Education* (Glasgow: Glasgow Corporation, November 1933)

Part Three will show, cinema exhibition and film production commissioned and organised by civic institutions and other social formations was instrumental in regulating cinema, albeit in a constructive rather than restrictive manner. These kinds of activities have increasingly come to scholars' attention under the banner of Useful Cinema.

Despite the abundance of films and documents waiting to be analysed in local archives around the world, studies of filmmaking and exhibition practices outside commercial entertainment contexts are not plentiful.³⁷ However, as the collection *Useful Cinema* (2011), suggests there is increasing academic interest. The editors of this volume, Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson, define useful cinema as

a body of films and technologies that perform tasks and serve as instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social and political capital.³⁸

The contributing authors focus on the North American context and assess the ideological functionality and instrumentality of this type of cinema. Paul Monticone in his recent article on the use of film by American utility companies further stresses the importance expanding this new research field in order 'to better assess cinema's changing cultural status and social functions'.³⁹

Similar research exists for other countries. Åsa Jernudd, for example, has written on educational cinema in Sweden, where the governmental School Film Department was an important intermediary of useful cinema.⁴⁰ In regard to the Scottish context, the late scholar of film and visual culture Elisabeth Lebas has worked on municipal films commissioned by Glasgow Corporation between 1922 and 1938. These included a self-promotional series on the city's civic assets and achievements as well as a cycle of films functioning as instructional entertainment

³⁷ See for example *Screenculture: Canadian Educational, Sponsored & Industrial Film Archive*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.screenculture.org/cesif/>.

³⁸ Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, introduction to *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC ; London: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

³⁹ Paul Monticone, "'Useful Cinema' of What Use?: Assessing the Role of Motion Pictures in the Largest Public Relations Campaign of the 1920s," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015), 74.

⁴⁰ Åsa Jernudd "Educational Cinema and Censorship in Sweden, 1911-1921," in *Nordic Explorations: Film before 1930*, eds. John Fullerton and Jan Olsson (London: J. Libbey, 1999).

and fundraisers for children's holiday camps.⁴¹ Lebas identifies this early cinematic enterprise as a social democratic project that actively negotiated 'the role of cinema in an industrialised capitalist world.'⁴²

This thesis seeks to continue the research started by these authors. But it holds that studies on useful cinema must not be confined to particular films or technologies. In line with New Cinema History it proposes to widen the definition to include exhibition practices that were religiously-, educationally- or politically motivated. As Stefan Moitra's work on exhibition practices of Welsh Miners' Institutes demonstrates, alternative exhibition practices and venues could play an important role in defining cinema's role in particular communities. The Miners' Institutes adopted a propagandist as well as compassionate approach to exhibition, screening films from communist countries like the USSR, but also remaining in touch with the needs of the mining community for recreational entertainment.⁴³ As this thesis shows, Scottish organisations like the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society utilised cinema in a similar manner. In an attempt to offer a rounded study of early cinema's social roles in Scotland, Part Three discusses the significance of useful cinema as a body of filmic material and additionally underscores its importance as an exhibition practice.

The role of municipal cinema in shaping cinema's social role is the topic of Chapter Six. Focusing on the small town of Kirkintilloch, it maintains that the municipal cinema's intended function was political and economic and has to be seen in association with contemporary notions of municipal socialism promoted by Labour politicians such as Keir Hardy and Thomas Johnston. The cinema evolved to play an important civic role that was constantly negotiated with the audience and in relation to its commercial rivals. An analysis of a sample of weekly newspaper adverts and reviews from the *Kirkintilloch Herald* are deployed in the exploration of this role. This chapter also contends that municipal cinema as exhibition practice conveyed a

⁴¹ Elizabeth Lebas, "Sadness and Gladness: The Films of the Glasgow Corporation, 1922-1938," *Film Studies*, no. 6 (2005): 27-45.

⁴² Ibid., 43. See also the more recent publication: Elizabeth Lebas, *Forgotten Futures: British Municipal Cinema 1920-1980* (London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 2011).

⁴³ Stefan Moitra, "Cinema Operation and the South Wales Miners' Institutes in the 1950s and 1960s," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

political message similar to the early municipal films that Lebas looked at and so highlights the importance of the exhibition practice as alternative form of cinema.

Chapter Seven sketches out the different roles early cinema took on in the hands of one national agency operating outwith the realm of civic institutions as well as outside of the cinema industry, the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Limited (hereafter SCWS). As argued below, these roles corresponded to national and transnational developments in cinema history and signified the shifting boundaries of cinema's social function typical for the early period. The history of SCWS's cinema and film work is approached diachronically, exploring developments over a period of twenty-six years. The primary sources used are articles, editorials and adverts published in *The Scottish Co-operator*, the main journalistic outlet of the Scottish Co-operative movement. Other sources include the Society's minute books, catalogues and commissioned films. As will become apparent, the SCWS utilised cinema in various ways - for entertainment, education, publicity and product advertisement. Its engagement with cinema and film symbolises, therefore, the multitude of social roles Scottish institutions ascribed to early cinema.

1.5. Conclusion

New Cinema History has generated a multitude of empirical studies focusing on film distribution, cinema exhibition and reception. While employing a similar approach, this thesis takes a less travelled route and explores local and national discourses and practices around cinema regulation and the creation of useful cinema. Presenting a number of case studies, it focuses on the narratives and strategies of various social institutions and agencies invested in circumscribing what cinema was and should be in Scotland. It offers a perspective that emphasises the complexity of institutional responses and teases out the multiplicity of social roles Scottish institutions and agencies intended and allowed early cinema to play.

This investigation constitutes extensive empirical research and brings together a range of different primary sources such as cinema trade papers, national and local newspapers, official reports of social reform bodies, town councils and magistrates minutes, education authority minutes, government rules and precedent books, financial papers and company records. Exploring the diversity of institutional responses to early cinema in Scotland by engaging a wide range of primary sources

this thesis contributes fresh insights into the complexity of cinema's social role during the early period.

PART I

REGULATING CINEMA

2. The legal and administrative frameworks for film exhibition in Scotland

One of the main arguments underlying the first part of the thesis is that the social role of cinema as a cultural institution needs to be understood in the local and national context in which it was received and allowed to operate. The present chapter gives, thus, an overview of the legal framework for film exhibition in Scotland, seeking to highlight its distinctiveness which is necessary to understand the significance of local regulatory practices discussed in chapter three. To understand this distinctiveness it is essential to see the Scottish framework as a part of the larger British context and not as an entity in itself. The following sections reflect this by engaging with debates north as well as south of the Scottish border.

The regulatory practices identified in this and the next chapter targeted two aspects of film exhibition, the content of films and the cinema space. The regulation of the cinema space itself can be divided into two separate issues. First, the cinema space as a social sphere which could be controlled through managing opening times, children's access, or the conditions which might encourage crime, such as darkness, proximity and so forth. Second, the cinema as physical space, regulated through the supervision of property elements ensuring the physical safety of the audience from fire. While debates about cinema regulation often conflated the two aspects, it is important to bear these differences in mind as the legal interpretation of the separate aspects marks the dividing line between the Scottish and the British frameworks.

The legal structures within which British and Scottish cinemas were allowed to operate were unstable and inconsistent during the early cinema period, indicating that cinema's social function had not been clearly defined at this stage. As Annette Kuhn argued in her book *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, especially

the years between 1909 and 1925 ...constitute a period of uncertainty - even of struggle - over the means by which cinema was to be understood, defined and regulated.¹

¹ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 1.

The present chapter contends that this struggle was particularly complex in Scotland and that it was by no means finished in 1925. In fact, as will become apparent it extends the 'early' period by decades. Out of all the questions relating to this struggle, the question of censorship - who was to censor what, when and how - was particularly difficult to answer and, therefore, plays a prominent role here. The chapter's objective is to explain a paradoxical situation in which the same local censorship practices that were common in the rest of the UK were considered to be unconstitutional in Scotland. This chapter argues that this was due to the legacy of Scotland's legal tradition and contemporary political motivations to maintain its autonomy. This produced a distinct framework for film exhibition that left Scottish authorities with markedly less power to censor film content than their counterparts south of the border.

A further crucial point Kuhn makes is that censorship was a dynamic and fragmented form of regulation during the early cinema period, far removed from the notion of a static governing apparatus laying out certain guidelines that then determined practices on the ground. This was thanks to the incorporation of censorship into a cinema licensing system that was under the control of central and local governments. While the UK parliament could pass laws determining the conditions under which cinemas were to be granted licenses, local authorities were the executors of these laws and allowed some measure of discretion. Moreover, licensing authorities were not inert tools of the state apparatus but exercised agency by pressuring the central government in regard to legislation. London City Council was especially influential in this respect and often acted as pacesetter for developments in the rest of the country. The British cinema industry, too, was not a passive receiver of prohibitive rules produced by governing bodies. In fact, the industry itself played a crucial part in the creation and negotiation of these rules. This means that the struggle over the control of cinema was not only fought by central and local government agencies but also by cinema trade bodies driven to establish a system of self-regulation. Self-regulation, of course, throws up additional questions as to the motives of the self-regulating bodies and their acceptance among central and local governments as well as the cinema trade itself.² What follows will

² Ibid., 12-21.

shed some light on this dynamic discourse with a particular focus on the case of Scotland.

Regulation of film exhibition in Britain and Scotland, with its emphasis on decentralisation and self-regulation, is almost unique in the international context. As Neville March Hunnings has pointed out

the only other countries to use a self-regulatory system are the two countries which were under Allied occupation after 1945: Japan and Germany.³

Certainly, the American film industry also established a self-regulatory censorship system with the formation of the Production Code Administration in 1934. But as Lee Grieveson and Laura Wittern-Keller have demonstrated, this was preceded and accompanied by local censorship at the level of exhibition. The city of Chicago, for instance, gave its police chief the authority to censor films as early as 1907.⁴ The power of local governmental censors was only compromised during the 1950s when exhibitors began to successfully challenge their supremacy in court.⁵ Furthermore, the British case can be contrasted with other systems in European liberal market societies, such as, Belgium and Denmark. In Belgium, for instance, censorship was ‘forbidden by constitution’ and alternative control mechanisms were developed by the Catholic Church which entered the cinema exhibition business.⁶ Denmark, on the other hand, took a more interventionist approach. During the early cinema period municipal authorities had the power to censor films and a state controlled censorship department was established in 1933.⁷ So, while the question of whether and how cinema should be censored arose in those countries at some point during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the responses differed. The next sections briefly introduce the laws and agencies

³ Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 392.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the events leading to local censorship practices in Chicago see Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 37-78.

⁵ For a brief account of legal censorship in the US see Laura Wittern-Keller, “All the Power of the Law: Governmental Film Censorship in the United States,” in *Silencing Cinema*. For a comprehensive account see Wittern-Keller, *Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

⁶ Daniël Biltereyst, “Film Censorship in a Liberal Free Market Democracy: Strategies of Film Control and Audiences’ Experiences of Censorship in Belgium,” in *Silencing Cinema*.

⁷ Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 307-332.

relevant for the regulation of cinemas in Britain as a whole before discussing the Scottish situation in more detail further below.

2.1. The British Framework

2.1.1 British legal discourse around cinema regulation

The legal framework for film exhibition is based on a system of licensing. The first cinema shows taking place in fixed places of popular entertainment were subject to regulation and licensing laws already in place. In most areas, this was the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751, an act to regulate places of public entertainment that were not subject to the 1737 Playhouse Act or the 1843 Theatres Act. It was passed to prevent ‘thefts and robberies’ as well as ‘riotous ... mischief’ in illegitimate or so-called disorderly houses through imposing licencing conditions.⁸ The measure was initially only used to enforce the licencing of illegitimate theatres and music halls in the cities of London and Westminster. But the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, passed by the British parliament in 1890, allowed other British local authorities to adopt similar measures.⁹

The Disorderly Houses Act was quickly found to be as obsolete because it was not applicable to film shows on fairgrounds and the many penny-gaffs, small cinemas set up in converted storefronts that had emerged especially in London during the 1900s.¹⁰ The cheapness of admission of such cinemas meant that they were more accessible than other places of entertainment and quickly morphed into spaces where children, immigrants and the working classes socialised. This meant that these cinemas were perceived as a risk to social order and the Disorderly Houses Act as an ineffective legal instrument to deal with it. As Jon Burrows and James Robertson contend, it was the Metropolitan Police that exerted the most pressure on the Home Office to bring in new legislation dealing exclusively with cinematograph shows.¹¹ Burrows argues that this mainly originated in an aim to control the immigrant

⁸ Preamble to the Act quoted in Ibid., 30.

⁹ Ibid., See also Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 15.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913-1972* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1-2. Jon Burrows, “Penny Pleasures II,” 173.

population in London's East End.¹² Additional support for new legislation came from sections of the trade pursuing the betterment of the cinema's public image which suffered also from attacks on the content of films, many of them criticised for glorifying crime.¹³

The transformation of cinema from obscure novelty to permanent entertainment feature meant that it began to be seen as a permanent threat to the physical safety of the public, especially in regard to the highly inflammable nitrate content of celluloid films. Anxiety around the fire risk represented by cinemas and moves to find better ways to control it occurred in many countries towards the end of the 1900s. Paul Moore, for example, identified such trends in Canada and Gary Rhodes described danger from fire as one among many *Perils of Moviegoing in America*.¹⁴

In Britain, the Disorderly Houses Act proved ineffective in dealing with the threat of cinema fires. Concerns were raised in particular by widespread press coverage of cinema fires breaking out abroad, such as the widely reported fire at the Bazar de la Charité in Paris in 1897. In direct response to the Paris fire, London City Council tackled this risk early on by issuing specific fire regulations to licenced theatres in 1898.¹⁵ As a result of the combined pressure to enhance the social and the physical safety of the public in and around cinemas, by the end of the 1900s a legal measure was sought that was more widely applicable. In February 1909, the Home Office proposed a bill that dealt explicitly with the conditions under which cinematograph shows ought to operate, which was passed by Parliament as the 1909 Cinematograph Act at the end of the year.¹⁶

From 1910, this new law required that every film exhibitor in Britain had to apply for a cinematograph licence, granted by the county council or other local authorities on an annual basis. As mentioned, intentions behind its creation sprang

¹² Burrows, "Penny Pleasures," 193.

¹³ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 14. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema*, 1.

¹⁴ Paul S Moore, *Now Playing*, 45-75; Gary D. Rhodes, *The Perils of Moviegoing in America: 1896-1950* (New York:Continuum, 2012), 1-44.

¹⁵ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 15; Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 37-38.

¹⁶ Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 43-47.

from physical as well as social safety concerns, but the Act itself only laid out the physical conditions necessary to run a licenced cinema. A licence could be obtained after the existence of certain safety measures had been confirmed, such as the appropriate 'number and location of exits, ... enclosure of the projector, ... encasement of films, ... type of lightening used, ... placement of fire appliances ...'.¹⁷ Similar rules were applicable to Scotland, where the Scottish Secretary circulated detailed regulations in March 1910. As Griffiths comments, the new rules 'included the provision of adequate exits, indicated by illuminated signs' and demanded that 'the enclosure from which the cinematograph apparatus was to be operated' be located 'outside the auditorium' or otherwise separated from the audience by 'a barrier of at least 2ft'.¹⁸ This was initially perceived as too rigorous, especially in regard to temporary exhibitions. Its application in Scotland, however, did not go far enough for those groups and agencies whose principal concern were the social dangers of cinema and cinema-going.

In England, Wales and Ireland (before independence in 1923), the legal scope of the Cinematograph Act was interpreted generously, empowering licencing authorities to attach additional conditions transcending the realm of physical safety. For instance, London City Council immediately and successfully prevented cinema shows on Sundays testing the scope of the Act in a law case against the Bermondsey Bioscope Company Limited in the English High Court which approved of the Council's actions.¹⁹ The outcome of the *LCC v. Bermondsey Bioscope Co. Ltd.* law case had wide implications for the ensuing interpretation and application of the Cinematograph Act in London and elsewhere in Britain. Only a year after the Cinematograph Act came into force, the LCC used the Act to enforce other social conditions, including the restriction of opening hours and limits on the admission of children at evening performances. Crucially, the High Court's approval of the LCC's application of the Act in London had repercussions beyond the capital's boundaries as it meant that exhibitors residing anywhere in England, Wales and Ireland could potentially be prosecuted or their cinema licences withdrawn for non-compliance

¹⁷ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 17.

¹⁸ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 58-59.

¹⁹ *LCC v. Bermondsey Bioscope Co. Ltd.*, (1911) 1 K. B. 445. For more details on this case see Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 39; Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 17-18 and 138, endnote 10.

with rules added by the respective licencing authority, even if these conditions regulated the social rather than the physical nature of cinema performances.²⁰

The 1909 Cinematograph Act was the only law passed dealing explicitly with cinema regulation during the period under consideration. Despite its focus on physical safety conditions it became an important key stone for the social regulation of cinemas. Significantly, as Kuhn argues, it ‘opened a legal path to certain practices of film censorship’ on the local level.²¹ These practices were constantly negotiated between central and local authorities, the cinema trade and various pressure groups.

2.1.2. The negotiation of censorship

The inconsistency caused by such erratic censorship practices quickly became problematic and was, therefore, countered by plans to establish a central body that could supersede localised positions and create a unified system for the whole of the UK. Proposals to establish such a central censorship body came from the Home Office and the cinema trade alike. When press campaigns widely condemned localised practices as unsatisfactory, the trade began to take steps to avert government intervention. As a first step the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA) was formed in 1912, to represent the interests of British cinema exhibitors and to pursue an agenda of self-regulation. This manifested itself instantly in the establishment of British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) during the same year. The ‘voluntary’ censorship board was financed by the Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers and, after successful persuasion by the CEA and other trade bodies, received very tentative support from the Home Secretary Reginald McKenna.²²

Introducing a basic classification system, the BBFC offered to categorise films according to their suitability for general and adult audiences. A film marked with ‘U’ signified that the picture was appropriate for a general audience, while films marked with an ‘A’ indicated its suitability for adults only. Moreover, the board refused to

²⁰ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 17-18.

²¹ Ibid., 18.

²² Ibid. 21-22.; Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 50-55.

give certificates to films deemed sexually, religiously or politically offensive.²³ But without the wholehearted endorsement of the Home Office and the LCC as well as lacking any legal authority, the Board struggled to find widespread acceptance among local licencing authorities following the first years of its inception. In 1914, a mere twenty-four out of over five hundred British licensing authorities acknowledged the BBFC as central censor.²⁴ In Scotland, the only two authorities appearing to have officially accepted the BBFC at this stage were Falkirk and Perth. In fact, Perth Town Council endorsed the Board's status as early as March 1913, when

[t]he Magistrates instructed the Clerk to insert into the Licenses to be granted in future that the Film to be exhibited must be passed by this Board.²⁵

These were exceptions to the rule. As was the case in the rest of Britain, Scottish authorities largely ignored the BBFC during the 1910s.²⁶

Occupying a mere advisory role, the BBFC was viewed with equal indifference by cinema exhibitors themselves. While the CEA campaigned for the widespread acceptance of the censorship board by all exhibitors, such efforts only reached as far as its membership, which was far from universal, and at times the CEA failed even to unite this small fraction of the trade.²⁷ Furthermore, Griffiths argues that Scottish exhibitors generally preferred state censorship to self-regulation during the 1910s. For instance, two of the most prominent Scottish cinema exhibitors, A.E. Pickard and J. J. Bennell, were in favour of a censor that was more firmly backed by the Home Office than the BBFC. Both Pickard and Bennell owned large circuits of cinemas which brought them in contact with a number of different local authorities and Bennell was also active in the film distribution trade: Bennell's B.B. Pictures Ltd., for example, grew into the largest independent Scottish distribution company in

²³ Definite rules guiding the board's decisions in this regard seem to have been outlined only years later as "T.P. O' Connor's 43 rules for the BBFC," in *The National Council of Public Morals, The Cinema Its Present Position and Future Possibilities* (London: Norgate and Williams, 1917), 255-256.

²⁴ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 23; James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London ; Dover, N.H: Croom Helm, 1985), 7.

²⁵ Perth Town Council Minutes 1913, March 27, 1913, GB 252/PE 1/1/37, Perth & Kinross Council Archive.

²⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 63.

²⁷ Griffiths shows that branches in Greenock and Dundee, for instance, were more reluctant to accept the BBFC than those in Edinburgh and Glasgow. *Ibid.*, 65.

Scotland.²⁸ Especially for Bennell, who had links with the Temperance Movement, enhancing the respectability of the cinema trade was an important goal. His view is expressed in an interview with the trade paper *The Bioscope* in 1916, in the midst of a Home Office campaign to establish a state censor. He argued that such a body was a necessary means to marginalise disreputable exhibitors:

I'm afraid a central censorship board is essential. ... it is inevitable in a business of this kind that a few exhibitors should be tempted ... by the big profits often so unfortunately associated with the screening of a questionable subject ...²⁹

Throughout his career, Bennell, as founder and chairman of the Glasgow branch of the CEA and in his activities as distributor and exhibitor of morally sound and educational pictures, actively campaigned for the improvement of the public image of the cinema.³⁰

An important economic concern driving exhibitors with less idealist motives than Bennell was that a central censorship board, be it initiated by the trade or imposed by the state, was only worth supporting if it was able to override decisions taken by local licencing authorities. In this way, local conditions for film exhibition could be standardised and become universal across the country and make business more predictable.³¹ During the 1910s, the BBFC lacked such power and was, thus, met with scepticism by many exhibitors.

Such scepticism was not confined to the BBFC as such but also emerged in connection to Home Office proposals to establish a quasi-official censor in 1916. Home Secretary Herbert Samuel, who had been involved with the creation of the Cinematograph Act earlier, showed a keen interest in uniting censorship practices across the country and offered to do this by appointing a state censor. Due to war conditions, he was reluctant to pass new legislation through Parliament, a necessary step to take away full control from local licensing authorities. Proposing to establish

²⁸ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012), 150-160. See also "Mapping Film Exhibition in Scotland before Permanent Cinemas," *Post Script* 30, No. 3 (Summer, 2011): 25-37, <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/101725/>.

²⁹ "Mr. Bennell in London," *Bioscope*, September 14, 1916, 1061.

³⁰ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918," 157.

³¹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 63.

a censor through administrative action instead, which relied on the voluntary concession of powers by local authorities, his scheme offered no real benefit to the cinema trade. The cinema trade paper *The Bioscope* coined Samuel's proposal a

somewhat pompous and irrelevant rite of pretending to confer official powers upon a body which will in fact have none ... The stamp of rather foolish mock-official status held out as a promised benefit will render the censorship no more effective and rather less dignified than it is at present.³²

As the editorial explains, the benefits of centralisation some exhibitors hoped an official censor could bring would not be realised under this arrangement and it was, therefore, strongly opposed.³³

A reshuffle of the government at the end of 1916 brought the appointment of a new Home Secretary - Sir George Cave - and with it began the most significant phase in the formation of the British censorship system. Cave was not interested in cinema censorship and shelved the question of establishing a state censor. Instead he sanctioned existing local arrangements. He specifically advised 'local licensing authorities to make more effective use of their powers of censorship under the Cinematograph Act'.³⁴ Furthermore, Cave gradually endorsed the BBFC more strongly than his predecessors and began to lobby local licencing authorities to accept the Board's recommendations on the suitability of films. Apart from the acknowledgement of the BBFC as an independently financed body that saved the government time and money, Cave's recognition of the body was driven by two other events. First, after the death of its first president G. A. Redford in November 1916, the board came to be headed by a figure with a stronger public profile, T.P. O'Connor. Connor was a well-known journalist, Irish Nationalist politician and former president of the CEA. Crucially, he was prepared to be interventionist, and specified forty-three rules guiding the censorship board. Second and related to this is the praise the BBFC received by the 1917 Cinema Commission, established upon request by the cinema trade at the time of

³² "Mr. Samuel offers a bad bargain," *Bioscope*, October 26, 1916, 334.

³³ See also "The lean days are here," *Bioscope*, October 26, 1916, 341-342.

³⁴ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 24.

Samuel's censorship campaign.³⁵ The Commission was an inquiry into the social impact of cinema and set up by the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM).³⁶ The Council was an important player that negotiated the regulation of cinema, albeit outside of the legal and administrative framework.³⁷ It was noted for its liberal stance and threw an optimistic light on cinema's role in British society and efforts by the industry to regulate itself.

The improved status of the BBFC was tested immediately after the war, when the emergence of a new type of film put the relationship between the Censor, the Home Office and local authorities under immense pressure. The films in question represented a particular difficulty because they dealt with sexual morality and health, undermined by war conditions, and were promoted by social reform organisations such as the NCPM and the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease (NCCVD). As Kuhn explains on three case studies, the BBFC defined cinema's role as one of family entertainment and decided to withhold certificates for films it regarded as health propaganda and, thus, unsuitable for exhibition in commercial cinemas.³⁸ The other agencies involved in negotiating censorship, however, supported a broader definition of cinema's social role which included information and education. What followed was a confused situation in which the BBFC's verdict was largely ignored. Many shows took place in alternative venues, where exhibition conditions were agreed directly between exhibitors, local licencing authorities, reform agencies and government departments. A case in point is the exhibition run of *The End of the Road* (US Public Health Films, 1918), a film contrasting the fate of a young woman informed about the dangers of contracting syphilis with that of a woman ignorant of such risks. The film lacked a BBFC certificate, but had been approved by the Ministry of Health and the NCCVD. In fact, as the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* put it, '[m]any medical men and others, ..., were enthusiastic for its being shown' as long as 'every care ... [was] taken to prevent any but adults gaining

³⁵ The Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers' Ltd and the Kinematograph Renters' Society, National Council, *The Cinema*, vii.

³⁶ Its report is discussed at length in Chapter Four.

³⁷ The Council pioneered one of the first experiments into educational cinema, which is considered in Chapter Five.

³⁸ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 28-95.

admission.³⁹ Not only health organisations weakened the status of the BBFC by supporting the exhibition of ‘propaganda’ films; some cinema exhibitors openly undermined the censorship board. One exhibitor from London, for example, justified his decision to screen *The End of the Road* by pinpointing its mere advisory function:

The British Board of Film Censors has no legal powers to prevent the exhibition of any particular film. It is an organisation formed by cinema managers for their own protection.⁴⁰

Hence, the film was shown in commercial cinemas as well as a variety of public venues. In Scotland, these included Cambuslang Co-operative Hall in 1919, Denny Town Hall near Falkirk, Dundee Caird Hall a couple of years later and Aberdeen Music Hall, where the Pioneer Film Company even put on repeat shows due to the film’s popularity.⁴¹ Furthermore, opinions and orders on who was old enough to gain access varied. In Aberdeen, for instance, ‘children under 15 years of age ... [were] not admitted by order of the Board of Health’ while in Folkstone, Kent, ‘no person under 14 years’ was admitted to shows of the film in May 1922.⁴² In London, an exhibitor at the Polytechnic Cinema decided on his own accord that ‘no one under the age of eighteen’ was given access to the performance of *The End of the Road*. Such chaotic and highly localised practices undermined the reputation of the BBFC and suggested that the Board was far from being recognised as Britain’s central censorship board.

³⁹ “Banned Film on Trial,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, January 7, 1920, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000563/19200107/034/0003>.

⁴⁰ “The Exhibition of a Film,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, December 30, 1919, accessed October 2015, *The British Newspaper Archive*, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000563/19191230/113/0009>.

⁴¹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 64-65; “Advert: Variety Cinema,” *Falkirk Herald*, October 8, 1921, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000733/19211008/105/0003>; “Problems of Film Censorship,” *Dundee Courier*, November 25, 1922, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000164/19221125/099/0005>; “*The End of the Road* Repeat Show in Aberdeen,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 14, 1921, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000576/19210214/084/0006>.

⁴² “An Educational Film,” *Folkstone, Hythe, Sandgate, and Cheriton Herald*, May 20, 1922, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000765/19220520/111/0005>; “*The End of the Road*,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 2, 1921, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000576/19210202/103/0008>.

The explicitly sexual nature of propaganda films and the erratic manner by which the conditions for local exhibitions were agreed also divided cinema exhibitors. For exhibitors managing permanent cinemas the chaos was particularly worrying as it enabled itinerant exhibitors to exploit the popularity of 'propaganda' films at the expense of established picture houses. Where a customary exhibitor tried to take advantage of the trend, too, this could have negative consequences for his reputation and financial stability.⁴³ At the beginning of the new decade, therefore, the CEA started concerted efforts to persuade local licensing authorities to preclude the display of films without a BBFC certificate, whether they were to be shown in temporary or permanent venues. Griffiths argues that Scottish branches of the Association were quicker in effecting such change than those in the rest of the UK.⁴⁴ For instance, Glasgow and Edinburgh magistrates were approached by the Association during the winter months of 1920 and complied with its terms shortly after, in March and April 1920. The swift compliance of Scotland's two main cities with the CEA's recommendations explains why there is little evidence of performances of *The End of the Road* in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In England, a parallel CEA campaign was met with support by prominent councils such as Middlesex County Council in August 1920 and London City Council the next year. Exhibitors applying for a cinematograph licence there were henceforth obliged to only show films with a BBFC certificate. This marked the beginning of a period when censorship practices became increasingly consistent, relationships between the regulatory agencies introduced so far stabilised, and the BBFC finally found widespread acceptance across Britain.⁴⁵ For reasons that will become apparent below, it is important to bear in mind, however, that in Scotland the new condition was attached to the respective local police act and not the Cinematograph Act. This was different to practices in England and Wales, where the 1909 Act was used to administer compliance with BBFC standards.⁴⁶ This is

⁴³ Chairman of Cinematograph Exhibitors Association makes this clear in Cinematograph Exhibitors Association Edinburgh & East of Scotland Branch Minute Book 1918-1923, September 19, 1919, GB2120/5/11, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Moving Image Archive.

⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier with notable exceptions, Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 64-66.

⁴⁵ For more detail see Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 25-26.

⁴⁶ Edinburgh Full Magistrates Minutes, April 19, 1920, GB 236/SL 119/2/7, Edinburgh City Archive.

due to a marked difference in the legal interpretation of the 1909 Cinematograph Act which will be explained in detail in the section 2.2.3.

The increasing acceptance of BBFC certificates among local authorities was the basis on which a more reliable and sophisticated censorship system could be built. The 1920s witnessed an expansion of Authorities' acknowledgement of the Board's differentiation between 'U' and 'A' certified films. The pace for this was originally set in London, where the City Council successfully enforced the display of BBFC certificates prior to screening and demanded that children under sixteen and unaccompanied by an adult or guardian were excluded from 'A' certified films. According to Kuhn, the Council's actions had been encouraged by the Home Office and were used by it to formulate new model conditions for cinematograph licences.⁴⁷ Circulated around the country in July 1923, the model conditions found the support of the English Bar. Many authorities followed London's example and, consequently, a more robust legal framework for film censorship was created in England and Wales.⁴⁸

These developments applied only to a limited extent to Scotland, where the existence of a separate legal system and additional administrative agency meant that a slightly different framework emerged. The distinctiveness of the Scottish approach to cinema censorship became noticeable when new regulations connected to the 'A' certificate were successfully resisted by exhibitors and Authorities north of the Border. This resistance was possible due to the intricacies of Scottish regulatory framework for film exhibition.

2.2. The Scottish Framework

Insights into the Scottish framework for cinema exhibitions are rare as previous scholarship has focussed mainly on frameworks pertinent in England, Wales and Ireland. Neville March Hunnings, for instance, has primarily detailed the relationships between *Film Censors and the Law* in England and other countries, though his account includes some information on Scotland. Kevin Rockett has discussed the specific case of Ireland, and Peter Miskell has teased out the approach of Welsh

⁴⁷ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 75-79.

authorities.⁴⁹ Building on Hunnings' book and James Robertson's detailed work on the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), Annette Kuhn has contributed to a dynamic understanding of the censorship discourse during the early cinema period, but with a firm focus south of the Border. In *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, economic and social historian Trevor Griffiths has started to tease out the particularities of the Scottish scenario. Despite its usefulness in generating a better understanding, the framework for film exhibition in Scotland requires further clarification. This chapter builds on Griffiths' work by engaging more profoundly with key agencies producing and maintaining this framework. Crucial in this respect is the role played by the Scottish Office in mediating trends towards centralisation set in London and positions within Scotland. Continuously insisting on legal and administrative autonomy during the period under consideration, the position of the Scottish Office is an important focal point for the following account. Before delving deeper into its role as key agency, the following section will briefly outline how venues featuring early film shows were regulated before the 1909 Cinematograph Act came into force.

2.2.1. Scotland's legal tradition

As indicated above, the 1751 Disorderly Houses Act applied only to a certain extent in Scotland where public entertainment was subject to a separate legal and administrative system. The roots of this system are to be found in the 1707 Act of Union which preserved the exclusivity of the Scottish legal system:

[T]he Court of Session, or College of Justice, do, after the Union, and notwithstanding thereof, remain, in all time coming, within Scotland, as it is now constituted by the Laws of that Kingdom, and with the same Authority and Privileges, as before the Union ...⁵⁰

Furthermore, Scotland's burghal structure also remained intact after the Union. This arrangement, which reached as far back as the twelfth century, meant that Scottish burghs were granted more autonomy than was common in England, Wales and Ireland. For instance, the burgh's responsibility of 'policing' was not restricted to crime prevention but had a much wider legal definition. It included services such as

⁴⁹ Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship*; Peter Miskell, *A Social History of the Cinema in Wales*.

⁵⁰ The Act of Union 1707, Paragraph XIX, in *Modern Scottish History: 1707 to the Present*, vol. 5: *Major Documents*, eds. Anthony Cooke et. al. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 10.

drainage, street-lighting and the supervision of public health. Burghs and town councils were enabled to pay for such public services and take a more involved approach to local governance by another uniquely Scottish institution, the Common Good Fund - a municipal account instrumental in accumulating money from land rents and trade tolls. As urban historian R. J. Morris noted, this tradition fostered the development of a fragmented form of governance that was determined by local power structures rather than central agencies.⁵¹

The localisation of power increased during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as Scottish towns witnessed an unprecedented growth in population caused by rapid industrialisation. Dislocation, poverty and overcrowding brought social problems like infectious diseases and crime and, therefore, Local Authorities sought to strengthen their policing systems.⁵² Nowhere was this situation more ubiquitous than in Glasgow where more than ten Police Acts were passed between 1800 and 1900 in order to control the spread of diseases, to improve sanitation, to extend the boundaries of the city for the provision of more housing, to increase the Corporation's income from taxation and to expand the power of its magistrates. Accordingly, places of public entertainment such as theatres and music halls, which had previously been the responsibility of the Justices of the Peace, were brought under the supervision of Glasgow's magistrates under the Further Powers Act of 1892. The Act

enabled by-laws to be made for the safety and comfort of the public and for the maintenance of order in theatres, public shows, billiard and bagatelle rooms; [and] it extended the powers of the police regarding entry ... to unlicensed theatres and to gaming houses.⁵³

While Glasgow Corporation's action followed a central measure, known as the 1892 Burgh Police (Scotland) Act, other towns passed a string of local acts to increase the control of the magistrates over venues offering public entertainment. For instance, in Edinburgh these were subject to the 1879 Municipal and Police Act, and in Dundee theatre and music hall owners had to obtain licences under the Dundee Corporation

⁵¹ R. J. Morris, "Urbanisation and Scotland," in *People and Society in Scotland*, vol. 2: 1830-1914, eds. Hamish Fraser and R. J. Morris, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1990), 92-93.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 91-92.

⁵³ John Lindsay, *Review of Municipal Government in Glasgow* (Glasgow: Hodge, 1909), 29.

Acts of 1871 and its subsequent amendments.⁵⁴ Consequently, and crucially for developments in later decades, when cinema shows were staged for the first time in Scotland in 1896, these were subject to local rather than central control and exhibitors had to adhere to the respective local licencing practice.

Whereas licencing practices were localised they shared some common features. Licences for public shows were usually granted annually, and followed an inspection of the premises by the local Burgh Engineer and/or Firemaster. As Griffiths contends, after checking ‘that arrangements for audience safety and the maintenance of good order were adequate’, the inspector would advise the magistrates committee in regard to granting a licence.⁵⁵ Building regulations further maintained the adherence to licencing conditions as any alteration had to be approved by the local Dean of Guild Courts. This practice was to ensure that the audience was at all times safe from the risk of fire and that enough emergency exits were available. Similar preparations had to be made for temporary shows in churches, temperance halls and other venues, effectively preventing the emergence of so-called penny gaffs or nickelodeons, the small shop conversions common in London and some American cities before 1910.⁵⁶

The existence of a separate legal tradition did not mean that British legislation was not applicable at all in Scotland; the two legal systems overlapped to a certain extent. While granting courts in Scotland some discretion, the 1707 Act of Union earmarked that Scottish law was

subject nevertheless to such Regulations for the better Administration of Justice, as shall be made by the Parliament of Great Britain.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 57-58. Register of Theatres, Music Halls and other places Licensed as places of public amusement by the Town Council of Dundee in terms of the Dundee Corporation Acts, 1871 to 1907, from 1925-1939, GB 251/TC, Dundee City Archives.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 57-58.

⁵⁶ Ibid.; Burrows, “Penny Pleasures II”; For the American context see Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York : Oxford: Charles Scribner’s Sons ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1990).

⁵⁷ The Act of Union, Paragraph XIX, in *Modern Scottish History*, 10.

This means that a dual if not multi-layered legal structure was pertinent in Scotland. Forming the outer layer was legislation passed by the British parliament while the inner layers referred to practices that were adopted by Scotland's municipal authorities and confirmed by Scottish courts. Initially, the duality of British-Scottish legal structures did not affect the regulation of cinema entertainments in Scotland as these were only subject to the inner layers - the regulation of places of public entertainment administered by local licencing authorities as outline above. But the passing of the Cinematograph Bill in 1909 complicated this set up. This complication was further intensified by a literal and narrow interpretation of the 1909 Act by the Scottish Office and Scotland's courts. The Scottish Office was an additional key agency in the establishment of the framework for film exhibition in Scotland.

2.2.2. The Scottish Office

The Scottish Office was established under Lord Salisbury's minority government in August 1885 to reconcile trends towards centralisation and local political sentiments. By then, Britain had grown 'a centripetal form of government' that introduced nationwide policies for enhanced social control based on utilitarian principles.⁵⁸ While Scottish landowners and urban professionals largely agreed with these principles, many were convinced that domestic management should remain in local control as set out in the 1707 Act of Union. As historian Ian Levitt specifies:

The professional classes, especially lawyers used a separate legal code, [and] were unwilling to accept the primacy of a Lord Chancellor whose background was the English bar.⁵⁹

For that reason, the administration of the Poor Law, for example, was placed in the hands of an Edinburgh-based institution - the Scottish Board - in 1845. The Board was to consult with the Lord Advocate about the specifics of Scottish law and to ensure 'the gradual implementation of a uniform Scottish policy'.⁶⁰ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Liberal MPs favouring decentralised governance criticised the lack of authority the Scottish Board possessed and petitioned the government to

⁵⁸ Ian Levitt, "The State," in *The Modernisation of Scotland, 1850 to the Present*, *Modern Scottish History, 1707 to the Present*, vol. 2: *The Modernisation of Scotland, 1850 to the Present*, eds. Anthony Cooke et. al. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

reinstate the position of Scottish Secretary which had been abolished in 1745, following the Jacobite rebellion. Despite opposition from Conservatives who feared an unwanted balancing of the political agenda of the Board towards idiosyncratic concerns such as reform of the Highlands, the Temperance Movement and church disestablishment, the Liberals eventually succeeded.

The role of the Scottish Secretary was to mediate Scottish interests at Westminster and to facilitate the uniform implementation of legal and administrative policy decided by the UK parliament. In the Scottish Office, initially located in London, the Scottish Secretary worked together with a team of civil servants, a permanent under-secretary and a number of clerks. The Office was divided into four departments: the Home Department, responsible for administering laws, orders, prison & fire services, and overseeing the fishing industry; the Department of Health, which supervised Scottish health services, housing and town planning; the Department of Agriculture; and the Scottish Education Department.⁶¹ With the passing of the 1894 Local Government Act the Scottish Secretary was granted a seat in the Cabinet, enabling him to support Scottish bills more adequately in Parliament and, thus, manifesting the Secretary's role as 'effective head of domestic administration'.⁶² As a result of the (re-)instatement of the Scottish Office, a distinctive form of Scottish government had emerged by the turn of the new century.

Despite this, many Liberals felt that Scottish devolution did not go far enough. Some complained, for instance, that the Scottish Secretary, who did not occupy the same status as a Secretary of State (at least not until 1926), was treated by the British government like a junior minister. Hence, in tandem with pledges to support Irish Home Rule, some Liberal MPs supported more administrative autonomy for Scotland. One such individual was John Sinclair, Liberal MP for Dunbartonshire and Forfarshire between 1892 and 1909. Crucially for the history of the Cinematograph Act in Scotland, Sinclair was appointed Scottish Secretary from 1905 to 1912. In this position, Sinclair introduced a number of reform acts: for instance, the National Galleries of Scotland Act of 1906, the 1908 Education (Scotland) Act and the 1909 Town Planning Act. Becoming the 1st Lord of Pentland in 1909, he was particularly

⁶¹ Ibid., 7

⁶² Ibid., 11.

interested in agricultural reform and spent a great deal of his secretaryship pursuing the passage of the controversial Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill, which passed through parliament in 1911. Importantly, Sinclair has been described by his private secretary, H.M. Conacher, as ‘a great believer in administrative devolution’:

He wanted Scotland to be governed according to Scottish ideas, and was never enthusiastic about the method of dealing with Scotland by applying a single legislative measure to Great Britain.⁶³

In line with this view, Sinclair partially moved the Scottish Education Department from London to Edinburgh in 1909, and transferred the central administration of the Housing Acts to the Local Government Board, also based in the Scottish capital.

2.2.3. The Scottish Office and the 1909 Cinematograph Act

The Secretary’s aim to secure as much administrative autonomy for Scotland as possible was reflected in the way the 1909 Cinematograph Act was interpreted. In March 1910, when Sinclair laid out the rules for the application of the Act in Scotland, he determined that the licencing law was not to replace Scottish legislation dealing with places of public entertainment; instead it was to be treated as a supplement.⁶⁴ Accordingly, licences taken out under the Cinematograph Act had to have the approval of the local Burgh Engineer or other authority in charge of issuing certificates under the respective Police Act of the municipality, some of which were mentioned above. Related to this is the Secretary’s narrow reading of the Cinematograph Act as a measure only applicable to physical safety while all social issues were to be dealt with under pre-existing local legislation. This interpretation was instantly strengthened at Edinburgh’s Burgh Court, where the continuing applicability of the nineteenth-century police acts was confirmed in a case against local exhibitor John Stewart in March 1910. The case bears some similarities with the *LCC v. Bermondsey Co. Ltd.* mentioned earlier in that it centred on the ban of cinema entertainments on Sundays, a social aspect of cinema regulation. Stewart had

⁶³ Lady Pentland, *The Right Honourable John Sinclair, Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I.: A Memoir* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928), 106.

⁶⁴ Statutory Rules and Orders, 1910, No. 289, S. 9, Cinematograph Scotland, Regulations, dated March 10, 1910, Made by the Secretary for Scotland under the Cinematograph Act, 1909 (9 Edw. 7, c. 30) NLS, GB2120 5/7/122, Moving Image Archive.

begun to offer Sunday shows assuming that the new licence taken out under 1909 Cinematograph Act would override the ban of Sunday entertainments made under section 287 of the 1879 Edinburgh Municipal and Police Act. Similarly to the English High Court, the Scottish judges decided in favour of the town council and forbade cinema shows on Sundays.⁶⁵ However, and this was the dividing line between the British and the Scottish legal framework, in doing so they re-validated the older municipal and police acts and limited the scope of the 1909 Act in Scotland. Thus, while the parallel decision made by the English High Court in London allowed for a wide interpretation of the 1909 Cinematograph Act and legitimised localised practices of social regulation, including censorship, the rule created by Edinburgh Burgh Court reverted to pre-existing legislation and curtailed the particular applicability of the Act in Scotland. As Griffiths states the ‘verdict [was] not subsequently challenged in the Scottish courts’ and, hence, set an important precedent for the limited applicability of the Cinematograph Act in Scotland.⁶⁶

The interpretation of the Cinematograph Act as legislation supplementing rather than replacing Scottish laws had implications on how Scottish licencing authorities were to approach the question of film censorship. Pre-existing police acts only allowed for the social regulation of the cinema space - control over opening times, supervision of children, their admission to evening performances and so forth. The control of film content was not covered by them. That this created an obstacle for the execution of localised censorship practices became apparent only one month after the Edinburgh Burgh Court decision when Glasgow magistrates discussed the release of a film produced by the Motion Picture Patents Company. Portraying the black heavyweight boxer Jack Johnson beating the white James Jeffries in a state of semi-nudity, the picture caused much controversy. Enquiring about the options available to prevent exhibitions of the film in Glasgow, they found that under the 1892 Further Powers Act,

⁶⁵ “Sunday Entertainments Illegal,” *Scotsman*, March 29, 1910, *The Scotsman (1921-1950)*, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/483799342?accountid=14540>.

⁶⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 60.

Once a licence had been issued, the authority had no right to intervene over the content of the show.⁶⁷

So, neither the 1909 Cinematograph Act nor the 1892 Police Act was used to prevent the public display of the film. Crucially, this revealed for the first time the impotence of Scottish magistrates to act as censors. This impotence was confirmed a year later, when a similar controversy arose in connection with the film *From the Manger to the Cross* (Kalem, 1912) in Edinburgh. The magistrates were criticised by the Free Church Presbytery for allowing the unconstrained display of a film that depicted Jesus' suffering for entertainment and material gain while magistrates in Liverpool and Dublin, for example, managed to curb its widespread exhibition.⁶⁸ Thus, unlike colleagues south of the border, Scottish magistrates did, or could not, prevent the exhibition of the two films.⁶⁹

To leave Scottish magistrates with less control over the content of cinematograph shows than their colleagues in the rest of the UK appears not to have been Sinclair's intention. In a note in the Scottish Office Precedent Book from February 1911, it was suggested that 'a licencing authority ... regulate the character of pictures to be exhibited' in line with 'an English legal decision'.⁷⁰ This inconsistency indicates that Sinclair was not in full command of the Scottish legal framework. This is confirmed by David Torrance, who points out that the Lord Advocate at the time of Sinclair's secretaryship, Thomas Shaw, frequently complained that the Secretary did not consult him enough about Scottish legal practice, preferring to take matters into his own hands.⁷¹ Resulting from this was a confused scenario in which magistrates acted according to precedents tried in Scottish courts while the Scottish Office cited a decision made by English judges.

This inconsistency was rectified to some extent five years later under the leadership of Harold John Tennant, the new Scottish Secretary, who appears to

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ For censorial strategies developed by Dublin Corporation before 1923 see Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship*, 34-52.

⁶⁹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 60-61.

⁷⁰ Scottish Office Precedent Books, Volume 10: Public Health, Industrial, Social, Commercial, 267, GB234/HH49, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS).

⁷¹ David Torrance, *The Scottish Secretaries* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2006), 63-64.

have worked more closely than Sinclair with the Lord Advocate. A comment added to the one cited above deferred to the Advocate's opinion:

Censorship of films - L.A. [of] opinion that the [Cinematograph] Act only referred to "safety" & did not authorise censorship of immoral films.⁷²

This order reflected more adequately Scottish legal practice and, more importantly, commanded that the 1909 Cinematograph Act was not to be used as a censorship instrument. The timing of the order was no coincidence. Given in November 1916, it occurred in the midst of a major push by Home Secretary Herbert Samuel to implement a British state censor by administrative action, avoiding the passage of a new bill through Parliament. After receiving the Lord Advocate's advice that the use of the existing law (the Cinematograph Act) to censor films was illicit in Scotland, the Home Office excluded the country from its plans:

It looks as if Scotland must remain outside of the scheme, unless there is legislation.⁷³

No such legislation was passed until 1952, when a new Bill came into force to amend the 1909 Act and to bring Scotland in line with censorship practices south of the border.⁷⁴ For the early cinema period, however, the rule was that the 1909 Act was a measure to guarantee physical safety only.⁷⁵ As a result, a noninterventionist approach prevailed among Scottish magistrates in regard to film censorship, an approach that was continued long into the period of sound despite opposition from local institutions and pressure groups.

2.2.4. The Negotiation of Film Censorship in Scotland

Unlike in England, Wales and Ireland, the relationship between local licensing authorities and cinema exhibitors in Scotland was unhampered by the application of the Cinematograph Act as a censorship instrument, and was therefore more

⁷² Scottish Office Precedent Books, Volume 10: Public Health, Industrial, Social, Commercial, 267, GB234/HH49, NRS.

⁷³ Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 81, footnote 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁵ Some diversions to the rule seemed to exist however as Hunnings points out that Scottish law books frequently cited English cases in regard to cinema licensing issues. *Ibid.*, 81-82.

harmonious. Scottish local authorities were even praised by local CEA representatives for refraining from using the Act to 'influence film content'.⁷⁶ A number of distributors and exhibitors were prominent public figures, whose involvement in local and national politics extended their influence beyond realm of the cinema trade. J.J. Bennell has been mentioned above as a voice for respectability and temperance, whose activities earned him, his company and the trade in general the esteem of authorities in Scotland. As María Vélez-Serna pointed out, 'Glasgow Corporation 'hired his show as a turn in the Saturday evening concerts at the City Halls - and ... other civic institutions ... depended on his services for fundraising events.'⁷⁷ Others held positions within trade organisations as well as municipal government. Exhibitor James Welsh, for example, was not only the secretary of the CEA's Glasgow branch, but also active trade unionist and local Labour councillor.⁷⁸ Another case in point is Thomas Ormiston, president of the CEA from 1924 to 1928 and unacknowledged father of the 1927 British Quota Act, who also acted as Unionist MP for Motherwell during the 1930s.⁷⁹ As Chapter Three will show, the closeness of local cinema trade and municipal authorities could at times be strong enough to form an alliance against a formidable fraction of cinema critics campaigning for tougher censorship rules.

The distinctiveness of the Scottish approach to film censorship and the close relationship between cinema trade and civic fathers became particularly palpable during the 1920s. As mentioned above, this was a time when new regulations connected to the BBFC's 'A' certificate were successfully enforced in London and, consequently, applicable elsewhere in England and Wales. The conditions, which demanded that children had to be accompanied by a parent or guardian to 'A' certified films, were difficult to enforce in practice. As Sarah Smith gathered from a large number of oral history interviews, English and Welsh children developed numerous practices to dodge the 'A' rules, for example, by asking a stranger to

⁷⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 62.

⁷⁷ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918," 157.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁷⁹ Janet McBain, "Thomas Ormiston, the 'Father of the Quota Act' - overdue his place in film history?," *Early Cinema in Scotland* (blog entry), posted March 26 2014, accessed July 05, 2015, <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/thomas-ormiston-1/>.

escort them or by finding other ways to get into the cinema.⁸⁰ Given the difficulty in enforcing them and the different legal set up applicable in Scotland, the rules were simply ignored by licensing authorities and exhibitors north of the English border; it sufficed that films had been certified by the BBFC, the type of certificate it had received mattered less.⁸¹

In 1930, this distinctiveness was officially challenged in a parliamentary debate. In an attempt to unite censorship practices, Home Secretary John Robert Clynes had inserted the 'A' rules firmly in a redraft of the 1923 model conditions and urged local licensing authorities across Britain to adopt these under the 1909 Cinematograph Act. The respective circular was sent out in 1929 and advised local authorities to instruct cinema exhibitors to display the respective BBFC certificate before a film was shown and demanded that children under sixteen years of age were not admitted to films that had received an 'A'.⁸² On 25th March 1930, Conservative MP for Kelvingrove Glasgow, Walter Elliot, addressed the representative of the Scottish Office, Thomas Johnston (under-secretary to Scottish Secretary William Anderson and at the time often acting on his behalf), in the House of Commons, asking:

Whether his attention has been called to the fact that the Home Office issued a circular letter on 16th December, 1929, to licensing authorities with reference to the local censorship of films for children and young people; and whether it is his intention to issue a similar letter to licensing authorities in Scotland?⁸³

Like John Sinclair, Johnston was a supporter of administrative devolution and resolutely defended the Scottish legal framework, rebuffing Elliot's question with the words:

Notwithstanding decisions of the Courts in England that local authorities may attach to licences under the Cinematograph Act, 1909, conditions

⁸⁰ Sarah J. Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids*, Cinema and Society (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 61-73.

⁸¹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 80-82.

⁸² Ibid., 80.

⁸³ Cinematograph Films (Censorship), *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th Series (1909-80), Vol. 237, cc269-70, 25th March 1930, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1930/mar/25/cinematograph-films-censorship/column_270 accessed Sep 26th 2015]

other than "safety" conditions, I am advised that the Courts in Scotland would be unlikely to take the same view. In the circumstances I do not propose in the meantime to issue any circular to Scottish licensing authorities.⁸⁴

Even when alerted to the 'resolutions passed by several education authorities in Scotland with regard to the necessity of doing something in this matter', Johnston remained aloof and did not alter his stance.⁸⁵ The stern line Johnston took on this occasion signifies that cinema censorship had become tangled up in political tensions between advocates of centralisation and supporters of Scottish autonomy.

Scotland's disregard of the 'A' rules was symptomatic of the distinctiveness of the legal framework for film exhibition that had emerged there. The characteristic interpretation of the 1909 Cinematograph Act as a mere safety legislation supplementing pre-existing local laws meant that no condition could be attached to it that referred to social regulation. Furthermore, the relative closeness of trade and governing bodies meant that Scottish exhibitors were just as unwilling to adopt the new conditions as magistrates were unwilling to enforce them. Exhibitors maintained that it was impossible to determine for sure the age of the children and whether the accompanying adult was indeed a parent or guardian. Instead they were inclined to assume that children attending the cinema did so in agreement with their parents or guardians. Edinburgh magistrates echoed this view and added that the rule might, in fact, encourage children to gain admission to 'A' films.⁸⁶ In resisting the adoption of the 'A' film regulations, Scottish authorities and Scotland's cinema trade perpetuated a framework with only limited scope for the implementation of universal censorship practices and which diverted, thus, visibly from practices south of the border.⁸⁷

By the early 1930s, however, this approach had attracted increasing criticism from educationists and other pressure groups campaigning for tighter censorship rules for Scottish cinemas. One of the consequences of these

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 80-84.

⁸⁷ The next chapter will illustrate this discourse and scrutinize regulatory practices in Edinburgh and Glasgow in more depth.

campaigns was the 1933 *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, an investigation into the impact of cinema-going on children and young people in Scotland's capital that was significant enough to lead to a reconsideration of the issue by the Scottish Secretary of the time, Sir Godfrey Collins.⁸⁸ Taking office in 1932, he altered the approach set out by his predecessors and took the same stance as the Home Office by actively promoting the adoption of the model conditions mentioned above. Collins managed to keep the Scottish legal framework intact by pressing Scottish cinema exhibitors directly instead of addressing local licensing authorities. Nonetheless, Griffiths contends that 'progress was uneven' and the lack of statutory authority to control the content of cinema shows remained a problem until long after the Second World War.⁸⁹

For the period under consideration here, this chronology of events means that a discrepancy between Scottish and British legal practice existed throughout. While the regulation of the cinema space was fully covered by this dual legal structure, the narrow interpretation of the 1909 Act by the Scottish Office meant that it did not become an instrument to implement local censorship in Scotland. Consequently, this diversion from practices in England and Wales was central to the discourse on cinema regulation in Scotland during the early cinema period and beyond.

2.3. Conclusion:

If the early cinema period witnessed uncertainty 'over the means by which cinema was to be understood, defined and regulated', this situation was more pronounced and longer lasting in Scotland than in the rest of the UK.⁹⁰ This chapter has looked into the reasons for this discrepancy and defined more clearly the distinctive features of the legal and administrative framework for film exhibition in Scotland.

Principally, this framework differed from conditions south of the border in its interpretation of the 1909 Cinematograph Act as an accompaniment rather than a replacement of municipal police acts. The main reason for this approach lay in the

⁸⁸ For a discussion of its content see Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 91-93.

⁸⁹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 82. See also 81-85.

⁹⁰ Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 1.

existence of a separate legal tradition, reserved under the 1707 Act of Union, which fostered the persistence of strong municipal government structures as opposed to a centralised administrative system on the Scottish or the British national level. The validity of local practices of regulation was supported by the Scottish Secretary on a number of occasions.

The resistance to Home Office attempts to create a unified system of control for the whole of Britain originated in political tensions between central government and devolved institutions, transcending the realm of cinema regulation itself. It is important to bear in mind, however, that it was this tension that caused the discrepancies of the Scottish and the British legal system to endure throughout and well beyond the early cinema period. This produced a situation in which Scottish authorities, while able to regulate cinema space thoroughly, had only restricted control over film content. Thus, the consequences of the limited interpretation of the 1909 Act in Scotland became most visible in the realm of censorship, where Scotland fashioned an ostensibly more liberal approach than existed in England and Wales. Campaigns attacking noninterventionist practices occurred from time to time. These were largely local affairs that failed to achieve any significant changes to the overall regulatory structure during the period under consideration. But, as the following chapter will show, they had an impact at the municipal level and played an important part in defining the social function of early cinema in Scotland.

3. Regulating Cinema in Edinburgh and Glasgow

The current chapter will pick up the arguments developed in Chapter Two and exemplify the workings of the legal and administrative framework on two case studies - Edinburgh and Glasgow. Together with Aberdeen and Dundee, these two cities made up what has been referred to as the 'big four'.¹ Edinburgh and Glasgow were the prominent centres of Scotland's central belt, the country's most populated area.² This is also where most of the Scottish cinema exhibition trade was located. As Scotland's largest town, Glasgow boasted of eighty-five licensed cinema venues by 1914 and was the hub for the self-organisation of the trade.³ Only two months after the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association was formed in London in January 1912, the Glasgow and West of Scotland branch was inaugurated.⁴ Inhabited by a smaller population, but playing an important role as pacesetter for the regulation of cinemas in Scotland, Edinburgh had about forty-four cinema venues by 1917.

A comparison between the respective approaches taken by the two cities shows that regulatory practices in Scotland were partly defined by the boundaries of Scottish law and partially the result of local negotiations between governing bodies, trade organisations, interest groups as well as the public and the press. The relevant governing bodies were the local licencing authorities, in the case of Edinburgh and Glasgow represented by the town council's magistrates. Another important part was played by the local cinema trade. Its interests were mainly channelled through local branches of national organisations, most notably the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA), but were also furthered by cinema owners and exhibitors with strong connections to the local political elite. Some of them, such as the cinema

¹ T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000), 328.

² All demographical data, unless otherwise stated, refer to the Report on the Twelfth Census of Scotland available in digital format from the website *A Vision of Britain through Time*, accessed July 9, 2015, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/3/S1911POP.

³ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 126. Data on number of venues, unless otherwise stated, originates from Early Cinema in Scotland Database (venues table), accessed July 11, 2015, <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/>.

⁴ "Inaugural Meeting of Exhibitors' Association," *Bioscope*, 25, January 1912, 208-209; "Meeting of Glasgow Exhibitors: An Association to be formed," *Bioscope*, 22, February 1912, 515-516; "The Glasgow Exhibitors: Another enthusiastic meeting," *Bioscope*, 7, March 1912, 679-681.

owner and Glasgow magistrate James Welsh, were part of both worlds.⁵ Moreover, local education authorities and other juvenile organisations were agencies with a specific interest in cinema regulation. As the following pages will show, these groups were particularly concerned about the lack of control that was exercised in regard to the child audience in Scotland. Finally, the local press had some bearing on the respective discourse, with editors interpreting the situation according to their own affiliations. Owing to the Scottish framework for film exhibition fostering localised over universal control, it is necessary to examine the particular nuances in the local regulatory discourse in order to understand how cinema regulation worked in practice.

Out of the clusters of agencies just mentioned the most actively engaged in the discourse were organisations dealing with juveniles and the cinema trade itself. Licencing authorities were mostly caught in the middle, responding to and mediating between them. As one would expect, the interests these bodies held in cinema regulation stemmed from very different motives. Education Authorities, School Boards and youth organisations were campaigning for an increase in local control and displayed a desire to protect children from what they saw as a careless and indiscriminate cinema industry. Crucially, such views have to be seen in the context of competition. These agencies were up against a variety of new forms of leisure emerging at the end of the nineteenth century, including cinema-going.⁶ As Sarah Smith has argued in *Children, Cinema & Censorship*, cinema's popularity threatened the monopoly such agencies traditionally held over the entertainment, education and socialisation of children and young people.⁷ The cinema industry, on the other hand, relied to a great extent on the profit made from juvenile patrons. Terry Staples has shown that children made up a significant chunk of the British cinema audience.⁸ To keep these patrons coming, self-regulatory bodies strived to achieve coherent if not universal conditions of cinema-going. The CEA pursued this agenda by lobbying

⁵ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918", 271.

⁶ For a discussion of boys and young and new leisure activities see Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester; New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁷ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 7 and 77-105.

⁸ Ibid., Staples, *All Pals Together*. For quantitative data on the Scottish child audience see Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 72-73.

exhibitors to only show BBFC certified films. However, it could only try to impose this on members and, as Griffiths has noted, these were not always in agreement.⁹ Moreover, the implementation of such rules had to be negotiated with local licensing authorities and depended, therefore, on a favourable relationship with the magistrates. The two case studies presented here tease out these relationships and examine the rhetoric and strategies deployed by the different agencies to justify their campaigns for and against regulation.

Cinema's emergence as a cultural institution coincided with a shift in attitudes towards children and young people in Britain and elsewhere. Scholars of childhood argue that at the end of the nineteenth century, childhood and adolescence began to be recognised as separate phases that were significantly different from adulthood. During this period, the social and cultural environment was seen to play an important part in a person's socialisation. This in turn was thought to have repercussions on the health of a nation as a whole. The anxiety that some organisations expressed about juveniles frequenting places considered subversive or harmful has to be seen, thus, in a discursive context in which the child was at the same time an impressionable subject and a future citizen. As Smith and others have shown, the cinema as a cultural institution and the film as a visual medium were caught up in this discourse.¹⁰ This is not to say that cinema was the only leisure activity causing concern at the time; Italian ice-cream parlours and gaming machines attracted much of the same hostility.¹¹ But what differentiated the cinema from these pastimes was the presence of the film - a medium that displayed social behaviours that children might emulate in real life. Hence, campaigns to prevent children from seeing crime films were efforts to control their social behaviour and played a central part in the development and justification of cinema regulation, especially censorship. As Lee Grieveson has demonstrated for the United States and Paul Moore for Canada, this

⁹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 65.

¹⁰ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 8-11. See also Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain*, 88-125.

¹¹ That cinema was part of a larger discourse around 'corruptive' leisure activities came to my own attention when researching the case against a controversial cinema exhibitor in Perth, Scotland, who also happened to be the owner of an ice-cream shop and a local eccentric: Julia Bohlmann, "Perth's Triangle of Vice," *Early Cinema in Scotland* (blog entry), posted January 29, 2014, accessed September 26, 2015, <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/perths-triangle-of-vice/>.

discourse was significant in those countries, too, and not restricted to Britain.¹² The concept of the child as impressionable subject was also significant elsewhere. In Salvador and Romania, for instance, under-18s were banned from cinemas altogether and many other countries developed an age classification system for films, either overseen by a government department or by an independent body.¹³

In Britain and for most of the early cinema period, the distinction between child and adult audiences focused on physical safety, with cinema exhibitors obliged to adhere to certain safety measures under the 1908 Children's Act.¹⁴ According to this Act, the first to acknowledge that a child audience required different treatment,

Where an entertainment ... at which the majority of the persons attending are children is provided, and the number of children who attend the entertainment exceeds one hundred, and access to any part of the building in which children are accommodated is by stairs, it shall be the duty of the person who provides the entertainment to station ... a sufficient number of adult attendants, properly instructed as to their duties, to prevent more children or other persons being admitted to any such part of the building than that part can properly accommodate, and to control the movement of the children and other persons admitted to any such part whilst entering and leaving, and to take all other reasonable precautions for the safety of the children.¹⁵

As will be apparent below, the guarantee of physical safety through regulating the cinema space was an important facet of controlling the child audience. But often this guarantee was not sufficient differentiation in the eyes of education authorities and youth organisations. Ultimately, it was the social conditions and consequences of children's cinema-going rather than physical safety that concerned these organisations most and led to controversies, investigations and censorship campaigns.

¹² Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 13-17; Moore, *Now Playing*, 113-153.

¹³ International perspectives on children and cinema regulation to be found in Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 39-44. Other national histories of censorship are compiled in Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law* and Biltereyst and Winkel, *Silencing Cinema*.

¹⁴ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 73.

¹⁵ Children Act, 1908 (8 Edw. 7, c67), accessed October 4, 2015, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1908/67/pdfs/ukpga_19080067_en.pdf

3.1. Edinburgh

Edinburgh is unique compared to other Scottish towns. Whereas in other urban centres manufacturing industries thrived during the nineteenth century, the commercial focus of Scotland's capital remained largely on its traditional industries: brewing, printing, insurance provision and banking. The professional middle classes serving these were an important section of the city's population which was a little over 507,000 in 1911, comprising about 10% of Scotland's overall population of 4.7 million.¹⁶ Significantly, Edinburgh was Scotland's legal, religious and administrative centre with important institutions like the High Court of Scotland, Free Church College and parts of the Scottish Office permanently based there. Nonetheless, like other Scottish towns, Edinburgh was home to ordinary working men and women and faced many social issues related to overcrowding, slum housing and juvenile crime.¹⁷

It was in Edinburgh where Scots first encountered cinema. The country's first cinematograph show took place in the Empire Palace Theatre on Nicolson Street, on 13th April 1896 and was saluted as a 'scientific triumph' by the newspaper *The Scotsman*.¹⁸ Twenty years later, when Edinburgh had over forty venues showing films, cinema's initial scientific exclusivity had made way for an entertainment function with universal appeal. Like elsewhere, the child audience comprised a large section of the cinema audience. At a time of local controversy regarding cinema's potential to inspire juvenile crime in 1917, Edinburgh magistrates listed twelve cinema venues specifically catering to juveniles. These were spread over the town relatively evenly and included, for instance, the Operetta House in Chambers Street, part of Edinburgh's Old Town; the Central Picture House in Portobello; and the Picture House on Dalry Road, Haymarket - Edinburgh's oldest purpose-built cinema erected in 1912.¹⁹

¹⁶ All demographical data refer to the Report on the Twelfth Census of Scotland available in digital format from the website *A Vision of Britain through Time*, accessed July 9, 2015, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/3/S1911POP.

¹⁷ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 328-362. See also Morris, "Urbanisation and Scotland," in *People and Society in Scotland*, 73-103.

¹⁸ Quoted in Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 18.

¹⁹ Edinburgh Magistrates Full Minutes 1916-1922, June 11, 1917, GB 236 / SL 119/1/2/6, Edinburgh City Archive.

3.1.1. Children and the cinema space

Under the 1908 Children's Act local authorities were obliged to ensure the physical safety of children in places of public entertainment with a large seating capacity in order to prevent issues resulting from overcrowding and lack of supervision. Many venues offering cinematograph shows fell into this category, not all of them purpose-built cinemas. In Edinburgh, two venues came to the attention of the local authority due to overcrowding. In January 1912, the town clerk received a letter from councillor McArthy in regard to overcrowding in the Picture House on Princes Street, where children were seen to 'block the stairs and passages during performances'.²⁰ A year later a similar observation was made in the Operetta House on Chambers Street at Saturday matinees. This prompted the magistrates to set an age limit and to order a minimum of attendants to supervise the audience in cinemas. Accordingly,

[N]o child under ten years of age should be admitted to any entertainment in these premises unless accompanied by an adult and that at Matinees and on any occasion when the audience was mainly composed of children and to meet the requirements of Section 121 of the Children Act 1908, at least nine attendants should be stationed in the premises...²¹

The magistrate's minutes do not indicate whether Edinburgh exhibitors actually applied these rules.

Another issue arising at that time was that of children attending cinemas at night. In 1913, the local branch of the Educational Institute of Scotland and the Edinburgh School Board lobbied the town council to restrict children's cinema going in the evening. The main reason for this was the creation of a by-law in Glasgow to this effect during the same year.²² Glasgow educationists and teachers stating their case in the 1917 Cinema Commission found children's cinema attendance was detrimental to their performance and behaviour at school. They complained, for instance, that 'habitual frequenters of cinema theatres suffer physically in consequence of abnormal excitement and late hours' at the pictures.²³ It was also

²⁰ Edinburgh Magistrates Full Minutes 1909-1916, January 9 1912, GB 236 / 119/2/6, Edinburgh City Archives.

²¹ Ibid., June 30, 1913.

²² Ibid., December 19, 1913.

²³ National Council, *The Cinema*, lii.

held that children attended cinemas too often, too late at night, and stayed too long, a practice purportedly resulting in tiredness and mental strain, making children ‘difficult subjects for instruction.’²⁴ It is likely that Edinburgh teachers would have shared these concerns.²⁵ Edinburgh magistrates took a comparatively strict view and banned children under the age of twelve without accompanying parent or guardian from cinemas after 9 pm under the 1909 Cinematograph Act. Glasgow’s by-law applied to children under fourteen after 9:30 pm. In passing the laws, Edinburgh and Glasgow magistrates redrew the boundary of children’s being in the cinema space according to local judgement. The new rule conflated physical and social regulation significantly and so shifted the limits of the 1909 Act. Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the new rule was relatively ineffective in stopping children going to the cinema late at night; it merely passed the legal responsibility to the parents.

The cinema trade did not welcome the by-law. The Edinburgh branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors’ Association attacked it as impracticable due to the lack of certainty in determining the age of children and whether adults escorting them were legally in charge of them. As Griffiths writes, despite their role as official regulators, magistrates had to admit ‘the essentially discretionary nature’ of the legislation and simply asked the exhibitors to do their best in the circumstances.²⁶ This suggests the negotiable nature of local cinema regulation. Although Scottish magistrates were the only agency with the power to implement local laws, as elected officials they were caught in the middle of contradicting interests, organisations dealing with children on the one side and the local exhibition trade on the other. Hence, their actions were a political balance act intended to keep both on their side.

Though magistrates were the official arbiters of power, they were not the only pressure groups urging control of children’s cinema-going. Educational institutions also played an important role. One of their strategies was to lobby the licencing authority to enforce restrictions, but this was not the only one. Their desire for social control of cinema had a positive side, too, and the basis for that was the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For the view of Glasgow’s head teachers see section 3.2.2. below.

²⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 75-76.

recognition of the benefits of visual education through film. During the 1920s Edinburgh's Education Authority showed a remarkable interest in taking school children to the cinema within and outwith school hours.²⁷ Between 1919 and 1928 the Authority received a number of invitations from cinema exhibitors and civic organisations to attend cinema shows. These were opportunities for the Authority to exercise constructive control by deciding who would go to the cinema, to see what, and when. In February 1921, the manager of the King's Cinema in Home Street invited 'parties of school children, in charge of teachers, to the display of the official film of the Prince of Wales' Tour' (*50,000 Miles with the Prince of Wales*: Topical Film Company, 1920). The Authority allowed headmasters to accept the offer 'on the understanding that attendance is restricted to pupils of 10 years and over'.²⁸ On other occasions, the time of attendance was a cause for refusal or adjustment. In March 1925, the National Citizen's Union 'ask[ed] if the Education Authority would allow a good attendance of children at one or more exhibitions, in local cinema houses, of films of an educational nature'. The Authority refused this as the films were 'shown in the forenoon during the time the children should be at school'.²⁹ In January of the following year, the London Missionary Society's requested to show a film about India during the first week of March at three o'clock was accepted providing the time of the performance would be changed slightly:

it was agreed [by the committee on day schools and attendance] that the executive officer should communicate with the promoters with regard to the possibility of changing the hour of exhibition to 3.30 p.m. in place of 3 p.m. as proposed.³⁰

A number of times the Authority refused cinema attendance altogether. In October 1922, for example, the Authority was approached by the British Empire Educational Films offering to show films about New Zealand, Canada and South Africa; or in October 1928, when the Scottish Health League sought to show pupils a film about

²⁷ Scottish School Boards became Education Authorities under the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act.

²⁸ Edinburgh Education Authority Minutes 1921, February 09, 1921, 101, GB 236 / SL 163/1/3, Edinburgh City Archive.

²⁹ Edinburgh Education Authority Minutes 1925, March 10, 1925, 118, GB 236 / SL 163/1/7, Edinburgh City Archive.

³⁰ Edinburgh City Archive, GB 236 / SL 163/1/8 Edinburgh Education Authority Minutes 1926, 09th February 1926, 95-96.

dental care. Both offers were declined.³¹ Conclusively, while children were under the supervision of teachers, Edinburgh Education Authority was in a position to regulate pupil's cinema-going by making age restrictions and choices regarding the time of attendance, the type of film consumed as well as occasionally refusing attendance. Looking at the minutes of education authorities in Dundee and Glasgow, which do not mention any such actions, Edinburgh's Education Authority's strategies appear unique. Only further research into the activities of other Scottish authorities can tell whether similar strategies were adopted elsewhere.

3.1.2. Cinema, juvenile delinquency and the issue of censorship

One of the most discussed problems in relation to children's cinema-going was its perceived link with juvenile crime. As this issue is central to Chapter Four, it suffices here to say that children's desire to go to the cinema and the frequent consumption of crime films and Westerns was commonly suspected of leading to an increased risk of delinquency. This assumption was by no means restricted to Britain. Moore, for instance, has discussed the Canadian discourse around a local shooting accident involving two adolescent boys in Toronto in 1913. Their play fight was suspected of being inspired by Westerns the two had seen in the cinema.³² Grieveson reports parallel debates taking place in the United States, where in places like Chicago cinema was commonly regarded as nurturing a criminal underclass.³³ In Britain, the issue was discussed intensely during the First World War when many fathers were absent from home, apparently creating a vacuum of authority in which juvenile delinquency could thrive. The press discourse in Edinburgh reflected these broader debates by publishing a number of newspaper articles devoted to the issue: the *Scotsman's* 1916 piece "The Juvenile Criminal - Lack of Parental Control"; or the *Edinburgh Evening News's* article "Juvenile Crime in Edinburgh - 44 Children appear"; published five months later; or the *Evening Dispatch's* brazen headline "Cinemas and Crime" from January 1917.³⁴ To Edinburgh's civic leaders this problem was not new.

³¹ Edinburgh City Archive, GB 236 / SL 163/1/4, Edinburgh Education Authority Minutes 1922, 10th October 1922, 698; SL 163/1/10, Edinburgh Education Authority Minutes 1928, 09th October 1928, 748.

³² Moore, *Now Playing*, 121.

³³ Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 15.

³⁴ "The Juvenile Criminal: Lack of Parental Control," *Scotsman*, November 11, 1916, *The Scotsman (1921-1950)*, accessed October 4, 2015,

In 1915, Edinburgh School Board found that juvenile offences convicted in Edinburgh's Police and Sheriff Court had risen from 511 in Session 1904/05 to 710 in session 1914/15.³⁵ The Board subsequently formed a sub-committee to look into possible causes. In the committee's report, appearing the following year, the cinema was unequivocally suspected to be one of the causes. Accordingly, it recommended that the

Magistrates be asked to use their authority and influence with the holders of licences under the Cinematograph Act to prevent the exhibition of such pictures as may from their nature be likely to have an evil influence on the minds of children.³⁶

The magistrates' response to this call does not display the same urgency. They questioned the sub-committee's negative stance on cinemas and declared that they had 'no reason to believe' that objectionable pictures were exhibited in Edinburgh. In addition, the magistrates criticised the committee for failing to attach evidence of the local censorship practices carried out in England it had referred to in its letter and explained that they had received no such instructions from the Home Office. An attempt was made, nonetheless, to console the committee by promising to 'consider that an instruction might be issued to the licensees of Picture Houses'.³⁷ In response, the committee urged the magistrates to add the warning that 'the exhibition of films which were likely to have an evil influence ... would be dealt with under the provision of the Cinematograph Act, 1909'.³⁸ This, however, was ignored by the magistrates which is congruent with the broader legal framework. It was only a year after the Scottish Office had explicitly prohibited the use the Act as a censorship instrument. The magistrates, therefore, in June 1917 sent relatively vague instructions to cinema proprietors it had identified as catering to children:

<http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/488891426?accountid=14540>; "Juvenile Crime in Edinburgh - 44 Children Appear," *Edinburgh Evening News*, March 10, 1917; "Cinemas and Crime," *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, January, 10 1917.

³⁵ Edinburgh School Board Minutes 1915, December 13, 1915, 837, GB 236 / SL 28/2/39, Edinburgh City Archive.

³⁶ Edinburgh School Board Minutes 1916, May 8, 1916, 253, GB 236 / SL 28/2/40, Edinburgh City Archive.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, November 13, 1916, 580.

³⁸ Edinburgh School Board Minutes 1917, 12, February 1917, 82, GB 236/ SL 28/2/41, Edinburgh City Archive.

[I]n future they [the magistrates] will expect the licensees of Picture Houses, especially in cases where the entertainment is mainly frequented by children, to exercise particular care to ensure that no film will be shown which may be offensive to public feeling or injurious to morality or incite to crime or which may tend to have an evil influence on the minds of children.³⁹

Crucially, not all Edinburgh cinemas received the letter. It was addressed only to about a quarter of the city's picture houses:

The Star Picture House on St Mary Street; Palladium, East Fountainbridge; Operetta House, Chambers Street; Picturedrome, Easter Road; Pringles Picture Palace, Elm Row; The Salon, Baxter's Palace; Coliseum, Fountainbridge; Dean Picture House, Dean Street; Haymarket Picture House, Dalry Road; King's Cinema, Home Street; Tivoli Picture House, Gorgie Road; Bungalow, Bath Street, Portobello; Central Picture House, 281 High Street Portobello.⁴⁰

What this case illustrates is that, given the limiting regulatory framework outlined in Chapter Two, magistrates in Scotland found themselves in a position where they could intervene little in terms of actual censorship, but were, nevertheless, called upon by those who were anxious about the influence of cinema to use their powers to do exactly that. Like the 1913 By-Law, their instructions to the licensees of those twelve cinemas were a political balancing act rather than an intervention that had any practical consequences for exhibitors. Chapter Four contains more information on this particular case and discusses the role of Edinburgh's Chief Constable in mediating the perceived link between children's cinema-going habits and juvenile crime as witness for the 1917 Cinema Commission.

3.1.3. Self-regulation & censorship in practice

The type of control that seemed to be much more effective was self-regulation. Where the School Board had failed to effect any significant change in the regulatory framework, the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association succeeded a few years later. As outlined in the previous chapter, problems related to the exhibition of sexual health films threatened to undermine the trade's reputation as some exhibitors exploited the genre's sensational value regardless of BBFC recommendations. In

³⁹ Edinburgh Magistrates Full Minutes 1916-1922, June 11, 1917, GB 236 / SL 119/1/2/6, Edinburgh City Archive.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

order to discipline its members and to find some level of uniformity in terms of exhibition practices, the CEA started to lobby local licencing authorities to enforce the acceptance of the BBFC as a central censor at the beginning of the 1920s.

In April 1920, Edinburgh magistrates gave a pioneering example by being one of Scotland's first local authorities to try and implement the BBFC's status as central censor:

The Magistrates in virtue of the powers contained in Section 287 of the Edinburgh Municipal and Police Act 1879 made the following addition to the regulations and conditions referred to in Licences granted for places of public entertainment: That ... only Film shall be exhibited which have been passed by the British Board of Film Censors ... unless with the special permission of the Magistrates.⁴¹

This was a decree that contained the threat of legal repercussions for exhibitors not adhering to it. In accordance with the legal and administrative framework applicable in Scotland, the nineteenth-century Police Act was used to justify the condition, not the 1909 Cinematograph Act which had been used in England and Wales. In a meeting of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association in May 1920, it was proposed to write to all magistrates in Scotland to follow Edinburgh and Glasgow's example, (implying that Glasgow magistrates had already received an instruction).⁴² As mentioned earlier, the Greenock and Dundee branches disagreed and no letter was sent to the magistrates there.⁴³

Once Edinburgh magistrates had made the decision to enforce the recognition of the BBFC in their jurisdiction, they stuck to it. Over the eight years that followed, they largely disallowed the exhibition of uncertified films. Between 1920 and 1928 four applications were made by distributors to show such films in Edinburgh. Three of them were unanimously refused. Only one of these pictures was about sexual health *The Dangers of Ignorance* (1928) and, ironically, it was this film for which the magistrates granted an exemption.⁴⁴ The three applications refused regarded *Ghosts*

⁴¹ Edinburgh Magistrates Full Minutes 1916-1922, April 16, 1920, GB 236/ SL 119/2/7, Edinburgh City Archive.

⁴² "The Censorship Question," *Bioscope*, May 27, 1920, 81.

⁴³ In Dundee, the new rule was applied in 1929: Dundee Town Council Minutes, Police and Lighting Committee, February 11, 1929, 334, GB251/TC, Dundee City Archive.

⁴⁴ Edinburgh Magistrates Minutes, March 13, 1928, GB 236 SL 119/1/4, Edinburgh City Archive.

(Majestic Motion Picture company, 1915, rereleased in 1919), a film based on a play by Henrik Ibsen in which syphilis featured, for exhibition in Leith Synod Hall; *The King of Kings* (1927), a religious epic by DeMille Pictures Corporation; and the political drama *Dawn* (British and Dominions Film Corporation, 1928).⁴⁵ As none of the banned films was a crime film, Western or sexual health film, they represent screen depictions that were deemed 'distasteful' by the magistrates. There are no indications in the minutes of the discussions which led to the refusal of licences. However, in the case of *The King of Kings*, their decision might have been influenced by earlier criticism they received from the Free Church Presbytery in relation to the film *From the Manger to the Cross* (Kalem, 1910), which was shown without any restriction in Edinburgh over Christmas and New Year of 1912-13.⁴⁶ The refusal of licences in these cases suggests a certain inconsistency in the application of regulation, perhaps under the pressure of public opinion or reflecting precedents from other cities.

3.2. Glasgow

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Glasgow witnessed extreme industrialisation and urbanisation, attracting a large number of working people from other areas within Britain as well as immigrants from East and South Europe. Within just seventy years its population rose from 274,000 in 1831 to 761,000 in 1901, and this number grew to 784,000 over the following ten years.⁴⁷ As Tom Devine points out, 'in Glasgow ... the density per acre in 1911 was about twice that of Edinburgh and Dundee'.⁴⁸ The growth was accompanied by social problems, such as overcrowding, slum housing, the spread of disease, poverty, squalor, drunkenness. The city developed a range of diverse responses to these and became home to many

⁴⁵ Edinburgh Magistrates Full Minutes 1916-1922, June 28, 1920, GB 236 /SL 119/2/7,. *Ghosts* seems to have been rereleased by Exhibitors Film Exchange in 1919 and fitted not at all the category of 'propaganda' film. Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 66; Edinburgh Magistrates Scroll Minutes 1920-29, March 22, 1928, June 11, 1928, SL 119/1/3, Edinburgh City Archive.

⁴⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 60-61.

⁴⁷ All demographical data refer to the Report on the Twelfth Census of Scotland available in digital format from the website *A Vision of Britain through Time*, accessed July 9, 2015, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/3/S1911POP. See also Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 328.

⁴⁸ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 341.

temperance reformers, religious missionaries, and socialist politicians and, as mentioned in Chapter Two, expanded the municipal legal apparatus to increase the authority of the magistrates.⁴⁹

Glasgow was fruitful soil for the growth of mass entertainment in the form of the music hall, popular theatre, football and the cinema was no exception. During the early twentieth century, cinema exhibition was a continuously expanding industry, growing from eighty-five recorded venues in 1914 to over one hundred cinemas in 1917.⁵⁰ Finally, as mentioned earlier, the Scottish section of the CEA was founded in Glasgow, which made this manufacturing heartland also the centre of the Scottish cinema industry.

3.2.1. Children and the cinema space

In 1913, magistrates of the Corporation created a by-law under the 1909 Cinematograph Act to restrict, for their physical safety, the cinema attendance of children at night. The action was preceded by a report, in which the Glasgow Parish Council expressed alarm about children's cinema-going habits in the East End, the city's principal working class district. It was noted by the Council that even small children attended cinemas late at night without the supervision of a parent.⁵¹ Additionally, a letter was submitted by the theatre actress Olga Nethersole to the Lord Provost in which she makes the case for the 'censorship of cinematograph pictures'.⁵² In response, the magistrates formed a committee to solve the questions concerning the 'the public safety of cinematograph performances' although the

⁴⁹ Lindsay, *Review of Municipal Government in Glasgow*; Morris, "Urbanisation and Scotland," in *People and Society in Scotland*, 73-103; See also Irene Maver, *Glasgow, Town and City Histories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 113-203.

⁵⁰ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918," 126; National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema*, 350.

⁵¹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 72.

⁵² Glasgow Corporation Minutes Nov. 1912- Apr. 1913, Police department/ Magistrates, December 20, 1912, 384, GB243/ CI 3/48, Glasgow City Archive; Olga Nethersole founded The People's League of Health, 1917 and represented it upon the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland conferences 1930-, 31 and 32.: "Nethersole, Olga," in *Who Was Who* (London: A & C Black, 1920-2015); online ed., (Oxford: OUP, 2014); online ed., April 2014, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U241223>.

Parish Council and Nethersole unambiguously expressed worries about problems related to the social conditions of cinema-going.⁵³ The magistrates' careful choice of words indicates the contradictions of the broader legal framework, within which the Cinematograph Act was a physical safety measure and not the appropriate measure to regulate social conditions. The answer was to design a by-law that related to physical safety only and which would ensure that children's admission was confined to performances given during the day:

no child under 14 years shall, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, be permitted to be in premises licensed under the Cinematograph Act after 9:30 p.m.⁵⁴

The law was also intended to enforce better protection of this section of the audience from adults potentially preying on them during the day. So, it was demanded from cinema licensees that:

provision shall be made in such premises for separate seating accommodation for children under 14 years of age who are not accompanied by their parents or guardians [and] ... for the efficient lightening of such premises.⁵⁵

But in relation to censorship, the magistrates found that they were not in a position to take any action. Nethersole's request was discarded

in view of the provisions of the Glasgow Police Acts relative to public exhibition ... and to the fact that the British Board of Film Censors had been established.⁵⁶

While the 1913 conditions were meant to deal with the physical regulation of the child audience through restricting access, lighting and separation from adults, they clearly addressed social issues, most prominently parental neglect and child molestation.

The magistrates' intent to intervene with children's cinema-going in this way infuriated Glasgow's socialist press as it was seen as an attack on the working classes

⁵³ Glasgow Corporation Minutes Nov. 1912- Apr. 1913, December 20, 1912, 384, GB243/CI 3/48 , Glasgow City Archive.

⁵⁴ Ibid., April 10, 1913, 1226.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

and an attempt to control and infantilise them. The editors of the socialist paper *Forward*, founded by Labour Party representative Thomas Johnston, condemned the by-law in two strongly-worded articles from March 1913 where Glasgow magistrates were attacked as ‘social purity humbugs’.⁵⁷ As in Edinburgh, protest came also from local cinema exhibitors, who interrogated the magistrates on how they were to check the age of children or, indeed, that it was a parent that accompanied them, and finally how a division of the cinema audience shall be achieved in practice.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Glasgow’s 1913 by-law remained in place and was presented by Chief Constable J.V. Stevenson to the 1917 Cinema Commission.⁵⁹

3.2.2. Glasgow Education Authority and the issue of censorship

In 1922, five years after Edinburgh magistrates were urged by the School Board to censor films, Glasgow magistrates came under the same pressure from their Education Authority. But unlike in the Scottish capital, Glasgow educationists kept this pressure on considerably longer. Due to its intensity and persistence the Glasgow Education Authority’s censorship campaign offers a great insight into the motivations of the campaigners as well as the strategies adopted by the different parties involved to pursue or avoid local and national censorship. They show that there was a considerable demand to improve the regulation of children’s cinema-going in Scotland.

About a decade after Nethersole’s letter to the Lord Provost, the local censorship debate was rekindled by D.J. Mitchel Quin (a confessed cinema business shareholder) at a meeting of Glasgow Education Authority in April 1921. At a recent visit to the cinema, he had been offended to see ‘absolutely nude’ figures on the screen.⁶⁰ Fearing ‘the morality of the children was liable to be sapped and undermined by indiscriminate displays’, Mr. Quin complained to the magistrates, resulting in a withdrawal of this part of the film by ‘a particular cinema house’.⁶¹ He

⁵⁷ William Watt, “Social Purity Humbugs,” *Forward*, March 15, 1913 and “Podsnap’s Attack on the Pictures,” *Forward*, March 22, 1913.

⁵⁸ “Glasgow Magistrates and the Children,” *Bioscope*, April 17, 1913, 195-197. “Away up North: A few Notes from Scotland,” *Bioscope*, May 15, 1913, 487.

⁵⁹ National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema*, 350.

⁶⁰ “Glasgow Authority and Cinema Films,” *Glasgow Herald*, April 22, 1921.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

further recommended to request Glasgow Corporation to adopt a rigorous approach to censorship, ensuring

no moving picture ... be exhibited in any place under public control unless after such a picture has been seen and its exhibition permitted by a censor responsible to the Municipal or County Authority.⁶²

The Authority's concerns went beyond problems regarding film content. Another member, Mr M' Queen worried about cinema replacing education, stressing that it had a negative 'effect ... on the attendance at the evening continuation classes'.⁶³

Between 1921 and 1924, Glasgow Education Authority sent several requests and deputations to the town magistrates and met with cinema trade representatives to discuss their censorship proposals. The first deputation was received by the magistrates in October 1921. Charles Cleland, chairman of Glasgow's Education Authority at the time, was the principal speaker. As would be promised frequently over the coming years, the magistrates promised to consider the matter 'carefully'.⁶⁴

The other point of view the magistrates had to weigh up was that of the local exhibition trade. In an attempt to sway opinions, exhibitors lobbied magistrates and spoke directly to the Education Authority and its allies. For instance, chair of the Scottish Cinema Exhibitors Association and son of the J.J. Bennell, Ritson Bennell, met the Juvenile Organisations Committee of Edinburgh in October 1922. There, he stated that 'every section of the trade was opposed to local censorship' because it was 'utterly impracticable'. Instead he and his colleagues favoured the acknowledgement of the BBFC as official censor by the Home Office. According to Bennell, this could be done by incorporating into the 1909 Cinematograph Act 'a clause making it illegal to exhibit any film that had not received the Board's certificate'.⁶⁵ In Glasgow likewise, the trade urged Juvenile Organisations and the Education Authority to give up their campaign for local censorship and nearly brought

⁶² Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1921-22, May 5, 1921, 104-5, GB243 DED 1/1/3, Glasgow City Archive.

⁶³ "Glasgow Authority and Cinema Films," *Glasgow Herald*, April 22, 1921.

⁶⁴ "Glasgow Magistrates and Film Censorship," *Glasgow Herald*, October 26, 1921. *Who Was Who 1920-2014*, "Cleland, Charles," *Who Was Who* (London: A & C Black, 1920-2015); online ed., (Oxford: OUP, 2014); online ed., April 2014, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U223847>.

⁶⁵ "Bennell on Impracticability of Censorship," *Glasgow Herald*, October 18, 1922.

it to a halt. In 1923 at a meeting of the Authority with the Glasgow Central Juvenile Advisory Committee, Mr. Quin had become very pessimistic, arguing ‘that those opposed to public control of the cinema in Glasgow were in power in Glasgow Corporation’.⁶⁶ He was not far off the mark as cinema-owning magistrates were around at the time, such as James Welsh, owner of the Alexandra Parade Cinema.⁶⁷ Others, like Reverend Alexander Hay, were angered by the apathy of local politicians and ‘did not like to be beaten by vested interests’.⁶⁸ As a result, the two organisations decided to approach Glasgow Corporation again.

The Education Authority itself was not free of outside interests. Between 1922 and 1928, the most active years of the censorship campaign, the Authority was composed of about nineteen clergymen and twenty-three ordinary members.⁶⁹ Although the minutes do not reveal what Christian denominations were represented in the committee, their presence indicates that religious leaders had a special interest in cinema censorship, in connection with the education and socialisation of children. Significantly, this suggests the role of the Church in the regulation of cinema. While Kevin Rockett is able to identify much censorship in post-independence Ireland with the Catholic Church, in Scotland, the Church was significant not as an agent of censoring or controlling the social function of cinema, but as an opinion-former. It gave articulation to many of the anxieties about commercial entertainment, and was significant, through the energies of individual parish ministers in some local areas in giving an articulate voice to what was deemed to be the silent concern or hostility of parishioners. It was also influential in providing a large educated clergy who were well qualified to serve on civic committees and who regarded this as a professional and civic obligation.

The press represented another cluster of agencies with specific affiliations. The daily newspaper, *Glasgow Herald*, associated itself with the local business and

⁶⁶ “Local Film Censorship,” *Glasgow Herald*, December 14, 1923.

⁶⁷ Vélez-Serna, “Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918,” 271.

⁶⁸ “Local Film Censorship,” *Glasgow Herald*, December 14, 1923.

⁶⁹ Education Authority Minutes 1922-1923, March 30, 1922, GB243/ DED 1/1/4, Glasgow City Archives. Between 1925 and 1928 only slightly different composition: 18 reverends and 24 other members, Education Authority Minutes 1925-1926, March 26, 1926, DED 1/1/7, Glasgow City Archives.

professional classes.⁷⁰ When the editors discussed the call for a local censor in a lengthy article in December 1923, they made a strong case against such a system. The city's juvenile organisations and Education Authority are represented as advocating local censorship which would override the decisions of the British Board of Film Censors, a body they felt failed to represent 'national interest'. The Magistrates, on the other hand, doubted that a local substitute for the BBFC would be any 'more satisfactory or efficient' than the present system. In their view it was sufficient that licensees of picture houses committed themselves to only showing certified pictures. The *Herald's* editors supported this view, arguing that if the Corporation were to appoint 'a more experienced, capable and honest official than Mr. O'Connor', local censorship would become very expensive for the public purse.⁷¹ The article highlights the unfair competition Glasgow exhibitors would have to enter with exhibitors from less regulated authorities. The editors' preference for central over local censorship is even more obvious in a related piece where they argue for the 'conversion of the present board of film censorship into a legal and official body, endowed with similar powers to those which are exercised by the Lord Chamberlain with regard to stage plays'. Instead of Scottish town councils becoming 'declared enemies' of the cinema as they had been of 'play-acting, pageantry, music, dancing, and, in fact, all forms of public enjoyment' for centuries, a 'nation-wide' recognition of the BBFC would be more in line with 'British notions of freedom'.⁷² Thus, the *Glasgow Herald* mirrored the CEA's support of the BBFC.

During the following few years, the Glasgow Education Authority endorsed an increasingly interventionist and idiosyncratic agenda. In 1925, four years after initial proposals, the Authority renewed its efforts by sending attendance officers to cinemas, asking them to draw up a report to present to the Corporation. Their report criticised the casual depiction of 'intrigue, deception, drinking, free use of firearms, disregard for law, murder ... and the inevitable love-making' in most pictures they

⁷⁰ Irene Maver, "Books and Newspapers," *The Glasgow Story*, accessed July 12, 2015 <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/story/?id=TGSEB02>; See also Alistair Phillips, *Glasgow's 'Herald': Two Hundred Years of a Newspaper, 1783-1983* (Glasgow: R. Drew Publishing, 1982).

⁷¹ "The Cinema - Question of Censorship - Glasgow Opinion, *Glasgow Herald*," December 19, 1923.

⁷² "Municipalities and Theatres," *Glasgow Herald*, December 19, 1923.

had and a local censorship system was urgently recommended.⁷³ A proposal was drawn up that, for the first time, was not just about juveniles but did away with the distinction between the adult and child audience as it demanded the ban of certain films for all:

a joint committee of Town Council and Education Authority should appoint a board of two or three members, who should classify films to be shown in the city as (1) suitable for both adults and children; (2) suitable for adults only; and (3) unsuitable for either.⁷⁴

Concerns were not confined to the film text. Headmasters, in particular, were equally alarmed about the presence of children at late evening performances in ‘the cheaper class of picture houses’, suggesting that, although legislation to prevent this practice was in place it was ineffective. The authors of the proposal demanded that ‘the present practice of catering for school children immediately after school’ be banned as it was ‘bad for their physical well-being’.⁷⁵ Unsurprisingly, the magistrates rejected this extreme version of control. The proposal itself is telling, however, as it suggests that the headmasters and other school teachers perceived the rise of cinema-going among school children as a practice that, indeed, undermined educational efforts and social control, especially in the underprivileged areas of the town. The inclusion of adults into the new censorship proposal demonstrates that the Association’s intention went beyond regulating children and indicates a more general aversion to the distasteful elements of cinema. Perhaps it was this profound distaste that fuelled the Authority’s next action - to petition the Home Office to install ‘a real Censor’.⁷⁶

The eccentric proposal may suggest that the Authority was isolated in its censorship campaigns and, as an agency infiltrated by clergy that it was out of touch with broader secular debates and sentiments. This was not the case. On the contrary, the Authority received support from a variety of agencies, especially when it prepared to petition the central governments of Scotland and the UK. In alliance with the Glasgow Juvenile Advisory Committee the Home Office was urged to instate

⁷³ “Local Censors Wanted,” *Glasgow Herald*, May 16, 1925.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1926-27, December 23, 1926, 534-5, GB 243/ DED 1/1/8, Glasgow City Archive.

a censor 'to deal with all the films exhibited in the picture houses of the Kingdom' in the winter of 1926.⁷⁷ The petition had the additional support of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, the United Free Presbytery as well as nine other organisations:

(1) Glasgow Y.M.C.A.; (2) Scottish Sunday School Union for Christian Education (Glasgow Western Branch); (3) The Glasgow Guildry (Glasgow Centre); (4) The Girl Guides (Glasgow); (5) The Glasgow Council of Juvenile Organisations; (6) The Glasgow Society for Equal Citizenship and Glasgow Women Citizens' Association; (7) The Independent Order of Rechabites (Glasgow District No. 40);, (8) The Girls' Life Brigade (Glasgow Battalion); (9) Cowlares Ward Committee.⁷⁸

This shows that the Glasgow censorship campaign had reached a wide supporting constituency, uniting organisations that had traditionally been in charge of educating juveniles in social and religious values. It is likely that they shared, as Smith suggests, the fear that the popularity of cinema threatened to undermine their influence on children and young people.

Despite its critical stance towards cinema, Glasgow Education Authority reached out to the trade itself. Picking up the trade's preference of a unified censorship system, the Authority tried to sell the idea of a state censor to the Scottish section of the CEA. When Charles Cleland invited the Association to confer with the Education Authority this attempt proved futile. In January 1927, Ritson Bennell led a delegation from CEA and the Kinematograph Renter's Society, stating that both were 'definitely opposed to a national censorship'.⁷⁹ A decade on from his father's expression of support for a state censor, Ritson Bennell represented a new generation of Scottish exhibitors who no longer questioned the status of the BBFC but endorsed it.

In a last attempt to realise its ambition despite this set back, the Education Authority sent a deputation 'to wait upon the Secretary of State for Scotland ... to

⁷⁷ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1925-26, February 25, 1926, GB 243/ DED 1/1/7, 721 Glasgow City Archive.

⁷⁸ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1926-27, December 23, 1926, 534-5, GB 243/ DED 1/1/8, Glasgow City Archive.

⁷⁹ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1926-27, January 25, 1927, 589, GB 243/ DED 1/1/8, Glasgow City Archive.

press the aforementioned resolution on the Government', in March 1927.⁸⁰ Significantly, this deputation was supported by no less than seven other organisations in addition to the bodies named above. These included, for example, the Boy Scouts Association and the National Vigilance Association for Scotland.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the efforts of the Authority and its allies were finally crushed when the Scottish Secretary and Home Office declined the proposal in April 1927.⁸² The reasons for the Home Office declining at this stage are consistent with the larger UK framework. By 1927, a relatively robust system of censorship had been pioneered in London and was emulated in the rest of England and Wales. This was not the case in Scotland, however, and the question remained a recurrent one for the Scottish Office.

The persistence of Glasgow Education Authority's campaign for censorship can be explained in the context of the development of the larger regulatory framework in Scotland. To members of the Education Authority and other juvenile organisations aware of censorship practices developing south of the border, such as the display of the respective BBFC certificate outside of cinemas and before screenings as well as rules to limit the access of children to 'A' certified films, the absence of such control mechanisms in Scotland must have seemed incongruous and irritating.

Despite the Authority's defeat, its efforts to control film content continued. Applying a more constructive strategy than the restrictive strategies that had failed, during the late 1920s and early 1930s Charles Cleland and other teaching staff established societies to promote non-commercial forms of cinema, such as the Scottish Educational Film Society and later the Scottish Film Council. Glasgow educationists also pioneered an experiment to test the utility of educational films as a teaching aid in schools, a topic discussed in Chapter Five.

3.2.3. Self-regulation & censorship in practice

As in Edinburgh, the pursuit of self-regulation by the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association was more successful than campaigns by the local Education Authority and

⁸⁰ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1926-27, 17 March 1927, 722-723, GB 243/ DED 1/1/8, Glasgow City Archive.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "The Films - Question of Censorship," *Glasgow Herald*, 12, April 1927.

its allies. Eager to follow in Edinburgh's example, Glasgow magistrates recognised the status of the British Board of Film Censors in response to pressure from the CEA in the spring of 1920. But Glasgow magistrates were not as consistent in their application of the guidelines as their colleagues in the East and occasionally allowed the exhibition of an uncertified film. Only two months after the new condition was demanded under the 1892 Further Powers Act, *The Bioscope* was bewildered that an exhibition of an uncensored 'morality' film was planned to take place in the Kelvin Hall, a venue owned by the Corporation.⁸³ Likewise, Herbert Wilcox's *Dawn*, dramatising the life of a British female spy during the First World War, was refused twice by Edinburgh magistrates while Glasgow Corporation sanctioned its screening at once.⁸⁴ In principle Glasgow magistrates agreed with their Edinburgh colleagues in accepting the status of the BBFC as censors, but the way this principle was executed differed in practice. While Edinburgh magistrates generally opted for a ban of all uncertified films, their Glasgow colleagues regarded the BBFC classifications as 'advisory' and were not opposed in practice to the exhibition of all such films, deciding on showings on a case by case basis.

3.3. Conclusion

Comparing the viewpoints and strategies of different agencies in negotiating the regulation of cinemas in Edinburgh and Glasgow shows how the legal and administrative framework played out in relation to local practices.

Regulation occurred on three levels. First, the space of cinema and the presence of the child audience in that space were subject to local control. The three main issues targeted by specific measures were overcrowding, lack of supervision and attendance of children at evening performances. Both licensing authorities passed by-laws to deal with these during the early 1910s. Despite efforts to mask these regulations as physical safety measures, the laws nevertheless regulated the social conditions of cinema-going for children and juveniles. As such the 1913 By-Law was

⁸³ "Uncensored Films," *Bioscope*, June 17, 1920, 107.

⁸⁴ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 67.

perceived by the socialist press as an intervention to control working-class adults and children.

Second, in both cities the magistrates were pressed by the respective Education Authority and other juvenile organisations to censor films. The debates again centred on the child audience and, particularly in Edinburgh, on a perceived link between cinema-going and juvenile crime. As apparent in the Glasgow case, at times the organisations overstepped the mark and called for certain 'distasteful' films to be censored for all. The Glasgow campaign was more intense, longer-lasting and received widespread support. It is likely that this was due to the fact that the Scottish censorship model did not, in the first instance, recognise the BBFC's 'A' certificate. In neither Edinburgh nor Glasgow did the magistrates respond to the campaigns by issuing specific rules or regulations. Their inactivity was consistent with the Scottish legal framework and perhaps indicated an alignment of the magistrates with the interests of the cinema exhibition trade. For exhibitors, censorship based on local sentiment would have meant a great deal of uncertainty and a centralised system was the favoured option. During the 1910s, this included a central state censor. As the standing of the BBFC had improved much during the 1920s, it received the increasing support of central and local authorities as well as the cinema trade itself.

Third, self-regulatory strategies developed most prominently by the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association achieved effective results in Edinburgh and Glasgow where membership of the CEA was high. In response to calls by the Association, the official acknowledgement of the BBFC happened almost simultaneously in Scotland's two main cities. However, although magistrates in both cities agreed in principle about the necessity to restrict film exhibition to BBFC certified films, Glasgow magistrates exercised more discretion than their Edinburgh counterparts. This and the fact that other towns (where, perhaps, membership of the CEA was much lower) did not acknowledge the BBFC until much later, confirm the discretion Scottish licensing authorities possessed in this matter.

Campaigns to implement a more effective censorship system for Scotland and the whole of Britain did not end during the 1920s but continued with even more vigour during the 1930s. This suggests that the problem, especially in relation to children's cinema-going, was far from being sufficiently addressed during the early period. In Scotland, the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s witnessed the

emergence of more progressive strategies to regulate this section of the audience. A glimpse of the future could be caught in the activities of Edinburgh's Education Authority during the 1920s. Instead of promoting censorship, the Authority sanctioned visits of school children to educational cinema shows and exercised control by selecting who would go, when, and what would be seen. Similarly positive strategies developed in the 1930s and concentrated on the provision of an alternative to the commercial cinematic diet by promoting the production, distribution and exhibition of educational films in schools. Particularly interesting in this respect are, once more, the activities of Glasgow's Education Authority.

PART II

ASSESSING THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF CINEMA

4. The 1917 Cinema Commission: The State and Possibilities of Cinema

This part of the thesis centres on the assessment of cinema's social impact by a British organisation that claimed to be independent from governing institutions as well as from the cinema industry. The National Council of Public Morals constituted two investigations which were symptomatic of the broader national discourse around cinema - the 1917 Cinema Commission of Inquiry and the follow-up 1925 Commission. The objective here is to read their reports from a Scottish perspective by linking them to local debates.

As the first UK-wide attempt to capture and examine the social impact of cinema, the 1917 Cinema Commission is a comprehensive account particularly well suited to illustrate some of the key arguments of the thesis. It contains an important testimony from Edinburgh's Chief Constable on the problem of cinema and juvenile delinquency. This testimony will be discussed in some detail to tease out the connection between local connotations specific to Scotland and the wider context. Some of the previous sections have already alluded to the educational benefit of film as a visual medium, an aspect that also played an important part in designating cinema's social role. This potential was discussed in the 1917 Cinema Commission. An essential function of this chapter is to elucidate the connection between debates around film's potential to inspire juvenile crime and arguments about its benefits as an instructional medium. As will become apparent, at the centre of both debates was the idea of the child as an impressionable subject, who, depending on the type of film that was shown, could be corrupted or edified by its encounters with the cinema screen.

My first argument is that the 1917 Cinema Commission represents a particular discourse that centred on cinema as a social problem. In the first place, the British framework for film exhibition, with its emphasis on localised control, was unsatisfactory to certain sections of the public, culminating in Home Office proposals to establish a state censor in 1916. The Commission was therefore a response to public opinion and public concern. Secondly, the cinema trade itself was keen to support the Cinema Commission because it sought to (re-)establish its reputation as a credible and respectable industry providing entertainment for the masses. Thirdly, the Cinema Commission was itself invested with progressive reform interests. The

Cinema Commission came into existence not only due to anxiety regarding cinema's negative impact on society and the trade's aim to gain respectability. The National Council of Public Morals itself was interested in the development of cinemas as a tool for instruction and propaganda. Finally, the Commission explicitly addresses the issue of cinema and juvenile crime, particularly through the contribution by Edinburgh's Chief Constable, which is consonant with the overall aim of the Commission to dispel unjustified allegations against the cinema, but is sometimes dissonant with local debates and public opinion.

The reformist National Council of Public Morals was intrigued by the potential of cinema as a communicative tool and constituted the Cinema Commission in 1916. A few film historians have produced readings of the Commission's report. Jeffrey Richards, for example, discussed it in relation to the many inquiries undertaken in the 1930s to investigate cinema's impact on the young. He found that, although many more surveys of this kind were embarked on then, the 1917 inquiry had already identified the three main concerns:

[T]he link between the cinema and juvenile crime, the effect on behaviour and attitudes and the physical effects of cinema-going.¹

Beaven placed the Commission within the broader discourse on young males' leisure activities. The question was whether cinema or other leisure activities, such as football and street cycling, fostered or hindered the nurture of young boys into engaged citizens for the British Empire. He claimed that while anxiety about juvenile leisure activities was nothing new at the beginning of the twentieth century, fears deepened due to changes in work patterns related to industrialisation and urbanisation.² Terry Staples utilised the same primary source to tell the *Story of Children's Cinema* from an audience perspective, using large extracts of interviews with children undertaken by the Commission. He found that the analysis of children's views and statistical evidence taken together, ironically, testified that a great proportion of children 'never went to a cinema at all', deeming contemporary worries unjustified.³ Staples, moreover, argued that the following four key themes

¹ Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939*, Cinema and Society (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984), 79.

² Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain*, 100-119, see also 156-158.

³ Staples, *All Pals Together*, 18.

determined the discourse about children's cinema since its beginning: 'exploitation, corruption, edification and diversion', the middle two figuring greatly in the 1917 Commission.⁴ More recently, Paul Moody contrasted the 1917 Cinema Commission with contemporary police papers of London City Council. He argued that the papers show that prostitution and molestation of children were serious and often ignored problems and that the issue was downplayed by the Cinema Exhibitors Association in their testimony to the Commission.⁵ While the problem of indecency in the cinema was a noticeable part of the early cinema discourse, this chapter centres on the discussion of the impact of watching films on children and young people as registered in the Commission's report and ancillary documents.

4.1. The Historical Background of the Commission

As indicated in section 2.1., the 1909 Cinematograph Act was utilised by some English licensing authorities to ban films, which meant that censorship practices were erratic and localised. The cinema trade formed the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association and the British Board of Film Censors in 1912 to create a more unified system, but the censor struggled to find widespread acceptance during the early 1910s. This caused an unsustainable state of affairs and dissatisfaction with it intensified over the following few years.

Moreover, social problems associated with cinema-going in its early years seemed to be exacerbated during the First World War. The absence of many fathers, who had been recruited as soldiers, and mothers, who replaced them in the workplace, was associated with the progressively boisterous behaviour of young people and a statistical rise in juvenile delinquency. Without the unity of the family home, children were thought to be particularly exposed to immoral and potentially harmful influences. An article on "Juvenile Crime" in *The Times* from May 1916 is representative of this fearful position. The article refers to a circular that had been issued by the Home Office to clerks of justices stating that 'the total number of children and young persons charged with punishable offences has grown from 2686 to

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Paul Moody, "'Improper Practices'," in *British Silent Cinema*, 49-63, especially 59.

3596' between December 1914 to February 1916 in seventeen large British towns.⁶ The association with the cinema followed foot immediately: Home Secretary Herbert Samuel stressed, that most of the chief constables

represented that children are led to commit offences by witnessing cinematograph films depicting crimes, the use of firearms, & c, and that children often steal money in order to obtain admission to cinemas.⁷

The lack of parental control and guidance in boys clubs due to war conditions as well as the lure of gaming machines were acknowledged as factors contributing to the problem; the cinema, however, was the main target in this article.

Accordingly, the article closed by referring to a 'resolution in favour of a central Government censorship of cinema films' adopted by the chief constables of England and Wales at a recent conference.⁸ The problem of rising juvenile criminality was represented along similar lines in a *Scotsman* article entitled "The Juvenile Criminal" in November 1916. It concerned itself mainly with the problem in Edinburgh where thieves were said to organise themselves into gangs with telling names inspired by popular crime film serials, such as 'the Black Hand gang' or 'The Clutching Hand gang'.⁹ Social workers in contact with children claimed that picture shows offered a dual motive for the juvenile thief:

the creation of the desire to attend the picture shows and the suggestion in the film of means by which the necessary money might be obtained.¹⁰

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the anxiety about cinema and the negativity of some commentators was by no means universal, and did not diminish its popularity or persuade the general public that it was a malign force. The author of the article himself expressed a neutral attitude:

⁶ "Juvenile Crime," *Times*, May 13, 1916, *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=glauni&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS51578541&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "The Juvenile Criminal: Lack of Parental Control," *Scotsman*, November 11, 1916, *The Scotsman (1921-1950)*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/488891426?accountid=14540>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The cinematograph has been much indicted in regard to juvenile crime. In some respects it has been over-abused and certain of its critics have perhaps protested too much.¹¹

What this suggests is that more balanced and even optimistic positions existed that ran counter to anxious attitudes and newspaper reports emphasising cinema's potential to breed juvenile delinquents.

The discourse on early cinema's potential negative effects reached new heights when Samuel took several steps to introduce state censorship between May and October 1916. Sections of the cinema trade, especially the CEA, were dissatisfied with the proposal due to the Home Secretary's unwillingness to pass new legislation, the only way to diminish the power of local licensing authorities. This meant that the state censor would not be in a better position than the BBFC to centralise the system and standardise conditions for film exhibitors. Like the 'voluntary' censor, the quasi-official censor would have to negotiate its recommendations with licensing authorities and had no legal power to override decisions taken locally. As this spelled state intervention without the benefit of economic predictability, the cinema trade started a counter-campaign during the second half of 1916.¹² Some articles published in the trade paper *The Bioscope* discussed the issue, reflecting the unsettled mood that existed among exhibitors with telling titles such as "The Wolves Are Upon Us", "Mr. Samuel after a Bad Bargain" or, indeed, "The Fight against Censorship".¹³ In an accompanying effort to raise the profile of the picture house, the Cinematograph Trade Council (representing the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, the Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers and the Kinematograph Renters' Association) approached the National Council of Public Morals to conduct an investigation into the social impact of cinema, especially on children and young people, which resulted in the founding of the Cinema Commission.¹⁴

The National Council of Public Morals (hereafter NCPM) was founded by Reverend James Marchant, a Presbyterian minister from London, who in his early

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, 42-43.

¹³ "The 'Wolves' are upon us," *The Bioscope*, October 11, 1916, 118; "The Fight against Censorship," *The Bioscope*, October 19, 1916, 262A-262G; "Mr. Samuel after a bad bargain," *The Bioscope*, October 26, 1916, 334-335.

¹⁴ National Council, *The Cinema*, vii.

career was an active social worker and writer. Born in 1867, Marchant acted as minister of several Presbyterian churches between 1895 and 1903.¹⁵ Before Marchant set up the NCPM in 1911, of which he acted as secretary until his death in 1956, he led the National Vigilance Society (NVS) with William Coote from 1901 to 1904.¹⁶ Already during his employment at the NVS, Marchant used films and lantern slides to support his campaigns for chastity.¹⁷ Likewise, the Bishop of Birmingham, Henry Russell Wakefield, who acted as the president of the NCPM and the Cinema Commission, was not opposed to popular entertainment as such. He endorsed popular culture and promoted 'the keeping open of theatres and music halls for the encouragement of civilian morale' during the First World War.¹⁸ Marchant and Wakefield were exemplary of a new type of religiously inspired reformer, who was forward looking and interested in social problems and opportunities arising from living in a modern society. During the first decades of the twentieth century they joined the ranks of many other reformers whose preoccupations had shifted from staunchly religious efforts to curtail prostitution and promote chastity, to campaigns focussing on secular issues like heredity, population decline, social hygiene and birth control. Its leaders were aware of cinema's potential to uplift and educate the public and, hence, drawn to investigating cinema more closely when the opportunity arose in 1916.

The Cinema Commission was headed by Marchant and Bishop Wakefield but as a whole turned out to be a diversely motivated body. It brought together four different factions of people interested in cinema, the NCPM itself being one of them. Secondly, the cinema trade itself, especially the CEA (represented by A. E. Newbould and W. Gavazzi King) and T.P. O'Connor, President of the BBFC, were present on the Commission, their motive to raise the industry's image. Thirdly, educationists had a

¹⁵ "James Marchant," in *Who Was Who*, Vol. 5: A Companion to Who's Who Containing the Biographies of Those Who Died During the Decade 1951-1960: 1951-60, 3rd Revised edn. (London: A & C Black Publishers Ltd, 1967), 731.

¹⁶ Bristow, Edward J. *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 142-143; Hunt, Alan. *Governing Morals: a Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 176-185.

¹⁷ Hunt, *Governing Morals*, 176-177.

¹⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Wakefield, Henry Russell (1854-1933)," by Stephen G. Parker, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70369>.

stake in cinema, showing an interest in developing it for the dissemination and memorisation of knowledge. One in particular stands out: Charles Williams Kimmins, child psychologist and Chief Inspector of London City Council's Education Committee.¹⁹ Next to Marchant and the Bishop, Kimmins would become a prominent promoter of educational cinema during the 1920s and 1930s and was behind the follow-up Commission on *Cinema in Education*, published in 1925. Additionally, agencies more generally interested in child welfare, for example, the Child Study Society and the Ragged School Union formed a fourth group. Interestingly, two famous personalities devoted their names and their time as cinema commissioners: General Lt. Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, and Marie Stopes, author of birth control tract *Married Love* (which was later adapted for the screen).²⁰

The list of witnesses corresponds to this diversity of interests. To begin with, some commissioners were additionally questioned as witnesses: for instance, O' Connor, Newbould and King, and eleven other people associated with the cinema trade, signifying the considerable proportion of influence the trade had on the Commission.²¹ The section of the cinema audience the 1917 Cinema Commission was mainly concerned with, school children (in groups of two or three at a time), appeared on the witness list, too. Certain specialists, such as an ophthalmic surgeon, a lighting engineer and a hygienist were called to testify on the effects of cinema shows. Representatives of the police and judicial bodies were invited to attend the proceedings and give evidence, as were church leaders and organisers of religious groups like the Young Men's Christian Association, which had some experience with cinema in religious education.

While the witnesses tended towards a positive bias, there were several personalities among the witnesses who opposed cinema. One such was the well-known headmaster of Eton, Edward Lyttleton, who had published at length about the cinema. Miss Margery Fox from the Headmistresses' Union and Sir Robert Wallace,

¹⁹ Kimmins was interested in the 'therapeutic effect of child laughter' and together with his wife Grace Thyrza, took care of disabled children: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Kimmins, Dame Grace Thyrza (1870-1954)," by Seth Koven, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34315>.

²⁰ National Council, *The Cinema*, viii-ix.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

chairman of County of London Sessions, were likewise critical towards the cinema.²² There was at least one cinema opponent who decided that the Cinema Commission was not a suitable platform for the expression of his opinion. Temperance reformer Frederick Charrington declined because the Cinema Commission was unrecognised by the Home Office and could not assume legal authority to enforce the attendance of witnesses and the disclosure of information.²³

4.2. The Report

The Commission invited and heard witnesses until June and published its final report in October 1917. The report is divided into several parts, each relating to different aspects of cinema such as its quality as a social space, film content and censorship, and finally film as an educational tool.

4.2.1. Cinema as Social Space

The first charge against the picture house referred to indecent conduct including solicitation and molestation to which the darkness of the theatre halls allegedly gave ample opportunity. Incidents were presented, for example, by Mrs. Basil, Girl Guide and social worker in the East End of London, who witnessed 'a man trying to behave objectionably to a girl ... [and] boys behav[ing] in a very nasty manner towards the girls'.²⁴ After considering other evidence also, the Cinema Commission concluded that there was no evidence to confirm that such indecent behaviour was 'more prevalent in the picture house than in other places of popular resort.'²⁵

The second charge referred to the physical effects of film consumption. Bishop Harman, senior ophthalmic surgeon at the West London Hospital, identified glare, flicker, rapidity of motion, concentration of attention and the duration of the exhibition as the five main sources of eye-strain and related conditions like headaches and fatigue. In an aim to safeguard young cinema patrons from such hazards, the commissioners drew up a set of model conditions which were to be

²² Ibid., 132-138, 138-142 and 151-156

²³ "Mr. Fredk. N. Charrington: Declines to give evidence before the Kinematograph Commission," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, January 4, 1917, 22.

²⁴ National Council, *The Cinema*, 240.

²⁵ Ibid., xxviii.

applied to film exhibitions. Aspects of these echoed local measures such as the 1913 By-Law created in Glasgow. For instance, boxes and standing rooms should be abolished and sufficient lighting provided to avoid indecent behaviour. Children attending without parents should be seated separately and ample seating accommodation should prevent overcrowding.²⁶ To prevent eye strain and related conditions a 'highly skilled operator' should be responsible for the projection of films, which must be 'in sound condition.'²⁷ Moreover, children's visits to the cinema would occur 'at such an hour as will ensure their night's rest is not encroached upon.'²⁸

Despite the focus on the negative aspects of cinema as a social space, its social value was recognised, too. The cinema was acknowledged to be useful 'in decreasing hooliganism and as a counter-attraction to the public-house.'²⁹ In particular children from poor social backgrounds were thought to benefit from the cinema as an alternative to the deprivation of their homes and streets.³⁰ Further justification of cinema as a culturally valuable institution was provided by evidence taken from the Young Men's Christian Association, which had successfully included 'cinema entertainment amid its varied beneficent activities for the army during the war.'³¹ The YMCA's purchase of the Glasgow Lyric theatre in 1914 is indicative of the Association's positive attitude towards cinema in Scotland, too.³² As cinema in the hands of religious or reputable organisations seemed to provide wholesome entertainment in a safe environment, the commissioners concluded that cinema as a social space was not inherently bad. What was needed was a regulatory framework within which safety could be assured. The provision of good pictures to accompany this space turned out to be a far greater problem.

²⁶ Ibid., 98-99.

²⁷ Ibid., lxxxviii.

²⁸ Ibid., xxviii.

²⁹ Ibid., xlvii.

³⁰ Ibid., xxxv.

³¹ Ibid., xlviii-l

³² See *Scottish Cinemas and Theatres Project*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/lyrictheatre.html>.

4.2.2. The Films

To regulate film content posed a different challenge as most pictures originated in Hollywood and could only be controlled on the level of exhibition. Some films were thought to undermine national social values. A committee in Worcester, set up to investigate the quality of films, found the American ‘society drama’ particularly unsatisfactory. These films, it was argued, ‘lower[ed] the standard of reverence for women, and familiarise[d] the minds of ... young people with loose ideas of the relations between the sexes.’³³ The problem of imports was underpinned by T.P. O’Connor and Arthur Northam from the Kinematograph Manufacturers’ Association. Both stated that the dominance of American firms made it more and more difficult to exhibit, and especially to produce, higher-standard films at home:

As more than 90 per cent. of the films being now shown in British picture houses are American, and as the British market is only a negligible fraction of the market of the American producer ..., a raising of the standard here without corresponding rise there, would mean that the picture house might be deprived of the supply they need for the constant change of programme twice a week.³⁴

The Cinema Commission scrutinised also other film genres, for instance, comic films were generally regarded as harmless apart from its ‘occasional vulgarity,’ while war films, naval exploration documentaries, topicals and nature studies were seen to contain high educational value.³⁵ It suggested that ‘cowboy and Indian films’ introduced ‘a variety of experience so new and attractive to the city child,’ which may outweigh its less beneficial aspect of depicting ‘a lower standard of civilization’. Similarly, a detective story was not seen as inevitably bad as it occasionally reinforced positive social values. It was the American ‘crook’ film that was singled out and criticised for ‘dealing exclusively with crime’ and spending too much time representing ‘the sordid elements of the story.’³⁶

When it came to such stories, the film text represented a threat because its effect on human behaviour, especially in juveniles, was uncertain. One way the

³³ National Council, *The Cinema*, xxx and 143.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxx-xxxii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, lxii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, and lxx.

commissioners tackled this issue was by asking children directly. Groups of children were interrogated about their film preferences, how often they went to the picture house, in what way it affected their well-being and, most importantly, whether it inspired them to do crime. Unsurprisingly, children themselves negated the idea that there was a link between the consumption of crime films and delinquent behaviour, but this was not regarded as sufficient proof to dispel the idea.³⁷

To grasp the scale of the problem, the Commission invited chief constables from all over the UK to be heard at the Commission. The only one who went to London to give evidence in person was Chief Constable Roderick Ross from Edinburgh. As he represented the entire UK police force at the Commission, his account is worth detailed attention. More importantly in the context of the thesis, it exposes the complexity of local censorship in Scotland and elucidates some of the practices and discourses considered in Chapter Three.

4.2.3. Juvenile Delinquency

Ross gave his testimony to the Commission on 12th March 1917 with the Bishop of Birmingham in the chair. Ross was enthusiastic about the cinema, calling its emergence ‘outstanding and remarkable’ and argued that, in Scotland, it had become ‘part and parcel of [...] the social life of the community’.³⁸ He stressed that the popularity of cinema-going was not only prevalent in large towns like Edinburgh but in rural areas also, where ‘the cinema has met with phenomenal success, and received the support and patronage of all classes of society.’³⁹

Surprisingly perhaps, given its reputation at the time, Ross explained cinema’s all-encompassing popularity in terms of public approval of it as ‘educative, morally wholesome, and bright entertainment’, and, less surprisingly, as a consequence of its low admission price.⁴⁰ He had no doubt that cinema had a powerful impact but was sceptical in regard to an overemphasis of its negative potential:

³⁷ For the interrogation of two school boys about such a link, see *Ibid.*, 200-201

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Were the lessons it taught to exercise an influence for evil in the people, that evil would ere now have made itself manifest in some form or other.⁴¹

Instead the Chief Constable stressed its benefits. In Edinburgh, he said, it attracted many people 'who otherwise would have resorted to the public-house'.⁴² That cinema rivalled the public house was not new for Ross as he read an extract from his 1911 Annual Report:

I am more than convinced that people are behaving themselves better than formerly, and I am of opinion ... that the gradual decrease in drunkenness has been brought about by the opening up to the people of more means of rational amusement such as the picture house.⁴³

It is noteworthy that Ross referred to cinema as rational entertainment when critics of cinema continuously blamed it for providing just the opposite - an opportunity to waste time and money on passive enjoyment of visual pleasures.⁴⁴ This indicates that cinema's function was far from being determined and that there was hope among some that it would develop further into a useful form of recreation.

Edinburgh's Chief Constable had received 'surprisingly few complaints' regarding the negative social impact of cinema. Ross pointed out that the complaints referred not to the cinema as such but to the films exhibited. Significantly, he stressed that his police force did not act solely on private individuals' complaints and that interference with film content was only considered appropriate if there was 'criticism in the Press'.⁴⁵ This position met with some perplexity and Ross was prompted by the chair to state his personal opinion about a controversial picture (the title of which was omitted in the final report) which had been banned in Manchester:

[Y]ou would not regard it as a film suited for general display? - No, were I a censor I should certainly ban it for young people under eighteen or twenty years of age.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid., 176.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁴ This was still seen as a problem during the 1930s: Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain*, 188-189.

⁴⁵ National Council, *The Cinema*, 181.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The disparity between the Constable's own opinion and his lack of power to interfere with the exhibition of films caused even more confusion. Some of the commissioners went on to ask more detailed questions - for instance Reverend F.C. Spurr, who enquired more directly about the police's authority to seize photographs, prints and films:

39. Have the Edinburgh police the power to seize objectionable prints and photographs? -- Yes, any objectionable or indecent.

40. But you have not the power to seize objectionable films? - If the films were indecent we should not seize them, but we should proceed against the management.⁴⁷

Ross's assessment of the core problem - the cinema being a potential source of inspiration for juvenile delinquents - was similarly ambiguous. While no case of imitative crime had so far 'come to ... [his] knowledge' he admitted that screen representations of criminals implied a 'grave danger,' especially to boys due to their 'inherent love of adventure'. In regard to incidental crime, that is to say stealing in order to afford admission, he was 'unable to find a single case where any juvenile set out to steal for this one purpose' and stressed that thieving in order 'to satisfy their fondness or craze for gambling' was far more common among young delinquents in the Scottish capital.⁴⁸ Ross concluded that

so far as Edinburgh is concerned, the cinema, in this respect and as a means of inciting the commission of crime on the part of juveniles, has had little or no effect on the crime committed by children and young persons.⁴⁹

To the cinema commissioners Ross's account seemed to throw up more questions than it answered and perhaps suggested a somewhat uninvolved, even eccentric approach. A look back to Chapter Two and Three above, however, indicates that Ross's statement signified the complexity of regulatory practices prevalent in Scotland at the time. His lack of involvement with censorial issues is congruent with the characteristic restriction of the Scottish framework not to impede with the content of film shows once a licence had been issued.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 182.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 176-177.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Nonetheless, Ross's opinion on cinema and juvenile crime appear at odds with local and national debates in Scotland. As Chapter Three has shown, the city's magistrates had been prompted to take more control over film content by the School Board's sub-committee on Juvenile Offenders in 1916. A glance at Edinburgh newspapers from 1917 confirms the peculiarity of Ross's statement further. In the *Edinburgh Evening News*, the Chief Constable had to stress that 'we cannot accuse the cinema of inciting its juvenile patrons to crime', implying that blaming the cinema was a common practice he tried to contest.⁵⁰ Not all Scottish chief constables adopted the same neutral approach. While letters to the Cinema Commission testify that the chief constables of Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow agreed with Ross's account in broad terms, Chief Constable Thom of Hawick, a small town in the Scottish borders, expressed a different viewpoint.⁵¹ For Thom there was

little room for doubt that the desire of many young people to obtain money to attend picture houses, billiard saloons, and ice cream shops had been the cause of a large number of the juvenile offences that the police had to deal with.⁵²

This indicates that despite Ross's alacrity to dispel concerns regarding juvenile crime and to support the cinema, its potential to cause delinquency among children and young people was an eagerly debated topic in Edinburgh and Scotland.

In the context of the Cinema Commission, it was Ross's opinion that counted, however. It is unknown whether the Commission had chosen Ross over other UK chief constables to testify in person or whether he was the only one who was motivated enough to appear as a witness. The Chief Constable of Glasgow, for example, was invited, but declined; like other chief constables who responded to the Cinema Commission, he provided information in form of a letter.⁵³ Crucially, Ross's personal presence bore somewhat more weight than the letters that other constables sent, not to speak of constables that did not respond to the Commission at all. Ross played a key role in influencing the opinions of the commissioners and the public alike as

⁵⁰ "Edinburgh's Crime: The Juvenile Depravity: Chief Constable's Explanation," *Edinburgh Evening News*, March 10, 1917.

⁵¹ National Council, *The Cinema*, 178, 179 and 350.

⁵² "Cinemas and Crime," *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, January 10, 1917.

⁵³ Glasgow Corporation Minutes Nov. 1916- Apr. 1917, Police department/ Magistrates, January 23, 1917, 484 , GB243/ CI 3/56 , Glasgow City Archive.

excerpts of his testimony appeared in national newspapers like the *London Times* and the *Scotsman*, as well as local ones like the *Glasgow Evening Times* or, indeed, the *Yorkshire Post*.⁵⁴ In the end, the Commission concluded that a link between cinema patronage and juvenile criminality was not 'a necessary connection'.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, commissioners had little doubt that films in general had a powerful influence, especially on children. Their potential to furnish young, impressionable minds with the 'wrong ideas of life and conduct' turned out to be a serious worry. Particularly condemned were shooting and stabbing scenes as these familiarised children with notions of death. Furthermore, the tendency of many such scenes to pause the story in order to present an 'enlarged view of the victim's features during death agony' was perceived as repulsive:

It is difficult to see how the child's nerves can maintain their tone; we should look for a want of balance in children subjected repeatedly to these ordeals, and delinquency would not be unlikely. At any rate, such exhibitions are highly objectionable for children, whether they lead to delinquency or not.⁵⁶

The Commission recommended that the special requirements of a child audience be met by providing special programmes and through the local enforcement of central censorship decisions in order to effectively differentiate children's programmes from film shows for adults.

⁵⁴ "Praise of the Cinema: Chief Constable's Evidence at the Inquiry," *Times*, March 13, 1917, *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=glauni&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS51447917&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>; "Cinema's Influence: Chief Constable Ross and a Power for Good," *Scotsman*, March 13, 1917, *The Scotsman (1921-1950)*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/485828077?accountid=14540>; "Boy Burglars and the Cinema," *Glasgow Evening Times*, March 14, 1917; "A Good Word for the Cinema," *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, March 13, 1917, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000687/19170313/162/0007>.

⁵⁵ National Council, *The Cinema*, xlviii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xlii.

4.2.4. Censorship

The Cinema Commission advocated special provision to be made for the entertainment of children due to their inherent impressionability. Their advice was to mark films suitable for the young with a 'C' and the rest with an 'A'. In addition, pictures marked with an 'A' should only be accessible to adults.⁵⁷

The debate around children's programmes was one of the rare occasions when the cinema trade was explicitly criticised by the Commission. Chairman of the CEA London branch, F.R. Goodwin, argued that exhibitors refused to co-operate with local authorities to create special programmes because such 'milk-and-water variety' would deter adult patrons from visiting the cinema at the time of matinees.⁵⁸ He also objected in more general terms to the censorship decisions taken by local authorities. In his view local authorities were

bigoted in their ideas, more so than a central authority which would fight out and settle this question on a national basis.⁵⁹

Although Goodwin's position was coloured by his experience with the interventionist methods of London City Council, he certainly expressed a more general dislike of localised practices among exhibitors. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, this distaste was also echoed by the Scottish section of the trade. The circumstance that the legal power lay with local licensing authorities was a profound issue for the BBFC, too. O'Connor stressed that although 'censorship had been conducted with remarkable assiduity' the Censor's unofficial status prevented the unified application of its recommendations.⁶⁰

Another problem related to self-regulation as such. A.E. Newbould, Chairman of the CEA for Great Britain told the Commission that the Association had transformed itself into a National Union which employed 'peaceful persuasion and other methods known as trades-union activity' to try and secure about ninety percent

⁵⁷ Ibid., xliii.

⁵⁸ Ibid., lxxxv and 22.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., lxxxi-lxxxii.

membership.⁶¹ While he hoped this would achieve more discipline among exhibitors and foster a more uniform censorship system, Newbould acknowledged that the Censor's decisions 'could not be enforced on the whole trade'.⁶² He informed the commissioners about the recent negotiations with the Home Office regarding the establishment of a Government censorship that had collapsed due to Home Secretary's reluctance to introduce official censorship legislation.⁶³ Another reason for the failure was the trade's disapproval of Samuel's intent to appoint the chief censor himself but leave financial obligations to the trade.⁶⁴

The 1917 Cinema Commission was in favour of a state censorship system. In the opinion of commissioners, only a central censor with the full legal backing of the Home Office could override local positions, discipline the cinema trade and so ensure uniform conditions for film exhibition.⁶⁵ However, the Commission set an important limit: the censor's task was mainly to differentiate between films for children from those for adults and was not to remove the possibility to have a 'serious discussion of moral and social problems' in films.⁶⁶

Any film for social, moral or religious propaganda ... should not be subject to such censorship.⁶⁷

Instead the promoting society should have the right to decide about the appropriate conditions for its exhibition. Clearly, the note aimed to smooth the path for the exhibition of future 'propaganda' films such as *Maisie's Marriage*, released in 1923; it was based on a controversial book about birth control authored by cinema commissioner Marie Stopes.

Despite the benefits of centralisation and standardisation, the cinema trade was equally reluctant to support an absolute form of state censorship. A note of

⁶¹ Ibid., lxxv.

⁶² Ibid., lxxiv.

⁶³ Ibid., lxxiii.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., lxxix.

⁶⁶ Ibid., xc.

⁶⁷ Ibid., xci-xcii.

reservation signed by Newbould, Lamert and King revealed their apprehension of a system that would function on the terms of the state alone:

[I]n giving their support to the findings generally, [they] desire to make it clear that they are supporting the principle of State censorship on the lines indicated by the Commission as an ideal to be worked for. They must expressly reserve for the industry the right to oppose any attempt to set up this form of censorship without provision of adequate safeguards against its many possible disadvantages and dangers.⁶⁸

To prevent disadvantages arising from an inflexible state censorship system, the commissioners recommended that a council of advisors representing the ‘public interest’ accompanied the appointment of a censor ‘by His Majesty in Council’. The censor’s decisions were to ‘supersede all local censorships’ and his salary was to ‘be charged on parliamentary estimates’. Realising that the current Home Secretary, Sir George Cave, showed no inclination in setting up an official state censor, the Commission recommended the BBFC’s decisions be ‘strengthened by local authorities’ through exclusively licencing cinemas committed to ‘show only films on the white list’.⁶⁹

In the broader context, the Commission’s censorship proposals seem contradictory, if not ironic. As Chapter Two has shown, reform societies with an interest in disseminating knowledge about sexual and ‘moral’ health like the NCPM played a significant part in undermining the BBFC by ignoring its decision not to certify sexual health films after the war. Reform societies were, thus, complicit in exploiting the Censor’s unofficial status. Significantly, the Cinema Commission shared the BBFC’s peculiar standing. As it had not been publicly endorsed by the Home Office, it was unable to impose any of its recommendation on local authorities or the cinema trade. Cave was even attacked by a Scottish MP, Sir Henry Craik, for tolerating a commission that ‘was largely organised by persons interested in the trade’ instead of undertaking a government led investigation.⁷⁰ The Commission’s partiality was further stressed by a member of the Home Office itself (possibly

⁶⁸ Ibid., xciii.

⁶⁹ Ibid., xci.

⁷⁰ Cinema Commission, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 92, c908, 02nd April 1917, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1917/apr/02/cinema-commission>; Cinema Shows, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 92, cc. 1300-1, 4th April 1917, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1917/apr/04/cinema-shows>.

George Cave), who claimed that the inquiry had been financed by the cinema trade.⁷¹ Such allegations tarnished the validity of the Commission's findings and reduced the force of its recommendations. As a result, the Commission could not create closure on certain questions regarding cinema's social impact, in particular by not regarding cinema's potential to inspire juvenile delinquency.⁷² Concerns about cinema's influence on children resurfaced repeatedly and multiple surveys took place during the 1930s, most prominently in London, Edinburgh, Birkenhead and Birmingham.⁷³

4.2.5. Educational Cinema

Film's power to instruct was not only central to debates on censorship practices but crucial also for another important discourse. In a section on the educational aspects of cinema, the 1917 Cinema Commission identified key arguments for the exploration and development of films as a teaching aid for schools. In discussing these arguments, the following section anticipates the discussions raised in Chapter Five, which looks more closely at the educational cinema movement inspired in part by the Commission

For better or worse, the Cinema Commission recognised in film's appeal to the visual sense and its vivid, animate representations of real life a key quality that enhanced the effectiveness of instruction. James Marchant, for instance, found that moving pictures seemed to guarantee a higher 'accuracy of ideas' than verbal or printed descriptions:

The majority of human beings are visualisers The addition of motion to the picture trebles the amount of realism.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Who are our Traducers?," *Bioscope*, November 15, 1917, 4.

⁷² Only five years later, a controversy ensued about the Censor's decision to cut a scene from the 1922 film version of *Oliver Twist* (First National Pictures Ltd.), in which 'Fagin demonstrates how to pick pockets' as it revealed the '*modus operandi* of crime': "Censoring *Oliver Twist* film: Protest against Excisions," *Scotsman*, December 30, 1922, *The Scotsman* (1860-1920), accessed October 2015, <http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/479498077?accountid=14540>. Emphasis in original.

⁷³ For a discussion of these four enquiries see Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 79-104.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, lxvi.

This was an important revelation for the future development of educational cinema. Marchant's enthusiasm was cautious, nevertheless, as he stressed that visual representations should 'supplement ... description or explanation in words' and not replace them.⁷⁵

As a medium that supported, not replaced, education by conventional methods, film was found especially useful in helping children remember what they had learned. The most significant contribution in this respect came from C.W. Kimmins. He presented material from a survey that he had carried out prior to the Cinema Commission with no less than 6000 school children from London and remarked that 'older children have a remarkable power of giving good accounts of films they have only seen once'.⁷⁶ Moreover, their memories of films were enduring; even after two years of cinema abstinence, some children could recite their original recollections. For Kimmins this seemed 'to open up possibilities for great educational developments'.⁷⁷ Geography, nature study and history were subjects thought to 'lend themselves most successfully to direct educational treatment'.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Commission acknowledged cinema's capability to broaden children's horizons more generally through the display of industrial topics, agricultural life and current events. War pictures, naval scenes and films of polar expeditions were particularly popular with children.⁷⁹ Finally, in spite of many allegations stating otherwise, the Commission decided that films did not depress mental activity but rather stimulated it: cinema cultivated the imagination as well as 'moral and aesthetic appreciation,' and trained children 'in observation'.⁸⁰

Other educationists were sceptical. J.G. Legge, headmaster of Cloudesley and J.W. Bunn, representing the National Union of Teachers, argued that the educational promise was overrated, claiming that educational films tended to 'bore the audience

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ National Council, *The Cinema*, 275.

⁷⁷ Ibid., lx-lxi.

⁷⁸ Ibid., lxix.

⁷⁹ Ibid., lxiv-lxv.

⁸⁰ Ibid., lxvii.

and ... [were] tolerated in silence'.⁸¹ Moreover, programming in commercial cinemas was an issue.

The educational worth of an instructive film that was 'sandwiched between a Charlie Chaplin film and a thrilling Episode of Exploits of Elaine' was estimated to be negligible.⁸² To ensure the educational value of a film, the preparation in school or an accompanying lecture was needed. This, however, seemed to complicate the relationship between educational bodies and the cinema industry. Exhibitors, for instance, argued that educational cinema ran counter to the economic motives of the industry as 'the public would not tolerate a greater admixture of educational films than 10 per cent. in a mixed programme'.⁸³ Reflecting this, the report emphasised that the development of educational cinema could not be the primary object of the commercial cinema which was merely obliged to provide 'healthy amusement and recreation'.⁸⁴

Apart from the recreational function, which was found to dominate in commercial cinemas, the Commission identified two other roles cinema played in society and should play more: propaganda and education. The responsibility of developing these functions, however, was a task the Commission assigned mainly to educational bodies:

Accordingly, educational and other authorities in the country might well consider how far they can assist in raising the whole status of the cinema, and to assist them in this endeavour has been a main object of our inquiry.⁸⁵

This conclusion is crucial. It demarcated and limited the function of commercial cinema significantly. It not only let the cinema trade off the hook by emphasising their role as commercial providers of amusement and entertainment but also identified the agencies that were to assume more constructive responsibility in creating useful functions for cinema outside of the commercial realm. So far educational authorities and their allies had mainly criticised the cinema for its

⁸¹ Ibid., liii and lv.

⁸² Ibid., lix.

⁸³ Ibid., lx.

⁸⁴ Ibid., lxv.

⁸⁵ Ibid., xxii.

failure to provide constructive and educational material. Now it was up to the educational agencies to do something about it.

4.3. Conclusion

The 1917 Cinema Commission was the first comprehensive investigation into cinema's social impact and functions in Britain. It was set up at a time when the pressure on the cinema trade was intense and the establishment of a state censor was looming large. The trade's reason for supporting the investigation was to legitimise the self-regulatory disposition of the industry, improve its reputation and define its role as provider of popular mass entertainment. As an inquiry lead by the National Council of Public Morals, the Cinema Commission was additionally invested with progressive reformist interests. The motivation of the NCPM to answer the trade's call originated in a vision of film as a medium for the inculcation of social values and was likely undertaken with a view to disseminate the findings of the Council's other commissions on such issues as birth control and parenthood. These interests sometimes collided, in particular in regard to children's matinees and the development of educational cinema, but both parties intended to free the cinema of unfounded allegations regarding its negative social impact.

The report on negative effects was divided into sections on social problems incidental to cinema as space and issues related to films. While worries regarding the conditions in which film shows took place were thought to be exaggerated, concerns about film content were taken more seriously, especially as potential cause for juvenile delinquency. Thanks partially to the sanguine statement of Edinburgh's Chief Constable, the idea of a direct link between cinema and juvenile delinquency was dismissed. However, his contradictory account seemed at odds with local and national debates and symptomatic of the self-imposed restrictions of the Scottish legal framework in regard to interference with film content. Overall, the Commission recognised the need for a more unified censorship system, recommending the instalment of a state censor to effectively enforce a differentiation between child and adult audiences. But due to its unofficial status, the Cinema Commission faced the same problem as the BBFC and lacked any statutory authority to impose its recommendations on either the cinema trade or the local and central governments.

Inherently connected with the debate on the impact of screen depictions in that it centred on children as impressionable spectators, the Commission reported on

a preliminary exploration of cinema's instructive facilities. Film's appeal to the visual sense and memory enhancing capacities were identified as crucial qualities to be developed by education authorities in the future. The most prominent figure providing evidence in support of this was C. W. Kimmins from London. Shortly after the publication of 1917 Cinema Commission's report, Kimmins and the NCPM's leaders, James Marchant and the Bishop of Birmingham, began to plan and raise funds for a second investigation. This spin-off focused solely on cinema's role in education and was a manifestation of the Cinema Commission's conclusion that useful functions had to be sought and created outside of the commercial picture house. The next chapter offers a discussion of the report that followed in 1925 and analyses its influence on educational cinema in Scotland.

5. From *The Cinema in Education* to *The Film in the Classroom*

The 1917 Cinema Commission discussed preliminary findings regarding cinema's educational potential, concluding that this was to be developed by educational and civic authorities and outside of the commercial picture house. This chapter focuses on two experiments that were undertaken with this objective in mind: the National Council of Public Morals' second Cinema Commission, which published a report called *The Cinema in Education* in 1925, and *The Film in the Classroom*, an experiment carried out by Glasgow Corporation's Education Department between 1932 and 1933. It will introduce hitherto overlooked archive material about the Carnegie Trust's role in shaping this discourse.

The debates on educational cinema occurring during the 1920s and early 1930s were important mediations of cinema's role in British and Scottish society as they were dominated by authorities and civic organisations pondering how this role should be regulated, defined and developed. These debates transformed the way cinema's social role was delineated by going beyond its impact as a commercial institution and focusing increasingly on film as a visual mass-communicative medium and discussing how it could be deployed for civic purposes. In line with this transformation, the idea of educational cinema changed from being a loose cinematic genre that included general interest films such as nature studies, travelogues, newsreels, local topicals and films based on books from respected authors to a film category that was defined according to its educational impact as a teaching aid in the school. Crucially, this discourse initiated basic arguments on which later movements promoting screen education would build.

The argument put forward here is that the discourse about the negative effects of children's cinema-going outlined above and the debate on the teaching value of films were connected in that they drew attention to film as a, potentially, powerful instructive medium. The impact of certain films on the child as an impressionable spectator, whether it be corruptive or elevating, was a central theme to both positions. This connection was particularly strong in Glasgow during the 1920s and early 1930s, when the city's educationists went to enormous lengths to establish a compulsory local and national censorship system, without success, and, at the same time, piloted Scotland's first social scientific experiment on using films in schools.

The continuity of the discourse is also visible in the activities of the National Council of Public Morals. The 1925 Cinema Commission and the Glasgow experiment were undertaken by educationists who had accepted cinema's popularity amongst children while being alert to its dangers in the commercial context, and who were now looking for ways to make it serve educational purposes - as a didactic instrument making useful knowledge tangible for school children.

The development of educational cinema was pioneered in other countries long before British authorities officially recognised its importance. As Jennifer Horne demonstrated, public libraries in the United States experimented with the use of films as early as 1910.¹ In Sweden, a State School Film Department (Skolfilmsavdelning) was founded at the end of the 1910s which promoted the use of non-fiction films for the teaching of so-called object lessons.² Similar structures were put in place in France between 1918 and 1924.³

In comparison, the establishment of the British Film Institute (BFI) in 1933 to support and develop educational and other forms of non-commercial cinema came relatively late. Its formation was inspired by the Commission on Cultural and Educational Films, an unofficial organisation launched by the Institute for Adult Education in 1929 to promote the use of film as a visual tool in education and the teaching of 'film appreciation'. To achieve these aims the Commission had proposed that an official body be established.⁴

The magazine *Sight and Sound*, launched in 1932 to support the Commission's cause is still being published by the BFI today.⁵ The early years of the Institute were dominated by an agenda to utilise film as a teaching aid, but this eventually opened

¹ Jennifer Horne, "A History Long Overdue - The Public Library and Motion Pictures," in *Useful Cinema*.

² Asa Jernudd "Educational Cinema and Censorship in Sweden, 1911-1921," 157-158.

³ Kenneth H. Garner, "Seeing Is Knowing: The Educational Cinema Movement in France, 1910-1945," (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2012), 67-107, <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/96053>.

⁴ Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*, ed. B. S. Gott (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1932), 140.

⁵ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "The *Sight and Sound* story, 1932-1992," in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, eds. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 237-252.

up to wider notions of screen education.⁶ While insightful studies exist discussing the film education movement that followed, the debates preceding the formation of the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films and the BFI have hardly been considered. An understandable reason for this negligence is that earlier attempts to create supportive structures did not bear fruits immediately but had to await the Commission's publication of *The Film in National Life* in 1932 to achieve wider resonance.

Two important obstacles were in the way of establishing such structures before 1930. On the one hand, the film trade was sceptical about the profitability of producing films that were suitable for classrooms but unsuitable for commercial cinemas, which resulted in the lack of a reliable supply of strictly educational films. On the other, education authorities were reluctant to introduce cinematography on a large scale because the production of educational films fitting with the school curriculum was insufficient.⁷ The trade's disinclination to explore educational cinema as a secondary market was intensified by changes occurring in the international film industry during the First World War. The introduction of uncompromising economic practices such as block booking, for instance, destabilised the British film industry and made it increasingly difficult to invest in ventures that seemed risky and non-profitable.⁸ Importantly also, the British exhibition sector was transformed by the growing market dominance of the feature-length fiction film, a trend set by American production companies. This meant that the function of information films like travelogues and topicals relegated short films from being a main attraction to being a support for the feature film.⁹ As Michael Hammond argued, such changes

⁶ Terry Bolas, ed., *Screen Education: From Film Appreciation to Media Studies* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2009), 11-37.

⁷ Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1929-1939: Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), 7-10.

⁸ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 82-84.

⁹ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918," 219-246. See also Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised: The Emergence of the International Film Industry, 1890-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 185-229.

ultimately positioned ‘the social function of cinemas as primarily a site of entertainment rather than information’.¹⁰

This process impacted on the definition of educational cinema in general. With the trade’s responsibility delineated to harmless yet (sometimes) informative entertainment, the debate came to be shaped more by the dynamics and demands of education, especially for school children. This means that the educational value of film came to be defined to a great extent by its usefulness as a teaching aid in support of knowledge transfer and memorisation. The 1925 Cinema Commission played an important part in this dynamic. Before the chapter looks more closely at the Commission’s work, the next section highlights how this shift manifested itself in the Commission’s funding structure.

5.1. Funding *Cinema in Education*: The role of the Carnegie UK Trust

While it remains uncertain how the 1917 Cinema Commission was financed, the two main funding sources of the 1925 Commission can be identified as Liberal Welsh MP David Davies and the Carnegie UK Trust.¹¹ The Carnegie Trust is of particular interest here; its ambition to establish a film library in Britain before 1930 has received little attention.

The Carnegie UK Trust was founded by retired steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913 and followed his earlier philanthropist ventures in the United States and Britain, including the establishment of numerous halls, educational centres and libraries. In Scotland, Carnegie had funded libraries in cities like Edinburgh and Aberdeen and had supported the building of libraries and library facilities in a number of smaller towns like Paisley and Bo’ness. The Carnegie UK Trust was based in Dunfermline, Scotland, where its founder had been born into a

¹⁰ Michael Hammond, *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006), 5. Locally, exceptions to this rule can be found of course. Edinburgh exhibitor James Nairn, for example, designed programmes specifically for school children during the 1920s: Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 82.

¹¹ Davies would go on to become a prominent member of the League of Nations: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Davies, David, first Baron Davies (1880-1944),” by Kenneth O. Morgan, accessed July 31, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32737>.

poverty-stricken weaver's family in 1835.¹² In line with Carnegie's agenda to foster the development of opportunities for self-improvement, the UK Trust's early years focused on the construction of free libraries, the creation and support of colleges and organisations facilitating adult education, such as the Worker's Educational Association.¹³

The Carnegie Trust became interested in cinema films concurrently with the 1917 Cinema Commission, perhaps due to the widespread press coverage of the inquiry. Its interest derived from the bad reputation of cinema at the time and the lack of efforts by the trade to change this through providing more uplifting programmes, especially for juveniles. To elevate 'the tone of the shows', the Trust came up with the idea to set up a

collection of cinematograph films of educational or historical importance which might be loaned out to both Picture Houses and Educational Institutes, including schools.¹⁴

At that point in time it was still relatively open which films would fit into this category and how a more educational cinema could be created. A sub-committee was appointed by the Trust to conduct some preliminary research. The members of this sub-committee were James Norval, Dunfermline town councillor and Provost to be; John Struthers from the Scottish Educational Department; Swire Smith, promoter of technical education, and Janet Elisabeth Courtney, co-editor for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.¹⁵

¹² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Carnegie, Andrew (1835-1919)," by Geoffrey Tweedale, accessed July 31, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32296>.

¹³ Ibid. See also *The Carnegie UK Trust*, accessed July 31, 2015, <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/who-we-are/history>.

¹⁴ A.L. Hetherington to Albert Mansbridge, letter, March 3, 1917, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

¹⁵ Norval became Provost in 1918, "Death of Sir James Norval," *Glasgow Herald*, August 14, 1936; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Struthers, Sir John (1857-1925)," by R. D. Anderson, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36357>; Courtney's maiden name was Hogarth: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Hogarth, Janet Elisabeth (1865-1954)," by Gillian Thomas, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38617>.

Initial investigations into the practicalities of setting up a cinematograph collection soon threw up a number of obstacles requiring further research. The British Museum, for instance, was considered as a possible centre for the film collection but refused to co-operate due to the 'the risk to the Museum' from combustible celluloid films. The perishable nature of celluloid represented another problem for establishing a permanent collection as films were likely to disintegrate after twenty years.¹⁶ Moreover, to enter 'the trade on a competitive basis' was costly and the specific conditions of the 1909 Cinematograph Act limited the choice of buildings that could be used.¹⁷ The preliminary inquiry led to a conference to which the Chief Censor T.P. O' Connor, Inspector of London's Education Department, C.W. Kimmins, and other members of the 1917 Cinema Commission were invited.¹⁸ Subsequently, a report was drawn up suggesting that a 'small measure of financial assistance to prosecute further' should be given to a committee outwith the Trust to find a 'solution for the practicable difficulty and at the same time make a modest start in forming a nucleus collection'.¹⁹

The Trust set aside a grant of £500 for this purpose.²⁰ However, the project benefitting from the funding ended up addressing a different set of questions. As will become apparent shortly, the goal to solve practical obstacles standing in the way of forming a central film collection became marginalised by the search for proof that films would be useful in the classroom.

Given that the link between the Carnegie Trust and several members of the 1917 Cinema Commission was already established at that point, it is not surprising that it was the National Council of Public Moral's second Cinema Commission which would eventually receive this sum. In an application to the Carnegie Trust in March 1918, the Council's leaders, Marchant and the Bishop of Birmingham, proposed a

¹⁶ A.L. Hetherington to Executive Committee, memorandum, April 18, 1917, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

¹⁷ Ibid; See also *Bioscope* Publishing Company to James Norval, letter, March, 23 1917, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

¹⁸ *Bioscope* Publishing Company to James Norval, letter, March, 23 1917, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS; Undated draft of interim report, GD281/82/51, NRS.

¹⁹ Undated draft of interim report, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

²⁰ Executive Committee Minutes, June 4, 1917, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

‘psychological investigation of the durability of the cinema impressions’ based on C.W. Kimmins’ research into children’s memory of films which I outlined in Chapter Four. It additionally sought to find ways around practical problems by collating ‘the best means of correlating the work of the cinema with that of the school’.²¹ In negotiating the terms of the funding over the following fifteen months, the Carnegie Trust became more interested in the psychological inquiry itself than finding solutions to practical problems.

The shift in the Trust’s position is symptomatic of the broader discursive change this chapter centres on and can be regarded as an on-going demarcation of educational cinema’s function. This shift is visible, for example, in the correspondence of the Trust between June 1917, when the decision was made to fund a committee searching for practical solutions, and July 1919, when the funding was finally granted to the Cinema Commission. In the process of reviewing the application by the National Council of Public Morals, John Struthers eventually stated that ‘of the two branches of enquiry proposed, the psychological investigation was much more important’.²² Following the Trust’s instructions, the Council used the grant only to cover costs related to the expenses of the psychological research. The Cinema Experiments Committee, which addressed some of the original practical questions the Trust had proposed, received no funds and was to run on a voluntary basis.²³ This demonstrates that the indistinct idea of educational cinema the Trust held during its initial investigations had made way for a narrower definition of what an educational film was and what it should be used for - as teaching aid in the classroom. Crucially, efforts to establish whether the use of film was of actual benefit in the classroom in a scientific manner were attractive to funders like the Carnegie Trust because these promised concrete results that would justify or rule out any further expenditure in creating a film library.

James Marchant and Bishop of Birmingham to Carnegie Trustees, letter, March 26, 1918, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

²² John Struthers to A.L. Hetherington, letter, February 21, 1919, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

²³ James Marchant to A.L. Hetherington, letter, March 15, 1919, Carnegie Trust: Cinematographs, GD281/82/51, NRS.

The chapter will now take a closer look at the report of the 1925 Cinema Commission which endorses this narrower interpretation of cinema's role in education. As will become apparent, this definition came to be based on statistics that confirmed quantitatively the teaching value of film. This methodology provided a blue print for *The Film in the Classroom* which will be the focus of the second part of the chapter.

5.2. The National Council of Public Morals' Cinema Commission of Inquiry – *The Cinema in Education* (1925)

The 1917 Cinema Commission had presented itself as substitute for a frequently demanded government-led investigation into cinema's effect on children and young people. The Commission's second inquiry was portrayed in a similar light. In the absence of any action taken by the British authorities in regard to exploring cinema's potential for education 'a committee of teachers, psychologists, and other experts in education, together with representatives of the trade' was appointed by the National Council of Public Morals.²⁴

Whereas the earlier Cinema Commission had emphasised the educational value of cinema, it had established, too, that an educational film could lose its merit in the middle of a mixed programme in the commercial cinema and that it, therefore, required thorough preparation in school to have a lasting effect on juveniles.²⁵ Consequently, the Commission's second inquiry dealt with films in the context of the classroom not the cinema theatre, and so also avoided impeding on the business of the cinema trade. It constituted two research teams, the Psychological Sub-Committee and the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee. The Commission's main terms of reference were

1. to investigate 'the durability of cinema impressions on school children',

²⁴ The National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema in Education* (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1925), 16.

²⁵ National Council (1917), *The Cinema*, liii, lv, lx, lix.

2. to measure 'fatigue caused by instruction by means of the cinema',
3. to carry out 'comparative tests of education by cinematograph methods with those by normal methods of instruction.'²⁶

These were addressed mainly by the Psychological Sub-Committee, while the problems of the practical application of cinema in schools were allocated to the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee. The following two sections will summarise the work and results of both committees separately before discussing the Commission's relevance in the larger context.

5.2.1. The Psychological Sub-Committee

The Psychological Sub-Committee was headed by Charles Spearman, Grote Professor of Mind and Logic and Head of Psychology at the University College London (UCL). Born in London, Spearman had trained in experimental psychology under Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig. In 1907, he had taken up employment with the UCL where he developed a branch known as the London School of Psychology, distinguished by 'its scientifically and statistically rigorous approach to studying human ability.'²⁷ Spearman is well known for his advances in intelligence theory, in particular, the two-factor doctrine of general and specific intellectual functions, one of the first correlational methods designed to find a general factor indicating a person's intelligence.²⁸ While working on the Cinema Commission he published *The Nature of Intelligence and the Principles of Cognition* (1923) where he proposes an epistemology of cognition based on ultimate psychological laws. His work on factor analysis was not only significant in the context of the 1925 Cinema Commission. It was important, too, for the later researchers of the Glasgow experiment who tried to find a so-called 'cinema factor' specifying a film's educational impact.

The work of the Psychological Sub-Committee took place at University College London, where the psychological classroom was fitted with a

²⁶ National Council (1925), *Cinema in Education*, 17-18.

²⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Spearman, Charles Edward (1863-1945)," by P. Lovie, A. D. Lovie, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36205>.

²⁸ Spearman's accumulated research into the measurement of human intelligence climaxed in his publication *The Abilities of Man* (1927), Ibid.

cinematograph apparatus, fire-proof projection boxes and doors.²⁹ While the terms of reference proposed more, the Committee concentrated on only two research objectives: to test, first, the accuracy and, second, the stability of children's memories of film lectures compared to slide and oral lectures, a focus that corresponded directly with Spearman's specific interest in cognitive functions. With 130 out of 160 pages, the final report of the Sub-Committee's research constitutes the largest part of *Cinema in Education*.

The researchers divided a class of twenty-three boys and seventy-nine girls into smaller groups, which received lessons on biological or geographical subjects either through film alone, a film talk (additional comments by the teacher), slides alone, a slide talk or an oral lesson.³⁰ All in all seven lessons were given, hence seven films screened: *The Sticklebacks* by Pathé Frères; *The Caddis Fly*, *The Volcano I* and *II* by the Educational Films Company; *Solving Canada's Fuel Problem*, *Salmon Fishing* and *The Enemy of the Forest* by Jury's Imperial Pictures Ltd.³¹ The children were prompted to write an essay immediately after the lessons and were invited to write another essay twelve months later without being confronted with the lecture material again. In order to analyse what the children had remembered and understood, the researchers first collated the individual pieces and divided them into particular and general statements. The essays were further partitioned into reports and interpretations of sub-title material as well as descriptions of moving pictures or slides. These were further categorised as descriptions of living things, inanimate objects or localities. Additionally, the quality of statements was determined by analysing whether a child was likely to have used rote memory techniques or displayed a more intelligent grasp of a problem, playing to Spearman's strength as a researcher.

Finally, the children's statements were counted, compared and tabulated to deduct statistically the value of a cinema lesson compared to other lessons. To

²⁹ National Council (1925), *Cinema in Education*, 18.

³⁰ According to Spearman the disproportion in numbers was due to the timing of the boys' experiment, starting off with forty individuals, but 'owing to the fact that the holiday season was approaching, attendances fell rapidly during the experiment,' *Ibid.*, 28. The report does not mention the age of the children but given the subjects of the lessons they were presumably between 11 and 13 years old.

³¹ National Council (1925), *Cinema in Education*, 27.

illustrate, table V of the report combines the girls' results on the memory of picture material, showing that oral lesson essays contained more general statements while film lessons gained in particular descriptions, especially in reference to 'action' and 'inanimate objects':

	Action.	Living Things.	Inanimate Objects.	Localities.	Interpretations.	Total.
GENERAL.						
Film alone	1.4	0.5	0.9	0.4	0.3	3.5
Slides alone	1.3	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.2	4.0
Film talk	4.5	0.6	6.3	1.8	1.0	14.2
Slides talk	6.1	0.8	4.7	1.8	1.2	14.6
Oral	13.4	2.3	9.3	3.9	2.0	31.0
PARTICULAR.						
Film alone	35.5	14.4	17.6	8.6	1.8	77.9
Slides alone	16.0	12.1	14.8	8.8	1.7	53.4
Film talk	33.2	12.4	19.1	8.6	3.1	76.4
Slides talk	23.6	12.6	16.0	7.0	3.7	62.8
Oral	11.7	3.9	6.8	3.1	1.4	26.8
TOTAL, ALL PICTURE MATERIAL.						
Film alone	36.9	14.9	18.5	9.0	2.0	81.5
Slides alone	17.2	12.7	15.8	9.6	1.9	57.4
Film talk	37.7	13.0	25.5	10.4	4.0	90.6
Slides talk	29.8	13.4	20.6	8.8	4.9	77.5
Oral	25.1	6.2	16.1	7.0	3.3	57.9

Figure 1: Table listing results, source: *The Cinema in Education*, 80.

The overall results indicated that moving pictures were best suited to portray movement ('action'), an outcome the researchers to some extent expected: 'Gains to cinema essays here run into the hundreds per cent'. But the results in regard to unmoving ('inanimate') objects, like tools, surprised them. The report concluded that 'film essays gain here, probably because seeing things in motion explains their use.'³² Sometimes the researchers identified situations when children had remembered details of what they had seen, but revealed a flawed understanding of the issue in general; for example, a child describing the appearance of a volcano

³² Ibid., 91.

without being able to name it accordingly or understand how an eruption came about.³³ Spearman referred to adverse effects such as these as ‘howlers’ and explained their cause in the context of intelligence theory. What the report implies but fails to make explicit is that ‘howlers’ were most likely caused by using commercially produced films that were intended for recreational consumption by a diverse audience and not primarily aimed at school children in an educational context.

On the whole, there is a favourable commentary running through the report. While Spearman admitted that general statements indicate a child’s ability to comprehend essential relations more than detailed descriptions do, he stressed that the visualisation of particular details was an important part of the process of understanding:

children are not always able to arrive at legitimate conclusions from (to them) highly complicated evidence. Unless things are pointed out explicitly, they may easily erect systems of relationships wrongly, and in consequence have their whole scheme rendered useless.³⁴

He concluded that the cinema as a teaching aid could visualise details of complicated subjects and hence be a significant asset to school education. What the report reveals is an understanding of educational cinema confined to its use as a didactic tool supporting the transmission and memorisation of factual knowledge. This was far from the more general notion the Cinema Commission represented in 1917, when it maintained that cinema widened children’s horizons by making them familiar with a variety of topics, including current events, nature, industry, foreign countries and so forth.

5.2.2. The Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee

The Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee was headed by C.W. Crook, former president of the National Union of Teachers and a member of the Cinema Commission in 1917. The Sub-Committee included other familiar names such as C.W. Kimmins, who headed the Joint Sub-Committee, head of the CEA A.E.

³³ Ibid., 60-67.

³⁴ Ibid., 96.

Newbould, Chief Censor T.P. O'Connor and others.³⁵ The Sub-Committee's goals were to find 'the best method of producing suitable films' and investigate 'the possibility of the cinema in cultivating aesthetic appreciation'.³⁶

The report of the Psychological Sub-Committee is extensive, bulging with details about the practical execution of the experiment and various methods of analysis. The report of the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee, on the other hand, seems short and inconclusive. Not strictly connected to the terms of references mentioned above, the committee collated a variety of information on different projectors, films and regulations in order to give educators a guide for using films in schools. The Sub-Committee mainly tested different projectors from national and international manufacturers as to their suitability for school use, determining that a school projector had to be 'portable', 'cheap', 'easy to manipulate' and have a lantern attachment for slides.³⁷ Furthermore, it embarked on assembling a list of suitable educational films, but found that most of them 'had been prepared for public exhibition and were not *ad hoc* educational films'.³⁸ Such films included *Plant Life* and *Crocus* by Pathé Frères, *The Kew Gardens of Stockholm* by Swedish Biograph, *Fish and Fishing for Everybody* by Canada Fisheries Kineto, *Bees* by Visual Education Films Ltd. and approximately thirty more.³⁹ In the absence of films suiting the school curriculum, a problem educationists recurrently cited when justifying their reservations about using films, a further sub-committee was appointed. This was called the Educational Sub-Committee and headed by C.W. Crook and included James Marchant, J.W. Bunn, J.H. L. Ridley and T.W. Trought. The Sub-Committee planned to produce a number of films that could be used in connection with the syllabus, but the lack of financial support tempered ambitions. In the end, only one film was prepared. *A River Film*, which depicted the birth and subsequent

³⁵ Rev. F.C. Spurr; C.W. Saleeby, Hermann Gollancz, T.P. O'Connor, John Kirk and Reverend Carey Bonner, plus a few names not associated with the first Commission such as educationist T.W. Trought. National Council (1925), *Cinema in Education*, 17.

³⁶ Ibid., 18.

³⁷ Ibid., 131. Models tested included projectors by PATHESCOPE, the 'Acme' portable projector by Jury's Imperial Pictures Ltd., The Kinoscope by British Kinoscope Ltd., the Oxford portable projector, the Petra by the British Petra Company, the De Vry Portable Cinema Projector, the Kinereflex film projector, Kinex by Krupp Ernemann and others. Ibid., 132-151.

³⁸ Ibid., 152.

³⁹ Ibid., 153-154.

functioning of a river, was to provide an example on how to construct a film text for school education.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee drew up an addendum of reports by ministers of education and similar bodies from other countries that utilised educational films. Finally, two appendices contained information on educational films in other countries and gave advice about fire safety regulations under the Cinematograph Act of 1909.⁴¹

Taken together, the report of the Psychological Sub-Committee and the information collected by the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee provided a handbook of educational cinema for interested teachers and educators in Britain, a handbook that for the first time underpinned scientifically film's value as a didactic tool for schools. The fact that the psychological inquiry constituted the largest part of the project suggests that a proper quantitative foundation was vital to justify the research. The statistical verification of the utility of cinema as a teaching aid was crucial because it defined a new, useful and legitimate role for cinema in society that was built on social scientific foundations and could run parallel to recreational cinema without replacing or interfering with it.

Rather than generating immediate practical results, the 1925 Cinema Commission became significant in the long run. In fact, *The Film in National Life*, published in 1932 by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films which proposed the creation of the British Film Institute, explicitly recognised the importance of both Cinema Commissions:

Any summary [of earlier research] must begin with the [1917] enquiry by the National Council of Public Morals. This was the first attempt by a responsible body to review the whole field.⁴²

And:

The Cinema in Education (1925), recorded finally and authoritatively important basic research.⁴³

⁴⁰ The report does not state what year this film was produced.

⁴¹ Ibid., 155-159.

⁴² Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *Film in National Life*, 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

The praise was directed particularly towards the Psychological Sub-Committee, whose innovative methods provided a starting point for future scientific research into educational cinema. When *The Film in National Life* was published, some local inquiries had already taken off, for example, in London, Middlesex and Glasgow.⁴⁴ Among these the Glasgow experiment stands out because it centred most explicitly on the use of films as a teaching aid in schools and confirmed in a local context the significance of using a quantitative methodology to verify results.

5.3. The Glasgow Experiment *The Film in the Classroom*

At the time of the publication of *The Cinema in Education* in 1925, Scottish education authorities were familiar with the debate on the potential use of films in school education. As one *Glasgow Herald* article suggests the subject had in fact long been ‘worn threadbare, driven to death, hackneyed, squeezed, and investigated from A to Z’.⁴⁵ Under the leadership of Charles Cleland, the Glasgow Education Authority had established a sub-committee to investigate the desirability of introducing cinematograph projectors into schools in 1919. The creation of the committee signified a heightened interest among Glasgow teachers in using films in schools and coincided with offers from film companies who sent catalogues and organised local demonstrations of educational films.⁴⁶ One such event was organised for 1500 teachers and took place in May 1920 in the Picture House in Glasgow.⁴⁷ Since Glasgow’s schools had little practical experience using cinematography, advice was sought from Dalziel High School in Motherwell, which had been in the possession of a projector since 1917.⁴⁸ These initial investigations bore no fruits, however, as the Authority concluded that only under favourable circumstances would films be a

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7-8.

⁴⁵ “Educating the Educationist,” *Glasgow Herald*, July 6, 1923.

⁴⁶ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes 1919-1920, June 5, 1919, 58-59, GB 243/ DED 1/1/1, Glasgow City Archives.

⁴⁷ Glasgow Education Authority Minutes, November 23, 1920, 661-663, GB 243/ DED 1/1/2, Glasgow City Archives.

⁴⁸ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 235.

useful addition to existing methods of presentation and stressed the lack of films fitting the existing syllabus.⁴⁹

Other education authorities were more visionary. In December 1920, Renfrewshire Education Authority, for instance, appealed to the Scottish Association of Education Authorities to explore ‘this new, but tremendously important, educational weapon’. It even recommended that proprietors of picture houses be encouraged ‘to provide regular performances for children and to endeavour to secure suitable films’. Nonetheless, the Scottish Education Department deemed the authority’s proposals ‘premature’ and like Glasgow emphasised the lack of films directly illustrating subjects taught at school.⁵⁰

This apathy transformed into action during the second half of the decade when interest in educational cinema flared up once more, no doubt, partially thanks to the 1925 Cinema Commission and similar inquiries.⁵¹ But the start was made by film societies not education authorities. The Edinburgh Film Guild, for instance, inaugurated Saturday morning matinees for children in the Scottish capital during the early 1930s. As Griffiths writes, the Edinburgh-based Educational Sight and Sound Association and the Educational Cinema Society in Glasgow (both founded in 1930-1931) built on the Guild’s success and likewise began to put on ‘matinees specifically structured with the needs, as ... perceived, of children in mind.’⁵² As a large part of the membership of the educational film societies were drawn from the local teaching communities - Charles Cleland had in fact founded the Glasgow Society - these events certainly addressed the ‘needs’ of teachers to engage with the persistent popularity of cinema-going among children and with the idea of visual education.⁵³ A local

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “The Cinema in Schools,” *Glasgow Herald*, December 3, 1920.

⁵¹ Another investigation was initiated, for instance, at the Imperial Education Conference in 1923. The appointed committee was headed by Lord Ronald Gorrell Barnes, who would later become Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Teachers and National Union of Teachers. The committee published a sympathetic report in August 1924. Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*, 6. See also *Who Was Who 1920-2014*, “Gorell,” in *Who Was Who* (London: A & C Black, 1920-2015); online ed., (Oxford: OUP, 2014); online ed., April 2014, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U53768>.

⁵² Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 233.

⁵³ “Films for the Schoolroom,” *Glasgow Herald*, May 18, 1931; The Corporation of Glasgow, Education Department, *The Film in the Classroom: Report by Special Sub-Committee on*

investigation into children's cinema-going habits in Edinburgh and their impact on personal well-being and social behaviour took place during the early 1930s. *The Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry* was published in 1933 and demonstrated a renewed interest in the role of cinema played in children's lives.⁵⁴

The decade also witnessed a noteworthy scheme at a school in the Gorbals, a lower-working-class area in Glasgow's south side that was the location of the city's first full-time cinema, the Wellington Palace.⁵⁵ The Gorbals School installed a 'cinema machine ... for the purpose of teaching nature knowledge and geography by means of non-inflammable educational films' in 1931.⁵⁶ This was not brought about by the Glasgow's Education Department but 'a joint committee of parents and teachers' raising over £300 to finance the cinema apparatus.⁵⁷ The efforts and finances this small community invested into equipping its school (raising the equivalent of about £ 17,000 in today's currency) indicates that there was an increasing demand for visual education through film, which had yet to be met by the authorities. At the public inauguration of the cinematograph machine, Cleland congratulated the school for its pioneering efforts, stressing that it was 'essential that cinematography should take its place in educational progress'. Allardyce added that 'the question of providing new facilities in [other] Glasgow schools' was now actively considered.⁵⁸ Indeed, it was not long before Cleland and Allardyce's joint project was to take off.

It is especially the former chairman of Glasgow Education Authority, Charles Cleland, who embodies an intriguing shift in the position of the city's educationists.⁵⁹ As described in Chapter Three, under his chairmanship the Authority directed several requests to the Glasgow magistrates, sent a deputation to the Scottish Secretary, and

Visual Education (Glasgow: Glasgow Corporation, November 1933), GB 2120/1/5/230, NSL, Moving Image Archive, 4.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the enquiry see Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 91-93.

⁵⁵ The Wellington Palace was located on Commercial Road and opened as full-time cinema in 1907: Early Cinema in Scotland Database (venue id=641), accessed September 9, 2015, <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/>.

⁵⁶ "Glasgow School's Lead," *Glasgow Herald*, May 28, 1931.

⁵⁷ Ibid.; Trevor Griffiths, E-mail message to author, January 9, 2015.

⁵⁸ "Glasgow School's Lead," *Glasgow Herald*, May 28, 1931.

⁵⁹ *Who Was Who*, "CLELAND, Sir Charles."

even petitioned the Home Office to install an official censor. This campaign effectively came to a halt in 1927. Glasgow Education Authority had recognised cinema films as a powerful influence on young people that it attempted to but, ultimately, failed to curb with this campaign. In a shift from restrictive regulation to positive and constructive strategies, efforts by film societies to put on special children's shows and the increasing interest in visual education at the beginning of the 1930s corresponded to the broader agenda to regulate cinema. They were attempts to elevate the standard of children's cinematic diet in the absence of an official censor who would enforce legislation differentiating child and adult audiences.

Cleland and his successor R.M. Allardyce played a prominent role in the educational cinema movement of the 1930s. Allardyce wrote for *Sight and Sound* about the Scottish 'progress' in this regard and has been described as the driving force behind the creation of the Scottish Film Council in 1934 as a branch of the British Film Institute.⁶⁰ Cleland's track record is equally impressive. He not only established the Scottish Educational Cinema Society but also appears in a film made to promote the Glasgow Necessitous Children's Holiday Camp Fund in 1934.⁶¹ He became chairman of the British Film Institute in 1936.⁶²

Between 1931 and 1933, Cleland and Allardyce pioneered Scotland's first social scientific experiment into the usefulness of film in schools. The experiment took place in the context of significant structural changes. Under the Local Government Scotland Act of 1929, the powers of Scottish education authorities were transferred to their respective local authority. The Glasgow Education Authority became the

⁶⁰ Melanie Selfe, "Encouraging National Film Culture: The Changing Role of Sight and Sound, 1935-1945," (Unpublished Masters Dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2003), 27.; C.A. Oakley, "How the Scottish Film Council began," in *21 Years of the Scottish Film Council*, ed. Scottish Film Council (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1955), 7, GB 2120/ 1/1/118, NLS, Moving Image Archive.

⁶¹ *Tam Trauchle's Troubles* was made by Pathé Pictures Ltd. for Glasgow Education Department and Cleland introduces the film: *Tam Trauchle's Troubles* (Pathe Pictures Ltd. for Glasgow Education Department, 1934), sound, from National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive, streaming video, 37:15, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0253>.

⁶² Oakley, "How the Scottish Film Council began," 11.

Education Department of Glasgow Corporation, resulting in a reshuffling of the authority's membership and a modification of its tenor.⁶³

Glasgow's Education Department carried out the experiment over two years and published a report titled *The Film in the Classroom* in 1933. The report presented the experiment as one of the first co-ordinated efforts 'to test scientifically the educational effect' of utilising films in schools. In doing so, Cleland and Allardyce distanced it from experiments undertaken in 'Middlesex and elsewhere' which tended to focus on 'the mass-presentation of general interest and background films'. The main purpose of the Glasgow project was to complement these general enquiries by conducting research that centred solely on 'using films as an integral part of the teacher's stock-in-trade.'⁶⁴

The Film in the Classroom was a summary report on experiments that took place in the post-primary course of five large Glasgow schools, including Hyndland and Springburn High school, involving children that were about 12 years of age.⁶⁵ Consisting of film-assisted lessons and subsequent memory tests, the experiment was conducted in a similar manner to *The Cinema in Education*. Nonetheless, *The Film in the Classroom* did not precisely emulate the second Cinema Commission's work. *The Scotsman* in April 1932 stressed that the Glasgow experiment was different in that it did not use 'commercial pictures to which the lessons had to be adapted but films especially prepared and adjusted to suit the lessons', thus tackling head on the main obstacle that had prevented the progress of cinema for the classroom a decade earlier.⁶⁶ Perhaps, this effort was made to achieve clearer results or to avoid the problems Spearman had encountered during his work with commercially produced films, some of which had caused a considerable number of so-called howlers.⁶⁷ The

⁶³ Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929 (Regnal. 19 & 20, Geo. 5, c. 25), accessed October 4, 2015.: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/19-20/25>

⁶⁴ Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 4.

⁶⁵ These are the only two schools revealed in the primary sources. J.E. Barton, "The Glasgow Experiment," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (1933-34), 126.

⁶⁶ "The Cinema: Films in the Classroom," *Scotsman*, April 5, 1932, *The Scotsman (1860-1920)*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/docview/489622727?accountid=14540>.

⁶⁷ National Council, *Cinema in Education*, 60-67.

choice of school subject 'was determined by the supply of suitable films available' and Geography was found to lend itself to the experimental treatment.⁶⁸ The use of specific films for school children was facilitated by the Scottish Educational Cinema Society and documentary film-maker John Grierson, who helped in the editing of silent films supplied by the Empire Marketing Board, British Instructional Films and Pathscope Library to suit certain geographical topics such as 'canals' and 'sea ports'.⁶⁹ The Society had also started to produce a small number of films itself during that time and supplied the 9.5 mm. projector used during the first part of the experiment.⁷⁰ Despite best efforts, the full report of the experiment has not been located. The following sections are based on a summary by the Glasgow Education Department, and on article by Barton and Cleland that do not contain the questionnaire or any detailed description of the methodology.

An initial inquiry was carried out between January and June 1932, establishing the ground for a more rigorous analysis the following year, which was to come up with concrete statistical figures. During the first stage of the experiment, each school selected two classes comprising thirty to forty-five pupils 'of approximately equal attainment'.⁷¹ Both classes received oral, lantern and cinema lessons in Geography once a week over a six month period (January to June). The choice of teachers was based on their expertise in Geography rather than their familiarity with cinema or love for film. In fact, as Cleland pointed out 'we deliberately excluded the film enthusiast'.⁷² The children's knowledge was then 'formally' tested with the help of a questionnaire before and after the summer vacation, 'the object of the second test being to see what permanence there was in the cinema impressions.'⁷³ Four out of five schools reported positive results in the early stages of the experiment:

⁶⁸ Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 4.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; "The Cinema: Films in the Classroom," *The Scotsman*, April 5, 1932; Charles Cleland, "Cinema Lessons and their Value: The Glasgow Experiment," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1932), 72.

⁷⁰ Charles Cleland, "Cinema Lessons and their Value: The Glasgow Experiment," 72; Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 4.

⁷¹ Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 4; Barton, "Glasgow Experiment," 126.

⁷² Cleland, "Cinema Lessons," 72.

⁷³ "Cinema as an Aid to Education," *Glasgow Herald*, November 4, 1932.

Headmasters and those teachers actually engaged in the experiment ... were satisfied that, under better working conditions as regards time, and supply of films, the cinema can be of considerable use to them.⁷⁴

The teaching staff pointed out 'that the pupils in the cinema class took a livelier interest in their Geography lesson ... and that they acquired a better understanding of it.'⁷⁵ However, in order for the Education Department to provide 'reliable data' and not rely on 'this impressionist verdict', the experiment was repeated in the following year, when 'cinema specialists made way for the statistical experts.'⁷⁶

During the second stage of the experiment only oral lessons (without any other visual aids) were compared with cinema lessons. Three classes instead of two were examined in order to 'control' variations. Class A and B received, in turn, one cinema and one oral lesson each week, while the control group only received oral lessons. An initial test was carried out after forty-eight hours plus a 'retentivity' test at the end of the teaching cycle, which had been shortened to eight weeks. The goal of the more rigorous second stage was to find a so-called 'cinema factor' - a number, that would indicate the 'average gain factor for each lesson' taught by the cinematograph.⁷⁷ The final report contains a table listing numerical 'cinema factors' for a variety of geographical topics:

⁷⁴ Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6 and 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 8.

CINEMA FACTORS						
School	Classes	Tests 1 and 2 Canada, Australia	Tests 3 and 4 Arctic, Alaska	Tests 5 and 6 Seaports, Canals	Tests 7 and 8 Cocoa, Rice	Mean Factors for Schools
I.	A and B	.876	1.016	.952	1.042	.969
II.	A and B	.877	.934	1.033	.934	.943
III.	A and B	1.081	1.052	1.036	1.144	1.077
IV.	A and B	.987	.907	1.014	.888	.947
V.	A and B	.848	.925	.993	.948	.927
Mean Factors for tests		.930	.965	1.005	.987	—

Figure 2: Statistical table listing 'cinema factors', source: *The Film in the Classroom*, 9.

Cinema factors above 1 indicated that tuition with the aid of film was beneficial and the table demonstrates that this could be achieved across all geographical subjects. The factors for test 5 and 6 indicated that the topic Sea Ports and Canals benefited in particular from the addition of film to the lesson as these achieved high results in three out of five schools. The report stressed, however, that positive results could not be achieved with general interest films screened in cinemas. For the use of films to be successful in the realm of the school it was important

- (a) That the films are really teaching-films, prepared for the purpose and not mere extracts from longer films of adventure or general interest. ...
- (b) That films intended to be an accompaniment to a lesson, and not to be a lesson by themselves, are standardised as regards length. ...⁷⁸

This statement reiterated and strengthened the definition that had become central to defining the educational value of cinema: its use as a teaching aid supporting the syllabus.

The test results of School III were above average in all topics which suggested that positive cinema factors derived not just from the display of teaching films as such but also from the technique of the teacher. Accordingly, the report identified teaching technique as an important area to build on in the future, recommending

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

‘that a film-teaching technique is developed and scrupulously maintained by the teacher’.⁷⁹

Like the 1925 Cinema Commission, *The Film in the Classroom* was not merely concerned with the transfer of knowledge through film exhibition, but also addressed questions regarding children’s memory of the material over a long period of time. To illustrate the results, the report featured a table dealing exclusively with so-called retentivity factors:

RETENTIVITY FACTORS			
School	Average Factors for weekly test	Factors for Retentivity Test	Increase of Factor after two months
I.	.969	.980	.012
II.	.943	.950	.007
III.	1.077	1.235	.158
IV.	.947	1.030	.082
V.	.927	.953	.028

Figure 3: Statistical table listing ‘retentivity factors’, source: *The Film in the Classroom*, 9.

The table shows that the average test results for film assisted lessons increased for all schools after two months which indicated ‘in every case a gain for the pupils taught with the cinema.’⁸⁰ These results constituted important evidence to support and justify the further development of visual education through film.

Overall, the report concluded:

- (1) In certain lessons and in the hands of certain teachers the cinema has been used with advantage.
- (2) From the consistency of the positive results obtained in one school there seems to be a particular technique in cinema presentation, the investigation of which is necessary
- (3) Some types of lessons lend themselves more than others to cinema illustration and instruction.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 10.

(4) Pupils taught with the cinema tend to retain what they have learned better than those taught without it.⁸¹

For Glasgow's Education Department the primary educational value of film lay in its facility to aid the transfer and memorisation of factual knowledge. This was measured by testing school children's responses to film-assisted lessons. The attempt to quantify this facility with a number - the cinema or the retentivity factor - indicates a demand among educationists to achieve tangible results that would justify the introduction of films in schools and the continuing influence of Spearman's factor analysis. Furthermore, the social-scientific approach present in *The Film in the Classroom* resembled to some extent that of *The Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry* which presented its results likewise in tables which were 'discussed in a measured way'.⁸²

The report did more than offer a prospect of what cinema in the classroom could achieve. It also reassured the remaining sceptics that this delineation made film a safe medium that, in the realm of the school, would not compromise children's moral or physical welfare:

Films on suitable subjects and satisfying the above conditions can be introduced as classroom aids without any interruption of ordinary school routine and without causing any strains, physical or mental, to the pupils.⁸³

Finding a place for film in the school was not insignificant because in this way the medium was stripped of the dangers the commercial picture house represented.

The subsequent years witnessed the large-scale introduction of cinematograph projectors and films into Scottish schools. This was facilitated by the Scottish Educational Film Association, a merger of the two educational film societies mentioned above founded in 1935, and the Scottish Film Council. The success of these bodies in 'command[ing] the respect of commercial companies and convinc[ing] the many sceptics inside the school' was crowned with the

⁸¹ Ibid., 10-11.

⁸² Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 91.

⁸³ Glasgow Education Department, *Film in the Classroom*, 10-11.

establishment of the Scottish Central Film Library in 1939.⁸⁴ This library was generously funded by the Carnegie Trust with a grant of £5000 and loaned many of its films to schools and other educational organisations in Scotland.⁸⁵ By 1950 the library had grown to be the largest distribution library in Europe ‘in terms of overall circulation of educational films’, symbolising Scotland’s prominent position within the educational cinema movement at the time.⁸⁶ In many ways, the Scottish Central Film Library was the practical answer, which the Cinema Experiments Sub-Committee had only partially addressed, to the problem which the Carnegie Trust had originally posed concerning the supply of educational films.

5.4. Conclusion

During the 1920s and early 1930s educational cinema was defined by its usefulness for school education. As programming in commercial cinemas centred increasingly on the long feature film, pushing the educational film to the margins, the development and demarcation of educational cinema fell to organisations that held a specific stake in education and to the charities supporting them like the Carnegie Trust. Educationalists endorsed a particular version of educational cinema. Driven by the demands of school teaching in particular, the assessment of cinema’s value for the classroom became a dominant goal that overshadowed broader notions of visual education in the cinema. The debate focused on the questions how effectively film could convey factual knowledge and help to retain it. *The Cinema in Education* was the first British investigation that tried to answer these questions by using statistical methods and the Glasgow experiment confirmed in a local context the significance of this methodology. Especially the identification of so-called cinema and retentivity factors in the latter experiment confirmed the idea that moving images had a profound impact on children.

⁸⁴ J.B. Frizzell, “The Scottish Educational Film Association,” in *21 Years of the Scottish Film Council*, ed. Scottish Film Council, 18.

⁸⁵ Oakley, “How the Scottish Film Council began,” 12.

⁸⁶ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 236. The library’s status as distribution centre was unique and a contrast to the National Film Library in London, which functioned mainly as a repository Nowell-Smith “Foundation and Early Years,” in *The British Film Institute*, 23.

By verifying that filmic visualisation was an effective instructive instrument, the experiments gave some justification to anxieties regarding the potential negative consequences of cinema-going: if it could be proven that cinema created lasting educative impacts, the idea that it could instruct youngsters in bad ideas and behaviour was plausible as well. So, the experiments confirmed what the educationists involved knew along, namely that cinema had a profound impact on how children learned about and interacted with the world around them. But rather than focusing on what children should not see by calling for an official censor, as the Cinema Commission and Glasgow Education Authority had done earlier, debates began to concentrate instead on what they should see.⁸⁷ Introducing films into school education was one way of providing an alternative to commercial cinema programmes. From this perspective, the Glasgow experiment in particular can be interpreted as the continuation of a struggle to control film content as a means by which children were socialised. Advocating the school as a new exhibition context outlined a new, useful and legitimate role for film in British and Scottish society. In the classroom educational cinema could co-exist with recreational cinema without replacing or interfering with it, as unlike the earlier censorship campaigns, it did not directly challenge the industry. Ultimately, the debate on censorship and the discourse on educational cinema centred on the same impetus: the importance of placing the protection and guidance of the impressionable child audience in the hands of public authorities instead of leaving it at the mercy of a fickle industry.

The aspirations visible in *The Cinema in Education* and *The Film in the Classroom* were part of an emerging movement that tried to create an alternative civic film culture which focussed on the educational and cultural value, less on the entertainment value of moving pictures. Such ambitions were already nascent in C.W. Kimmins' report to the 1917 Cinema Commission about his work with school children in London, and in the Carnegie Trust's ambition to form a film library. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of educational cinema had to await the formation of the Commission on Cultural and Educational Films before a civic film culture was seriously considered by British authorities and promoted by the British Film Institute and the Scottish Film Council. Finally, Scottish institutions and

⁸⁷ This shift of focus was a general trend and also the objective of emerging children's cinema clubs during the beginning of the 1930s: Smith in *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, 165.

promoters of educational cinema like Allardyce and Cleland, played a central role in the film education movement of the 1930s, confirming the significance of *The Film in the Classroom* in the light of the broader national discourse on cinema's social role in Britain.

PART III

USEFUL CINEMAS

6. Municipal Cinema: The case of Kirkintilloch

The first part of this thesis looked at the legal framework and local practices by which Scottish cinemas were regulated while the second part analysed enquiries into cinema's social impact and drew connections between broader (British) national debates and its local connotations in Scotland. This has revealed that Scottish institutions deployed restrictive and constructive strategies to shape cinema's social role. Constructive strategies included efforts to develop cinema's uses outside of the commercial picture house and the previous chapter has already introduced debates about cinema's role in the realm of education. The third part presents two concrete implementations of some of the ideas the educational cinema movement shared with other agencies that tried to utilise cinema for civic and non-commercial purposes. As outlined in section four of Chapter One, these alternative paths are now increasingly subsumed under the term 'Useful Cinema', a concept Wasson and Acland defined as 'films and technologies that ... serve as instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social and political capital'.¹ This thesis argues that this concept also applies to certain cinema exhibition practices. As the previous chapter indicated and as the following two chapters will show, exhibition contexts and practices played a crucial role in the ongoing strive of Scottish institutions and agencies to regulate cinema and so maintain their social relevance.

While the second part ended in 1933, this section will look at earlier periods because some of the practices preceded the debates discussed in previous sections. This is no coincidence: during the first two decades of the twentieth century, opportunities to use cinema outside of the commercial realm were more plentiful. As the commercial picture house had not yet fully established itself as the predominant form of exhibition, cinematograph shows were easily integrated into traditional forms of public entertainment, such as concerts, lantern slide and variety shows. These had been organised by a variety of civic and commercial agencies since the nineteenth century, from reform and religious societies via travelling showmen, funfairs, music halls, to town councils and the Co-operative movement. In short, cinema's social role had not been as closely tied to the large-scale exhibition industry cinema became from the late 1910s.

¹ Acland and Wasson, introduction to *Useful Cinema*, 3.

First, Chapter Six will discuss municipal cinema, a form of cinema exhibition that was controlled by the local town council. Kirkintilloch, a small town to the North East of Glasgow pioneered the first consistent municipal cinematograph scheme in Scotland, hosting moving picture shows in Kirkintilloch Town Hall from 1914 to 1923. Chapter Seven will consider the range of functions early cinema acquired in the hands of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, which ranged from entertainment to education and publicity. That chapter will cover much of the early cinema period and its purpose is to exemplify and pull together the various strands the thesis has discussed.

The previous chapter has presented the promoters of educational cinema as part of a larger movement that endorsed the creation of a civically and educationally responsible cinema to complement its role within commercial entertainment culture. Supporters of municipal cinema shared this vision of a cinema culture that was shaped by civic rather than commercial values. Municipal cinema was thus one amongst the range of alternative functions proposed during the early cinema period. The period after the First World War witnessed the establishment of several such cinemas across Scotland, for example in Montrose and Clydebank. None, however, served as long as the municipal pictures in Kirkintilloch during the silent period. Primary sources relating to the municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch exist in abundance: A full run of the local newspaper *The Kirkintilloch Herald* and the fortunate circumstance that the William Patrick Library in Kirkintilloch is in possession of the town council minutes as well as the cinema's financial papers for the period under consideration means that a detailed analysis of its exhibition practices is possible. The Kirkintilloch case is particularly interesting because of its links to the Independent Labour Party's policy on municipal socialism. Thomas Johnston, who as Labour MP and Scottish Secretary co-ordinated major civic projects in later years, as a young councillor in Kirkintilloch was an enthusiastic promoter of municipal socialism and the main instigator of the municipal cinema. His background raises interesting questions regarding the political or ideological vision which lay behind the cinema's creation and makes Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema a worthwhile case study.

The late film scholar and historian of visual culture Elizabeth Lebas defined the specificity of municipal cinema and introduced important arguments regarding its social function. In *Forgotten Futures*, she analyses films made by Glasgow

Corporation and Bermondsey Borough Council between 1920 and 1980, stating that these should be read as ‘messages from the local state and its civil society.’² As part of municipal and civic culture, films sponsored by the local state represented a counterpoint to popular and commercial cinema. As she explains, municipalities were ‘forbidden by law to compete with commercial cinema interests’ and municipal films were, hence, not meant to have a commercial value and were often shown free on municipal properties.³ Mainly conceived as informative texts about local events, culture and practices, they addressed spectators as citizens rather than consumers. Moreover, as a public not a private investment, municipal cinema was ‘subject to political accountability’, a central aspect in the context of the present chapter.⁴ As the following pages will show, many facets of municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch fit with Lebas’ categorisation. One of the main questions addressed is whether the municipal picture programmes were different to those offered by the Pavilion, the nearby commercial cinema with which it competed.

Lebas’ focus is on the films themselves, which means that questions regarding exhibition practices remain marginal in her account. While the present chapter draws on her definition of municipal cinema as ‘an alternative cinema’, it seeks to expand it to include exhibition spaces and practices.⁵ This means that a discussion of municipal cinema does not have to centre on the municipality as a producer or sponsor of particular local film texts, and can instead scrutinise its role as exhibitor. As Richard Maltby and others have suggested, to understand its social role cinema has to be positioned within the historical and local context it operated in.⁶ Hence, Kirkintilloch’s municipal cinema will be examined first in light of contemporary ideas regarding the scope of municipal government and the ambitions of local councillors. This will be followed by a discussion whether these ambitions manifested themselves in the programmes and how the cinema’s role was negotiated within these in relation to the commercial picture house. Filmmaking was still a relatively new and largely underexplored activity for local authorities during the early cinema period, so the

² Lebas, *Forgotten Futures*, 18.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ See Maltby and Stokes, introduction to *Going to the Movies*. Maltby, “New Cinema Histories,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

town council's control over its municipal cinema did not necessarily manifest itself in the film text as such but was more likely reflected in the organisation of the exhibitions, the space used, the choice of films, how the cinema was financed and promoted, and in its relationship with the audience.

Cinema shows in town halls were not uncommon during the early period and were mostly run by private exhibitors renting the hall from the Council.⁷ There is now an emerging scholarship within cinema history that looks at the role of the venue in attracting certain publics and audiences.⁸ This research strand has produced studies on non-theatrical exhibition spaces, including the home, libraries, meeting halls, temperance halls and the town hall.⁹ To consider non-theatrical cinema is particularly important for the early period when purpose-built cinemas were not yet widespread. Judith Thissen, for example, looked at moving pictures in neighbourhood meeting halls on the Lower Eastside in New York, mainly frequented by Jewish immigrants from Europe. She found that the exhibitor's relationship with the local community was crucial for anticipating the taste of the audience. She also discovered that the participatory nature of traditional working class entertainment was feared for its potential to transform into a political movement.¹⁰ As will be seen below, familiarity and participation were important aspects also of the municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch.

Cinema in multipurpose venues has become a significant part of studying early cinema in small towns and rural areas due to the scarcity of purpose-built cinemas there. These are an important expansion of cinema history because they complement 'grand' narratives that see modern cinema culture located solely within the picture palace of the metropolis.¹¹ That cinema exhibition furthered modernisation similarly

⁷ Vélez-Serna, "Mapping Film Exhibition in Scotland before Permanent Cinemas," 25-37; For a broader context on cinema exhibition in non-purpose built venues compare Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 16-55.

⁸ "Part 3: Venues and their Publics," in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

⁹ "Part 2: Other Cinema: Alternatives to Theatrical Exhibition," in *Going to the Movies*.

¹⁰ Judith Thissen, "Early Cinema and the Public Sphere of the Neighbourhood Meeting Hall: The Long Duree of Working-Class Sociability," in *Beyond the Screen: Institutions, Networks and Publics Of early Cinema*, eds. Marta Braun et. al (New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey Publishing, 2012), 297-307.

¹¹ See for example Ben Singer, "Modernity," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*.

in small towns has been convincingly demonstrated in the work of Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Joe Kember.¹² Recently, John Caughie has emphasised that early cinema exhibition was welcomed as a modernising force in Scottish small towns such as Bo'ness.¹³ Similar to metropolitan exhibition, cinema's initial success in small towns derived from its integration into local entertainment cultures rather than the radical replacement of traditional structures. This applies also to the case of early cinema culture in Kirkintilloch where the popularity of the commercial cinema brought about the modernisation of the town hall as a community venue. Before analysing the case of Kirkintilloch in more detail, the next section will consider the historical background of municipal cinema in Scotland and discuss the relationship it had with commercial cinema.

6.1. Municipal Cinemas and the Cinema Trade

Scotland was not the only country to municipalise some of its cinemas during the early period. The influence of pressure groups pushing for a tight regulation of commercial cinema led to a widespread municipalisation of cinemas in Norway. In 1913, the Norwegian government passed the Film Theatres' Act, demanding that local councils 'licence all public showings of films within the area of their jurisdiction'. An indirect consequence of this Act was that many Norwegian municipalities began to buy local cinemas, leading to the establishment of a public cinema monopoly, the National Association of Municipal Cinemas, in 1917. As Gunnar Iverson pointed out, apart from the motivation to regulate film exhibition, local authorities were drawn towards municipalisation due to the promise of earning a profit by running cinemas themselves and using this to pay for other services.¹⁴ Dag

¹² Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Modernity of Small Town Tastes: Movies at the 1907 Cooperstown, New York, Centennial," in *Explorations in New Cinema Histories*. Compare also Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and George Potamianos, introduction to *Hollywood in the Neighbourhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fueller-Seeley (London; Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008); and Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996). See also Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity: Victorian Popular Shows and Early Cinema* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2009).

¹³ John Caughie, "Small Town Cinema in Scotland: The Particularity of Place," in *Cinema beyond the City: Filmgoing in Small Town and Rural Europe*, ed. Judith Thissen (London: Palgrave MacMillan, forthcoming).

¹⁴ Gunnar Iverson, "Norway," in *Nordic National Cinemas*, eds. Tytti Soila, Astrid Söderbergh-Widding and Gunnar Iverson, (Routledge: London and New York, 1998), 106.

Asbjørnsen and Ove Solum have analysed the function of municipal cinemas in Norway by applying the concept of public service, more commonly used in studies of broadcasting. They found that its inherent notions of social responsibility and legitimacy were central to the institutionalisation and survival of the municipal cinema system.¹⁵ In the 1920s, the Social Democrats and the ruling Norwegian Left supported municipalities taking over cinemas which suggests that some parallels can be drawn with the Scottish situation where municipalisation of local services was an Independent Labour Party policy.¹⁶ However, municipal cinemas remained an exception, not the norm. One reason was that the power of local authorities as cinema regulators was limited, as explained in the first part of this thesis. Another reason was that national, political and legal structures were supportive of private rather than public trading. While widespread municipalisation like in Norway was unfeasible for these reasons, on the municipal level certain possibilities existed.

Similar to the Norwegian case, attempts to municipalise entertainment in Britain were associated with motivations to enhance public taste. Originating in the temperance and moral reform movements of the late nineteenth century, civic entertainments were intended to 'elevate to some degree the recreational taste of local citizens'.¹⁷ Such motives were articulated, for instance, by the Liquor Control Board when it considered opening a cinema in Cumberland in 1916. The idea was that a 'state cinema' would help

- (1) To secure an antidote to the lure of the public house.
- (2) To submit the picture theatres to a process of "State Purification" similar to that which is being applied to certain public houses.
- (3) To attempt some demonstration of its broad-minded tolerance towards "healthy amusement" for the people.¹⁸

Glasgow Corporation had been running municipal shows with similar intentions since the 1870s. Staged regularly on Saturday afternoons, these entertainments - often taking the form of concerts - started to include moving pictures at the beginning of

¹⁵ Dag Asbjørnsen and Ove Solum, " 'The Best Cinema System in the World' - The Municipal Cinema System in Norway: Historical and comparative perspectives," *Nordicom Review* (Vol. 24, No 1: 2003): 89-105.

¹⁶ Iverson, "Norway," in *National Cinemas*, eds. Soila, Söderbergh-Widding and Iverson, 105.

¹⁷ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 114.

¹⁸ "No Room for State Cinemas," *Bioscope*, August 10, 1916, 1.

the new century. In 1919, these shows faced increasing competition by cheap picture houses. In response Walter Freer, curator of Glasgow Corporation Halls and driving force behind the Saturday concerts, announced Glasgow's plans to furnish all public halls with a cinematograph to run municipal picture shows.¹⁹ Glasgow was not the only authority considering such a move at that time. Similar proposals came especially from a number of smaller towns such as Clydebank, Kirkcaldy, Montrose, Johnstone, Dunoon and Renfrew. The surge in post-war municipal cinemas even reached Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, where it was hoped that a public cinema 'would be less likely to offend Free Church sensibilities.'²⁰

Local authorities were not only motivated by moral arguments, but considered municipal pictures for economic reasons. Their profitability was proven by the success of commercial cinemas and, thus, regarded as a potential source of income to fund other municipal activities. As Griffiths maintained, this was particularly relevant during the early decades of the twentieth century when the increasing influence of socialist policies brought about the expansion of public services in many Scottish town councils without a matching growth in revenue:

[I]n a period in which the revenue base of most urban authorities was failing to expand at a rate to match the growth in services provided, the cinema's record for profitability offered hope of an additional buoyant source of income.²¹

Income generated through municipal cinema meant that revenues could increase without the town council having to raise the rates (the equivalent of Council tax). Enthusiasm for the municipal cinema schemes was particularly high during the immediate post-war years when property values were being re-assessed and the likelihood of increased rates was great.²²

Apprehensive about any type of state interference, the cinema trade lobbied against the spread of municipal cinemas. At a conference of the cinema trade in Glasgow in September 1918, the need to stop municipal competition was urgently

¹⁹ "The Municipal Cinema," *Bioscope*, November 27, 1919, 113.

²⁰ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 115.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

²² *Ibid.*, 112.

brought to the attention of delegates. First and foremost, the cinema trade was anxious about the favourable position municipal cinemas operated from:

Municipal trading in all except the absolute necessities of life - water, gas, and the like - is without doubt the most pernicious form of competition which the man of commerce has to face.²³

Under the protected auspices of the local authority, municipal cinemas were thought to have unlimited access to public finances and perceived to be in a better position to evade sanctions when the safety requirements of the 1909 Cinematograph Act could not be met:

No public hall can come near to complying with the restrictions which apply to all cinemas in the way of exits, fixed seats, etc., and it is far from right that with such obvious advantages they should be allowed to compete with halls which have to spend thousands of pounds ... to satisfy the [Cinematograph] Act ...²⁴

Another worry was that municipal picture shows would appeal to the same patrons while having lower running costs.²⁵ In 1919, when Glasgow was planning a municipal cinema scheme so comprehensive that it would 'embrace all the Halls under the Corporation' accommodating '300,000 patrons', the editors of *The Bioscope* accused the Corporation of trying to eradicate commercial cinemas in their jurisdiction. At the time the Corporation banned the building of new cinemas due to a shortage of housing stock, a policy the editors claimed was connected to its municipalisation agenda:

In effect it works out thus: We [Glasgow Corporation] want municipal cinemas. If we allow private enterprise to build cinemas, we shall not be able to run our municipal cinemas - therefore, we will stop building by private enterprise on the plea of houses first, and we will thus eliminate any further competition.²⁶

Glasgow Corporation never realised this agenda; it was unattainable in the face of a strong trade lobby as well as legal and pragmatic obstacles. The city's commercial cinema scene already encompassed more than eighty cinemas and was represented

²³ "Ousting the Exhibitor," *Bioscope*, September 19, 1918, 4.

²⁴ "The Municipal Cinema," *Bioscope*, March 27, 1919, 87.

²⁵ "Municipal Enterprise," *Bioscope*, July 19, 1917, 319.

²⁶ "The Municipal Cinema," *Bioscope*, November 27, 1919, 113.

by a local branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association which had close links with the Corporation. But the trade was not concerned about municipal cinemas in Glasgow *per se*, or any other specific place. What needed to be curbed were the consequences of any municipality setting a precedent for authority controlled cinemas that could lead to a Norwegian scenario:

A far greater danger lies in the possibility that the practice once started will be followed, and the havoc wrought may be multiplied a hundredfold. From the municipality to the State is but a short step. Is the next step to be the State controlled cinema?²⁷

Consequently, the journal encouraged exhibitors to take active steps against municipalisation. The principal strategy was to question the legitimacy of local authorities entering into commercial business with ratepayers' money:

The Acts of Parliament under which our municipalities are constituted never for one instant contemplated that these municipalities should be permitted to embark upon commercial enterprises.²⁸

In Scotland this led to two court cases, starting with a legal challenge against Dunoon Town Council in July 1921. In January, the Council had decided to take over the Pavilion Cinema on Argyle Street to offer summer entertainments that included cinematograph shows, a move that was contested in the Court of Session by the proprietor of the Picture House, also on Argyle Street. The judge sided with the private owner, arguing that while the council was allowed 'to erect places of public entertainment' and 'to provide music by bands, concerts, or otherwise' this provision did not include cinematograph shows.²⁹ In Montrose on the East coast, Ex-Bailie Davidson had started to run a municipal cinema in the Burgh Hall in 1919. According to *The Bioscope*, the pictures made close to £1000 in profit, a success that prompted the owners of the Empire Picture House to 'commence a legal action' against Davidson in December 1921, but without the desired effect.³⁰ Whereas legal

²⁷ "Ousting the Exhibitor," *Bioscope*, September 19, 1918, 4

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Councils and Kinemas," *Scottish Kinema Record*, July 10, 1921, 1; Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 115-6.

³⁰ Ibid., 116. "The Burgh Hall Cinema, Montrose," *Bioscope*, August 5, 1920, 74.

intervention prevented municipal cinema in Dunoon, in Montrose it enjoyed a number of prosperous seasons before faltering in September 1923.³¹

As an alternative to commercial cinema, municipally controlled cinemas were resisted and legally challenged by the cinema trade. While this strategy was not always successful, the surrounding discourse shows that political and legal structures were more supportive of cinema as a private enterprise and that the idea of cinema as public service was met with considerable opposition. This opposition is connected to municipal cinema's alignment with political movements which challenged the orthodoxy of free-market capitalism. The case of Kirkintilloch, in particular, must be understood in relation to the Independent Labour Party's view on municipal government and Thomas Johnston's support for cinema as a public service.

6.2. The Independent Labour Party and Municipal Socialism

James Keir Hardie, a Lanarkshire miner and trade unionist who sought more adequately to represent the interest of the working classes, founded the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893 and started to publish and edit the weekly journal *Labour Leader* to promote its cause.³² By 1906, the ILP had been absorbed into the Labour Party (formerly Labour Representation Committee), an alliance of trade unions and socialist groups which was on the cusp of becoming the third largest political force in Britain.³³ As an emerging party with the prospect of becoming part of the central government still some way off - Labour formed the first (minority) government in 1924 - the ILP's initial strategy was to create policies that focused on the municipal level.³⁴ One such policy sought to strengthen town and burgh councils' role as providers of public services. Hardie published a pamphlet to this effect in

³¹ "General News and Notes," *Bioscope*, September 13, 1923, 83.

³² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Hardie, (James) Keir (1856-1915)," by Kenneth O. Morgan, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33696>.

³³ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Labour Representation Committee (act. 1900-1906)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, by Alastair J. Reid, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95367>.

³⁴ James Moore and Richard Rodger, "Who really ran the cities? Municipal Knowledge and Policy - Networks in British local government, 1832-1914," in *Who Ran the Cities?: City Elites and Urban Power Structures in Europe and North America, 1750-1940*, eds. Ralf Roth and Robert Beachy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

1910. It was called *The Common Good: An Essay in Municipal Government* and encouraged town councils to use the Common Good fund - a specific Scottish institution enabling municipalities to raise money through selling public services - the provision of tram services, for example - without seeking permission from central government. The profits could be used to improve living standards by delivering other public services, like housing, clean water and gas. 'The Common Good' Hardie wrote 'would be invaluable as an aid in the development of municipal trading' from the basic supply of gas and electricity to the additional provision of affordable bread, coal, milk and, last but not least, public entertainment.³⁵ The specific institution of the Common Good fund created a practical basis for municipal enterprise in Scottish towns.

Thomas Johnston was an enthusiastic promoter of municipal socialism along the lines proposed by Hardie. In fact, as Johnston's biographer Graham Walker points out, he 'came to embody much of the former's [Hardie's] spirit of integrity and drive for social justice'. Johnston was born into a conservative and Presbyterian household in Kirkintilloch in 1881. The oldest of four children, Johnston was educated at Lairdslaw Public School, Lenzie Academy and as a mature student at the University of Glasgow. When he left school to work as a clerk, he became interested in Fabian socialism and the politics of the Independent Labour Party which he represented from the age of twenty-two. In 1906, Johnston founded *Forward*, 'a paper for the respectable, self-improving working class' that quickly rose to become Scotland's leading socialist newspaper of the day.³⁶ As author of *Our Scots Noble Families* (1909) and *The History of the Working Classes in Scotland* (1920), he was an active producer of knowledge for an educated and emancipated working class. Johnston supported

³⁵ J. Keir Hardie, *The Common Good: An Essay in Municipal Government* (Manchester: The National Labour Press Ltd., 1910), 7, see also 8-11, *Spirit of Revolt: Archives of Dissent*, accessed August 13, 2015, https://archive.org/stream/TheCommonGood_201411/The%20Common%20Good#page/n0/mode/2up.

³⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Johnston, Thomas (1881-1965)," by Graham Walker, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34213>.

the Red Clydesiders and more moderate working class organisations, such as the City of Glasgow Friendly Society in 1911.³⁷

Johnston served as local councillor in Kirkintilloch from 1913 to 1922, followed by a career in national politics when he acted as Labour MP for West Stirlingshire and Dundee during the 1920s and, most prominently, as under-secretary in the Scottish Office between 1929 and 1931 as well as Scottish Secretary from 1941 to 1945. As a national politician Johnston contributed to the empowerment of local authorities through the 1930 Housing (Scotland) Act and furthered Scotland's autonomy by creating a council of state with legislative powers in 1941. He also acted as Labour spokesman for colonial matters and contributed to the Empire Marketing Board.³⁸ If any central idea can be drawn from Johnston's complex socialist views and political activities, it is his support of the collective, or 'common good', through empowered municipalities and increased state provision. As Walker sums up:

He gave the state a natural role in Scottish economic life which has proved enduring and a marked contrast to developments in England. He was adept at channelling energies and expertise to a common purpose, and engendering self-belief.³⁹

The municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch was a local and very small manifestation of the idea of the empowered collective and its most immediate democratic representative, the town council. It is not surprising then that during his time as local councillor, Johnston fronted a number of municipal experiments, including 'a municipal piggery, a municipal goat herd, municipal kitchen, municipal jam-making, municipal restaurant, municipal slipper baths and a municipal bank'.⁴⁰ The municipal cinema was not even the most important and successful of these ventures; the bank was. Nonetheless, Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema had a small

³⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Red Clydesiders (act. 1915-1924)," by Alastair J. Reid, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95082>; Jack House and Allan Laing, *The Friendly Adventure: The Story of Scottish Friendly Assurance Society's One Hundred and Fifty Years* (Bell and Bain: Glasgow, 2012), 25, *Scottish Friendly*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.scottishfriendly.co.uk/uploads/pdf/150-years/the-friendly-adventure.pdf> .

³⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, "Johnston, Thomas,".

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Tom Johnston: Man of his Century* (Strathkelvin District Council, 1985), 1.

share in the bigger idea of municipal socialism and advanced the notion that cinema could function as an accessible public service. In a *Forward* article from Spring 1914, Johnston stressed that ‘there is money in the Municipal Cinema [and] splendid propaganda in the agitation for the Municipal Cinema’ and referred to its acceptance among Kirkintilloch town councillors as ‘an avowed step in Socialism’.⁴¹ A number of other Scottish town councils were praised by *Forward* for setting up municipal pictures that are less known for such efforts, such as Kirkcudbright, Coatbridge, Greenock, Govan and Alloa. Some of these ventures were short-lived, however. Alloa Town Council, for instance, ‘retired from the business when fresh private enterprise shows were introduced. ... surrender[ing] a valuable source of income to its Common Good funds’ and Govan stopped its municipal cinema when it was annexed to Glasgow.⁴² Kirkintilloch’s municipal cinema was part of a bigger project that tried to realise the type of municipal socialism that Hardie had proposed only a few years earlier. Under the auspices of the municipality, the cinema, like the restaurant or the bank, was to provide an affordable public service, its profits enjoyed and liabilities carried by the community. The next section offers an analysis of the cinema’s exhibition and programming strategies and the changes these underwent over the nine years of its existence.

6.3. Kirkintilloch’s Municipal Cinema

Kirkintilloch is positioned near the Antonine Wall to the North-East of Glasgow and was granted the Royal charter as Burgh in 1211. By 1911, it had a population of about 12,000, growing to about 13,000 inhabitants between then and 1925.⁴³ Scotland’s Forth and Clyde Canal, created during the eighteenth century, divides the North from the South of the town and made Kirkintilloch a place of significance during the industrial period, up to the middle of the twentieth century. The nearby coal mines, iron foundries, calico print works and chemical industries used its canal site at Southbank to ship raw materials and goods, and small vessels were built in

⁴¹ Thomas Johnston, “The Municipal Picture House in Scotland,” *Forward*, May 16, 1914.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The demographical data refers to the Census 1911 and Census 1951, available in digital format from the website *A Vision of Britain through Time*, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/>.

Kirkintilloch until 1945. The presence of industry meant that a large part of the area's population was working class and sympathetic to Thomas Johnston's socialist ideas. This is reflected in the changing election results which indicate that Labour was of growing political significance in Kirkintilloch and the surrounding region between 1910 and 1923.⁴⁴

Kirkintilloch Town Hall was built in sandstone, a classical building with Baroque features, and opened in July 1906. It was positioned at the Eastern end of Union Street, to the North of the Clyde and Forth Canal.⁴⁵

Before the town hall started to run municipal film shows, the space was rented to touring companies staging concerts, theatre performances as well as cinematograph shows. OK Pictures was a travelling film exhibition company headed by Jim Clark who 'established himself as favourite entertainment caterer in Kirkintilloch' by renting the town hall to show moving pictures.⁴⁶ But these companies were soon confronted with the competing attraction of the local cinema, the Pavilion Picture House, and bookings of the hall decreased.

⁴⁴ Information on election results for each constituency between 1910 and 1923 retrieved from the statistical atlas of website *A Vision of Britain through Time*, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/elections/>.

⁴⁵ See *Register for Scotland: Buildings at Risk*, accessed August 13, 2015, http://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/ref_no/1295.

⁴⁶ "O.K. Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, December 9, 1914.



Figure 4: Image of Kirkintilloch Town Hall during the 1900s, source: *The History of Kirkintilloch*

The Pavilion Picture House, located in close vicinity to the town hall on the corner of Kerr and Oxford Street, opened in 1912 and was the only permanent cinema in Kirkintilloch until the municipal pictures commenced two years later.⁴⁷ Neither a picture of the cinema, nor the building itself seems to have survived. *The Bioscope* reported a capacity of 1000 at its time of opening and among the traces left by the Pavilion are the weekly advertisements in the local liberal orientated newspaper *The Kirkintilloch Herald*.⁴⁸ During the war, the cinema was managed by Mr Simmons, and Thomas Ormiston, a leading figure of the Scottish cinema trade whose circuit grew to twenty-two cinemas in the 1920s, was recorded as the Pavilion's secretary in 1916 and 1921.⁴⁹ Like Johnston, Ormiston played a role in national politics as Unionist MP

⁴⁷ See *Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 1840-1980*, accessed 13, August, 2015, http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=204929; W. N. Rankine Mackie, "Memories of Home," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, August 10, 2010, *Kirkintilloch Herald* (online), accessed September 29, 2015 <http://www.kirkintilloch-herald.co.uk/news/local-headlines/memories-of-home-1-363090>.

⁴⁸ "Away up North: A few Notes from Scotland," *Bioscope*, October 17, 1912, 209.

⁴⁹ "Picture House," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, February 3, 1915; Kirkintilloch Town Council Minutes 1916, July 6, 1916, GB1015 /GD1/1/16, East Dunbartonshire Archives: Kirkintilloch; Kirkintilloch Town Council Minutes 1921, May 3, 1921, GD 1/1/21, East Dunbartonshire Archives: Kirkintilloch; McBain, "Thomas Ormiston,".

for Motherwell during the 1930s.⁵⁰ The Pavilion opened six days of the week, offering one house at 7 p.m. from Monday to Friday, a children's matinee at 3 p.m. as well as two evening performances on Saturday.

Lamenting the 'considerable loss' the popularity of the Pavilion caused for the income of entertainment in the town hall, Thomas Johnston and Bailie Gibson made a case for the installation of a cinematograph in a meeting of the town council in March 1914.⁵¹ The equipped hall was not intended to be leased to a private cinema exhibitor. The committee proposed instead to run film shows under the auspices of the council. At first sight, the co-conveners' motivations seem solely economic:

running a cinematograph show ... two nights a week, and a matinee on Saturday ... would ... make a profit of something like £ 151 17/8 a year.⁵²

However, they also attempted to justify the plan by emphasising the educational function of a municipal cinema:

The form of entertainment most appreciated ... was the picture house. The picture house exhibition had come to stay, and when that was the case most of them [the Hall and Park Committee] were of opinion that it should be in its very best, its very highest, and most useful form. They believed if they could give the public first-class entertainment that would be helpful and instructive at the same time it would be exceedingly valuable.⁵³

The installation of a cinematograph apparatus was swiftly agreed upon at the next meeting in April.⁵⁴ But the question whether the Council was in a legal position to use ratepayers' money for the running of municipal picture shows was unclear and caused 'several months' hard fighting' among councillors before the motion was carried. The main point of contention was that it was illegal for the town council to 'charge losses on cinema show running, against any of the local rates'.⁵⁵ Despite the lack of statutory powers to set up and manage a municipal cinema under the auspices

⁵⁰ McBain, "Thomas Ormiston,".

⁵¹ "Corporation Entertainments," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 11, 1914.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kirkintilloch Town Council Minutes, April 13, 1914, GB1015 GD 1/1/14, East Dunbartonshire Archives: Kirkintilloch.

⁵⁵ Thomas Johnston, "The Municipal Picture House in Scotland," *Forward*, May 16, 1914.

of the Council, a solution was found by setting up a non-statutory sub-committee comprising of Johnston, Gibson and Messenger Fletcher, who agreed to

run the entertainments on their own responsibility, giving an obligation to be personally responsible for any loss and handing over any profit to the burgh's Common Good Fund.⁵⁶

Moreover, according to Johnston the profits would be handed to the Burgh Treasures 'but [were] earmarked, so that ... losses [would] be taken from the profit fund.' Not every town had a Common Good fund 'to get around the legal difficulty' which makes Kirkintilloch town council, and other councils that had such a fund, stand out in their concern for communal welfare.⁵⁷

6.3.1. The Rise of the Municipal Cinema

On the afternoon of the 14th November 1914, the municipal cinema opened to a civic reception. Introducing the municipal pictures to a hall crowded with children and adults, Bailie Gibson underlined its economic benefit to the community:

It was for the public to patronise the pictures, as all the profits went to the public funds. No private individual took away any of the profits of these entertainments.⁵⁸

The afternoon matinee opened with the Western *Bronco Billy's Visit* (Essanay Film Manufacturing Company, c.1914), a Vitagraph comedy starring John Bunny and, 'in keeping with the announcement' that 'the programme contained an educational strain', the show finished with the colour film *Some Garden Flowers* (Pathécolor, c.1914).⁵⁹ If this spoke of the ambitions of the municipal pictures committee, the evening's choice of feature film was even more telling. The film, *The Curse of War*, directed by Alfred Machin for Belge-Cinéma Film in 1913, depicting a tragic tale of two friends who have to fight each other, was reported to have occupied 'the top of the bill.'⁶⁰ The programming of the film can be regarded as a reference

⁵⁶ "Municipal Public Entertainment," *Kirkintilloch Gazette*, May 15, 1914.

⁵⁷ Thomas Johnston, "The Municipal Picture House in Scotland," *Forward*, May 16, 1914.

⁵⁸ "Municipal Pictures Opening," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, November 18, 1914.

⁵⁹ Ibid.; John Bunny appeared in 250 Vitagraph shorts between 1910 and 1915 and was known to audiences worldwide; he died in 1915, *Internet Movie Database*, accessed September 11, 2015, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0120544/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm.

⁶⁰ "Municipal Pictures Opening," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, November 18, 1914.

to the Independent Labour Party's campaigns to stop Britain entering the First World War earlier that year.⁶¹ The bill also featured a shorter war picture showing 'French troops in manoeuvres' as well as another Western, *Red Saunder's Sacrifice* (Lubin Manufacturing company, 1912), and a burlesque show.⁶² Despite the temporary lack of a full cinematograph lens which rendered 'the pictures ... smaller than intended' on this first night, the *Kirkintilloch Herald* praised 'their remarkable steadiness', stating that the audience was sent home 'favourably impressed with what they had seen'.⁶³

The Saturday matinee and the two houses in the evening would become the most frequented shows of the municipal cinema. In addition, the municipal cinema opened on Monday nights (and subsequently on Fridays too), for which it proposed more elevated programmes, for example, an adaption of 'a play from Sir Walter Scott's novels' during its first season.⁶⁴ The intention to offer a cheap but uplifting alternative to the commercial picture house was particularly visible at the beginning of the project. During the first few months, the slogan 'Humorous, Topical, Educational' was adopted alongside a competitive price policy and a reference to the public character of the cinema directly below the title of the weekly advertisements for the *Herald*:

⁶¹ Maria A. Velez-Serna, "Anti-War movements and the Media," *Spirit of Revolt: Archives of Dissent* (blog), January 9, 2015, <http://spiritofrevolt.info/anti-war-movements-and-the-media-1914-1918/> accessed Aug 13th 2015.

⁶² "Municipal Pictures Opening," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, November 18, 1914.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

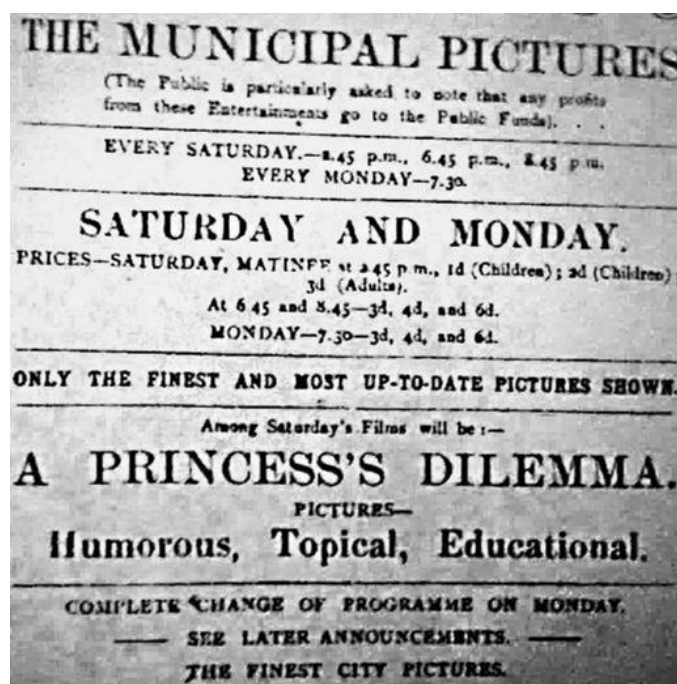


Figure 5: Advert Kirkintilloch Municipal Pictures, source: *Kirkintilloch Herald*, November 18, 1914

The municipal cinema committee soon had to compromise on some of its aspirations, in part due to competition from the Pavilion. A comparison between the programming and advertisement strategies of both venues shows that the municipal cinema adapted gradually to the Pavilion's decisions. The latter featured live variety on Saturday nights, for example, so while the municipal cinema initially only offered films, live acts came to figure prominently from about a month after its opening.⁶⁵ A further aspect that a *Herald* reviewer found initially wanting was comedy, an element that would become an important ingredient in both cinemas' programmes, especially during the war years.⁶⁶

Apart from this, both cinemas incorporated local elements into their weekend schedules. The Pavilion screened a roll of honour showing 'kent faces' of local soldiers 'received with applause' by the audience.⁶⁷ The municipal cinema established ties with the local community especially through its children's matinee

⁶⁵ "Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, December 16, 1914.

⁶⁶ "Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, December 30, 1914, and January 6, 1915.

⁶⁷ See for example "The Picture House," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January 13 and 26, 1915.

on Saturday afternoons. Rather than showing the same films that would be shown in the evening, it offered special programmes for children. In early March 1915, for example, a cinematic adaptation of *Jack and the Beanstalk* was exhibited, and the following month the children were shown animal films.⁶⁸ Packed matinee performances were also achieved with the help of a scheme that rewarded children who went to the town hall regularly:

The hall was crowded with weans in the afternoon, probably the chief draw being the near approach of the long-looked forward to gala and games, the reward of regular attendance at the matinees throughout the spring.⁶⁹

A later article in the *Scottish Kinema Record* suggests that the children's gala day, taking place in May or June each year, was filmed and shown at the last picture show before the summer break. The article titled 'Films and "Fathers" ' noted Johnston's reluctance to adopt the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association's recommendation to only show films that had received a certificate from the Censor because he deduced that this might put an end to the practice of exhibiting scenes from the annual children's gala.⁷⁰ While the special appeal to children was maintained during the first few years in operation, the educational aspirations so noticeable in the slogan 'humorous, topical, educational' featured in the initial advertisements were tempered, and educational films, when they featured at all, were confined to Saturday afternoons and Monday nights.

During the first Christmas season the municipal cinema had to compete with another rival, the travelling cinema OK Pictures. In the winter of 1914, the company that had previously used the town hall to screen its shows had to transfer to the Temperance Hall where a gas engine was installed 'for supply of electric light for the cinema machine'.⁷¹ Whether it was for the expense of this installation, the 'rather disappointing' entertainment it offered or owing to the general decline in travelling

⁶⁸ "Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 10 and April 24, 1915.

⁶⁹ "Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 12, 1915.

⁷⁰ "Films and 'Fathers'," *Scottish Kinema Record*, June 26, 1920, 1.

⁷¹ "O.K. Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, December 9, 1914.

cinemas during that time, the company did not return to Kirkintilloch during the following winters.⁷²

The ability of the municipal pictures committee to successfully engage in competition with the private cinema by adapting to audiences' taste meant it was instantly profitable, and secured a robust position in the entertainment culture of Kirkintilloch. When its first season drew to a close in June 1915, the municipal cinema committee was able to hand over £ 100 of profits to the town council via the Common Good Fund.⁷³

However, the public and semi-legal position the cinema occupied meant that scepticism and suspicion of mismanagement accompanied the celebration of its profitability. The first successful season was received with mixed feelings by the editors of the *Herald*, who expressed their doubts in form of a vernacular sketch entitled 'The Crack at the Brig'. In this weekly column commenting on local affairs, the two imaginary characters Tam and Rab criticised the public cinema as an unfair competitor to 'an or' nar company' (an ordinary company), arguing that it could avoid expenses that any private exhibitor had to face:

The Municeepal Picters ... had a baund of a' attendants warking for naething. They had nae manager tae pey. The ha'keeper's salary had been raised because o' the picters, but it wis the ratepeyers wha were peyin' it.⁷⁴

In an angry letter to the paper's editor Thomas Johnston accused the *Herald* of carrying a 'steady campaign of hostility to the Municipal Pictures' and pointed out that the cinema's achieved profits were remarkable considering that the initial capital expenditure for installing electricity and a cinematograph into the town hall had been around £600. He then listed some of the cinema's permanent running costs:

We paid ... over £53 for printing and advertisements. Artists did not come for nothing, nor did the pianist, nor the violinist, nor the cash girls. We did not get police attendance, nor lithographed posters, nor the trolley

⁷² Ibid.; Jim Clark also ran shows in Paisley, which appear to have finished in 1915. See for example, "Away up North: A few Notes from Scotland," *Bioscope*, February 23, 1911, 26.

⁷³ "Success of Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 16, 1915.

⁷⁴ "The Crack at the Brig," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 23, 1915.

display for nothing... . We had a first-class manager, and we paid him first-class terms.⁷⁵

The name of the manager is never mentioned in any of the accounts of the municipal cinema or the newspaper but from correspondence it appears that he was called J.D. Hutchison. Hutchison appears to have been well connected with the Scottish cinema trade. By 1917, a large part of the municipal cinema's feature programme was selected by Arthur Dent, who at the time was Scotland's sales representative for Famous Players-Lasky and Paramount.⁷⁶ This shows that the municipal cinema committee delegated programming decisions to a skilled manager and trustworthy distributor, who were committed to keeping up with current trends like feature programming.⁷⁷

Even without going into every single account detail, Johnston's letter to the editor demonstrates how ideologically charged the idea and practice of running a permanent municipal cinema was in early twentieth-century Scotland. The practice of drawing on a community's collective funds to invest in trading activities was illegal at the time and challenged liberal and conservative values of individualism and private entrepreneurship. Another example demonstrating this is a dispute that arose within the town council in the early months of 1917, when the municipal pictures committee was accused of deliberately avoiding the payment of rent by 'simply walk[ing] round the Hall Committee to the detriment of the Hall revenue'.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Thomas Johnston, "The "Crack at the Brig" and the Municipal Pictures", letter to the editor, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 30, 1915.

⁷⁶ J.D. Hutchison on behalf of the Kirkintilloch Hall and Park Committee to Newcastle Film Supply, letter, December 25, 1917, Kate Lees Private Collection; See also "History of Arthur Dent and the Family Business," *Adelphi Films*, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.adelphifilms.com/history-of-arthur-dent.asp>.

⁷⁷ Paramount was the pioneering company in this respect and its role as a trendsetter has been discussed by Michael J. Quinn, "Paramount and Early Feature Distribution: 1914-1921," *Film History* 11.1 (1999).

⁷⁸ Thomas Johnston, "Bailie MacIndoe and the Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January 31, 1917. See also "Kirkintilloch Pictures Committee," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, February 14, 1917.

In July, sceptics had even more reason to be suspicious. It was the municipal cinema's most successful season closing with a profit of over £372.⁷⁹

Throughout the war years the public and the private cinemas operated successfully in Kirkintilloch. Both cinemas continued to cater for local taste, advertising live and variety acts as the main attraction of the Saturday bill, with films only featuring at the end. In addition, contemporary trends such as serials were incorporated into the programme. In January 1916, *The Exploits of Elaine* (Wharton, 1915) was shown at the Pavilion while the municipal cinema screened *The Broken Coin* (Universal, 1915).⁸⁰ At the end of the war, both cinemas moved on to longer, five-reel dramas.

Each cinema attempted to construct and maintain its own identity by addressing a particular political constituency. Throughout the war, the Pavilion upheld a patriotic outlook and demonstrated this with a continuous commitment to exhibit war dramas and films like *The British Troops at the Balkans* produced by Topical Budget, a newsreel company producing propaganda films for the Government's War Office in 1917.⁸¹ The municipal cinema seemed to offer a more playful engagement with authority. On Friday evenings during the winter and spring season of 1917, audience members were invited to test their 'skills as Film Censors' as part of a competition.⁸² While there is no information indicating exactly what taking part in this competition entailed, it reflected broader debates. The competition was conceived at a time when the nationwide discourse about cinema regulation and censorship was at an unprecedented height resulting in the 1917 Cinema Commission.

The municipal cinema distinguished itself further from the private house in its pricing policy. With ticket prices ranging from 3d to 6d during spring 1916, the public

⁷⁹ Municipal Pictures Kirkintilloch, Cash book 1916- 1918, 28, GB 1015 BK/19 /1/1, East Dunbartonshire Archive: Kirkintilloch. See also "Town Council Minutes," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, July 11, 1917.

⁸⁰ "Municipal Pictures" and "Pavilion Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January, 19, 1916.

⁸¹ "Pavilion Picture House," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, February 9, 1916; Luke McKernan, "Topical Budget, 1911-1931," *BFI Screen Online*, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/583128/>. See also McKernan, Luke, *Topical Budget: The Great British News Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 1991).

⁸² Advert: Municipal Pictures, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January 10, 1917.

cinema was slightly cheaper than the Pavilion where tickets cost between 4d and 9d.⁸³ The Pavilion, moreover, exercised some measure of distinction between different social classes by using prices to separate the audiences into customers occupying the pits, or the more comfortable stalls and circle.⁸⁴ From June 1916, an extra charge of 1 to 2d was added to each of these to cover the newly introduced entertainment tax.⁸⁵ The following year, the Pavilion included the charge into the ticket price, selling tickets from 2 ½ d for a seat in the pits during the week and up to 11d for a seat in the circle on Saturday night.⁸⁶ Despite records confirming that the municipal pictures committee paid the tax, too, it managed to decrease ticket prices by 25-33%, keeping them between 4d and 6d, including tax.⁸⁷ What is more, the municipal cinema's weekly advertisement increased disproportionately in size and by 1917 had become three times as big as the Pavilion's advert:

⁸³ Adverts: Pavilion and Municipal Pictures, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 10, 1916.

⁸⁴ See for example Advert: Pavilion, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, April 11, 1917.

⁸⁵ Advert: Pavilion, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 14, 1916.

⁸⁶ Advert: Pavilion, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 6, 1917.

⁸⁷ Kirkintilloch Municipal Pictures - Abstract of Accounts 1916-1922, GB1015/BK/19/1/4/1, East Dunbartonshire Council Archives: Kirkintilloch; Advert: Municipal Pictures, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 14, 1917; "Success of Municipal Pictures," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, July 11, 1917.

MUNICIPAL PICTURES
KIRKINTILLOCH TOWN HALL,
FRIDAY FIRST, MAY 11.
Doors open 8.45; Commence 7.15.
GREAT PICTURE COMPETITION
Will be continued. 20 Prizes given away every Friday. Come and test your skill as a Film Connoisseur. Cards supplied to all.
SPECIAL FILM ATTRACTION—
THE END OF THE TRAIL.
In Five Parts. Magnificent Snow Scenes.
THE RED CIRCLE ELEVENTH EPISODE.
FELOVIS, THE CONTINENTAL MASTER JUGGLER.
LITTLE BOB, THE CHOCOLATE COON AND BIG BOOT MANIPULATOR.
DON'T MISS THIS GIGANTIC PROGRAMME.
SATURDAY FIRST, MAY 12.
Matinee at 2.30 p.m.
THE LAUGHING MASK.
Special Announcement about Grand Summer Gala.
8.30 and 8.45.
WALKER AND LORNE, IN A COMEDY VOCAL AND DANCING ACT.
ISA CHISHOLM, Dainty Comedienne.
THE LAUGHING MASK.
TWELFTH EPISODE, AND A
TRIANGLE KEYSTONE COMEDY.
Full Programme at Both Houses.
ADMISSION, 4d. and 6d.

PAVILION PICTURE HOUSE, KIRKINTILLOCH.
7 MONDAY TO FRIDAY INCLUSIVE—Doors Open 8.20 P.M. 7
7 1 Two—SATURDAY—7.15 P.M. 8
8 1 CHILDREN'S MATINEE EVERY SATURDAY 12
TO-NIGHT (WEDNESDAY)—
AVALANCHE OF FATE, AN EXCITING DRAMA.
LIBERTY! NINTH EPISODE—“A DISCOURT OF MARK.”
THURSDAY AND FRIDAY—
A STRANGE CASE! TRUE-LIFE DETECTIVE STORY. Featuring MARY MORRY.
SATURDAY—SPLENDID COMEDY AND VARIETY PROGRAMME.
Prices of Admission from Monday to Friday inclusive (including Tax):
ADULTS - - - - - Pit, 5d; Stalls, 6d; Circle, 7d.
JUVENILES, under 14, - - - - - Pit, 3d; Stalls, 4d; Circle, 6d.
Saturday Prices (including Tax), Pit, 6d; Stalls, 7d; Circle, 11d.

Figure 6: Advert Kirkintilloch Pavilion Picture House, source: *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 9, 1917

Figure 7: Advert Kirkintilloch Municipal Pictures, source: *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 9, 1917

6.3.2. The Fall of the Municipal Cinema

In 1921, the municipal cinema could still afford the biggest advert, but the first cracks started to appear. The new decade had brought an economic slump and falling attendance figures made it harder to run a lucrative cinema.⁸⁸ It was, nevertheless, the addition of a new cinema that had the most immediate impact on the fate of the municipal cinema. The Black Bull Cinema, which had been constructed on the site of

⁸⁸ Report of a thin house at the Municipal Pictures and of the temporary closing of the Pavilion due to gas restrictions “Picture House,” *Kirkintilloch Herald*, June 8, 1921. See also Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 116.

a former public house, the Black Bull Inn, opened in the autumn of 1922. Ironically, the pub's conversion was a consequence of Kirkintilloch's teetotalism, declared two years earlier and supported by Johnston.⁸⁹

The arrival of a second permanent commercial competitor altered the burgh's entertainment culture significantly. Additionally, the opening of the Black Bull as a cinema coincided with Johnston's departure from Kirkintilloch to stand as a Member of Parliament. This in turn changed the burgh's political landscape, leaving the municipal pictures committee with less determination and vigour. Coinciding with the recession, these factors served a blow to the municipal cinema from which it never recovered.

The manager of the Black Bull, James Lyle, knew how to fill a niche in Kirkintilloch almost instantly. His pricing policy, for example, challenged both existing cinemas. The Black Bull offered the cheapest seats at 1d. for children's matinees, thus rivalling the municipal cinema, and sold the most expensive tickets at 1s 6d. for a box at weekends.⁹⁰ Offering specific comforts such as this as well as differently priced seats in the circle and stalls, the cinema competed directly with the Pavilion. The Black Bull tried to appeal to women in particular. During a February week in 1923, almost all films screened starred women heroines such as *The Arizona Cat Claw* (World Film, 1919), *Why Girls Leave Home* (Harry Rapf Productions, 1921), *The Beloved Blackmailer* (World Film, 1918), and the programme featured a vaudeville turn with a female impersonator.⁹¹ But what really stood out about the Black Bull was that it staged a jazz band every Saturday night. Together with vaudeville and a variety of cinematograph films, jazz proved to be the key to the cinema's success and underpinned Lyle's status as an innovator who brought the latest trends to Kirkintilloch.⁹²

⁸⁹ "Notes," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 8, 1922. See also "Councillor Thos. Johnston and Prohibition," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, April 11, 1917.

⁹⁰ See Adverts: Pavilion, Town Hall Pictures and The Black Bull Cinema in the *Kirkintilloch Herald* on January 10, 1923.

⁹¹ "Black Bull," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, February 14, 1923.

⁹² *Ibid.*; see also "Black Bull," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 14, 1923; April 11, 1923; May 9, 1923.

PAVILION PICTURE HOUSE. KIRKINTILLOCH.		
7	MONDAY TO FRIDAY INCLUSIVE—Doors Open 6.30 p.m.	7
7	Two—SATURDAY—Performances.	9
2	CHILDREN'S MATINEE EVERY SATURDAY.	2
THURSDAY AND FRIDAY.		
GREAT COMEDY PROGRAMME.		
BERT LYTELL in THE MAN WHO.		
Five Reels of Smiles.		
In Again, Out Again. Kids and Kidlets. Serial, etc.		
SATURDAY.		
PICTURES AND VAUDEVILLE		
MONDAY, TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY—		
BLACK MAIL.		
A spirited tale of Rogues and Romance from the famous story by Lucia Chamberlain.		
Comedy, Serial, etc.		
Prices—Reserved Seats, 1s.; Circle, 9d.; Stalls, 5d.; Pit, 3d.		
Saturday—1s. 3d. (Reserved), 1s., 9d., 5d. (Including Tax).		

TOWN HALL :: SATURDAY FIRST

PICTURES & VARIETIES— 6.45 & 9.

"SPECIAL COMPETITIVE PROGRAMME."

VARIETIES—	PICTURES—
TWO MACKS, Vocal and Instrumental Entertainers.	A Great 2-Reel Drama.
HART & STEWART, Harmonising Duettists.	VANITY FAIR Scenic, Interest, and Topical.
HAROLD CARLYLE, Scotch Comedian.	A Good 2-Reel Comedy, ETC.

Special Notice to Boys and Girls.

MATINEE at 2 p.m.—Pictures, Comedy, Drama, etc., and Special Engagement of Professor Duval's **"Punch and Judy" Show and his dog, "Toby."** Don't Forget—half-an-hour earlier owing to length of Programme.

POPULAR PRICES—6d. and 9d. MATINEE, 1d.

Figure 8: Advert Kirkintilloch Pavilion Picture House & Town Hall, source: *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January 10, 1923

The Pavilion seemed not to have suffered from the success of the Black Bull. It continued to run programmes on a daily basis. While these still contained a vaudeville element on Saturday nights, the cinema began to focus more and more on films. The management also displayed more efforts to draw in children. During the same week that the Black Bull's films featured mainly female heroines, the Pavilion opened its house for school children midweek and gave away prizes for the best essays on *Nanook of the North* (1922, Pathé Exchange), a documentary by Robert Flaherty about the life of Eskimos.⁹³ The municipal cinema on the other hand faltered under the influence of the new commercial rival and very quickly lost its identity as a cinema. It began to focus on live comedy, variety acts and the promotion of local talent. Its changing outlook is particularly apparent in the weekly newspaper adverts which had shrunk back to its original size. What is most notable in the advert pictured here is that the municipal cinema was not promoted as a cinema

⁹³ "Picture House," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, February 14, 1923.

anymore, but as 'Town Hall - Pictures and Variety'. Some of the *Herald* reviews reflected this change and reported chiefly on live acts and only from time to time mentioned a film at the end. In response to the Black Bull's pricing policy, the municipal cinema dropped the admission price to children's matinees to 1d. This strategy seems not to have won any children back, however, as the 'children's matinee on Saturday ... [was] dropped for the season' in April 1923.⁹⁴ Considering that children had been a key audience for the municipal pictures, the decision to discontinue the weekly matinee hints at how deep in trouble the cinema was by that stage.

If the decline of the municipal cinema had been visible throughout the first few months of 1923 it became particularly obvious in April and May when it operated on a one-house-a-night system on Fridays and Saturdays. Again the size of the advert can be seen as a marker for the state of the cinema in general. By May this was reduced to a third of its original size, symbolically squeezed between the bigger adverts of the Pavilion and the Black Bull.⁹⁵ While films had already been pushed to the margins during previous weeks, towards the end of the spring season the exhibition of moving pictures ceased entirely. A variety show on Saturday and a 'Go-As-You-Please Competition' on Friday night were all that was left and both together received a mere two sentence review in the *Herald*.⁹⁶ The Saturday night house was soon taken over by Lyle who began to rent the town hall to stage picture shows, variety and jazz, the combination that had worked so well for the Black Bull.⁹⁷ Only a week into his business, Lyle reintroduced the children's matinee on Saturday afternoons.⁹⁸ The end of the municipal cinema project did not denote the end of moving pictures in Kirkintilloch Town Hall. Rather, the financial and managerial set up reverted back to what it had been before 1914: the hall was let to private showmen and continued to host many

⁹⁴ "Town Hall," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, March 14, 1923 and April 11, 1923.

⁹⁵ See Adverts: Pavilion, Town Hall and Black Bull Cinema, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 9, 1923.

⁹⁶ "Town Hall," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 9, 1923.

⁹⁷ "Black Bull Cinema," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 16, 1923 and "The Town Hall," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 23, 1923.

⁹⁸ "The Town Hall," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 30, 1923.

political meetings and community events.⁹⁹ The demise of the municipal pictures put an end to the specific socialist ambition that had defined the town hall entertainments over the preceding years. Its significance as a civic and public space appears to have emerged intact.

Correspondingly, the municipal pictures committee officially ceased to exist in April 1923. Unofficially it had fallen apart much earlier, but this had not been reported at previous town council meetings, which suggests that the communication between the committee and the rest of the Town Council had collapsed. Crucially for the reputational legacy of the project, this impasse and the fact that there was no official contract for the lease of the town hall had led to an accumulation of rent arrears of £240.¹⁰⁰ The Town Council had no other option but to write off the debt, that is to make up for the loss with rate payers' money, an illegal procedure at the time. With Johnston gone, Gibson received most of the harsh criticism from unsympathetic colleagues, who were opposed to the way the municipal pictures 'were mixed up with the Town Council'.¹⁰¹ Gibson tried to defend the project but its apparent failure as public cinema remained a topic of intense discussion at subsequent meetings and in the *Kirkintilloch Herald* over the following few months.

In the *Herald's* letters-to-editors section an angry and politically charged dispute ensued between supporters and opponents of the municipal cinema that went on for months. Disapproving of the negative attitude some councillors displayed, Charles Dowd asked whether the attacks on Gibson were 'for the good of the ratepayers, or ... merely political propaganda?'¹⁰² A number of letters were received from NO MORE MUDDLES, an author who refused to reveal his identity, who argued that 'capable, experienced, business men' should represent the community instead of socialists like Johnston and Gibson, exposing just how intertwined the municipal cinema was with local politics:

⁹⁹ *The Diary of a Town Hall*, (Kirkintilloch: Kirkintilloch & District Society of Antiquaries, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, See also "The Pictures Committee and their Let," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, January 11, 1922.

¹⁰¹ "Kirkintilloch Municipal Ventures - Arrears of Rent," *Kirkintilloch Herald*, April 18, 1923.

¹⁰² Charles Dowd, "Municipal Ventures," letter to editor, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, April 25, 1923.

A few extremists may still believe ... that we can never again have peace and plenty in auld Carnie until we have our good old, well-meaning friend, or his equal, filling the Provost's chair, and surrounded by a big majority of loyal comrades.¹⁰³

Apart from the rise of Labour in general, the controversies surrounding the municipal cinema have to be seen in connection with the other municipal experiments innovated by Johnston and mentioned earlier. NO MORE MUDDLES condemned these as a burden to the rate payer and 'nothing but failures'.¹⁰⁴ In addition to this, the cinema was denounced as unfair competition to private business:

Great promises made, a veritable gold mine, big reduction of taxation out of profits; a complete failure and financial muddle; besides, it was filched by the Council from the hands of private enterprise, and after failure is again back into the hands of private enterprise.¹⁰⁵

In association with other municipal projects municipal cinemas represented the confidence of an emerging Labour movement and with it the expansion of public services. The excitement and anxiety these projects inspired are captured in a quote by Neville Chamberlain's which Johnston cited in his autobiography:

Have we indeed reached the limit of what municipal enterprise should be allowed to attempt, if we confine it to a single town? For my part I would as soon endeavour to imprison a volcano.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, the municipal cinema's success during the 1910s inspired other towns and burghs to establish similar schemes after the war. In 1918, Clydebank started to run municipal pictures in its town hall and in Montrose the Burgh Cinema opened as municipal venture a year later.¹⁰⁷ The initial profits were considerable. The drawings of Clydebank Town Hall increased from £617 to £1119 in season 1918/19 while Montrose's municipal pictures made a profit of £293 after only six weeks.¹⁰⁸ This in turn inspired more councils to consider operating a municipal cinema: Perth, Paisley,

¹⁰³ "Municipal Picture Palace Muddle," letter to editor, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 2, 1923.

¹⁰⁴ "Municipal Picture Muddle," letter to editor, *Kirkintilloch Herald*, May 16, 1923.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Johnston, *Memories* (London and Glasgow: Collins Clear Type Press: 1952), 24.

¹⁰⁷ Clydebank Town Council Minutes 1918, June 25, 1918, CB 1/1/27, West Dunbartonshire Archives; Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 115.

¹⁰⁸ Clydebank Town Council Minutes 1919, May 27, 1919, CB 1/1/28, West Dunbartonshire Archives; Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 115.

Renfrew, Huntly (Aberdeenshire) and Dysart (Fife).¹⁰⁹ Not all of these projects came to fruition; however, that proposals existed confirms that successful municipal cinemas did set an example for others to follow. Crucially, the link to a greater vision of municipalisation was not just apparent in Kirkintilloch. While Montrose remained a liberal stronghold during the early twentieth century, Labour was on the rise in the region since 1910 and with the movement arrived the notion of increased public services provided by the municipality. Labour candidate Ernest Wade, for instance, stood for the town council election in 1919 and in his election campaign announced that he would not ‘stop at milk and pictures’, proposing to further the ‘municipalisation of the gas and electricity supply’ as well as housing.¹¹⁰ Less is known about the political background of municipal cinema in Clydebank. Its first Independent Labour Party representative was elected in 1906 and the emergence of the town as a Labour stronghold during the 1930s suggests that the idea of municipal socialism was not too far off the political agenda there either.¹¹¹ But the recession of the early 1920s hit these endeavours just as hard as the Kirkintilloch project. In 1923, Montrose’s Burgh Hall Cinema began to be leased again to a commercial exhibitor and Clydebank’s municipal pictures disappeared from town council minutes as early as 1921.¹¹² Less than a decade after its emergence, the days of the municipal cinema in Scotland were over.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to unearth the social role of municipal cinema in Scotland by focussing on the case of Kirkintilloch. During the 1910s, municipal cinema was conceived by some local authorities in Scotland as a means to raise funds to pay for the steady increase in the provision of public services at the time. The Common Good Fund, a specific Scottish institution some authorities possessed, could be used to this

¹⁰⁹ Griffiths, *The Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 115.

¹¹⁰ “Montrose Election Campaign,” *Dundee Courier*, October 31, 1919, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000164/19191031/044/0004>.

¹¹¹ “Clydebank - Politics and Local Government,” *West Dunbartonshire Council*, accessed August 14, 2015, <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/leisure-parks-events/tourism-and-visitor-attractions/museums-and-galleries/collections/politics/politics-clydebank/local-government-clydebank/>.

¹¹² Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 116.

effect. This was encouraged by the Independent Labour Party, whose founder Keir Hardie campaigned to expand the trading activities of municipalities. The main instigator of Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema project, Thomas Johnston, was a supporter of Hardie and of municipal socialism. During his time as town councillor he experimented with a number of municipal projects, the cinema being one of them. Municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch was, thus, a small part of the larger idea of municipal socialism. While the comprehensiveness of Kirkintilloch's socialist activities were unique at the time, the affiliation of municipal cinema to the idea of municipal socialism was not confined to this small town but also apparent in other locations such as Montrose. Early municipal cinema in Scotland can, therefore, be seen as a symptom of an emerging Labour movement attempting to expand the role of the municipality as provider of public services: public services that went beyond the delivery of mere necessities of life like water, gas and housing to include the provision of affordable information, entertainment and leisure.

In line with the idea of providing an inexpensive public service, the municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch endorsed an egalitarian pricing policy that did not perpetuate class distinction inside the cinema in the same way as the Pavilion or the Black Bull distinguished between patrons that sat in the pits and those that had money to pay for a seat in the circle. To be sure, this egalitarianism was only in part a voluntary feature of the municipal cinema. As a space that lacked the same features and comforts that the private cinemas offered, seats in the town hall could not be allocated to different 'classes' by means of pricing. Nevertheless, the effect that this must have had in terms of creating and maintaining a sense of community certainly suited a socialist agenda.

The exhibition practices of Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema were examined through an analysis of advertisements and reviews. This revealed the organisers' intention to use the cinema as a site for propaganda, education and 'responsible' entertainment. The opening night, with its anti-war theme, was characteristic. The aspiration to provide 'entertainment that would be helpful and instructive' was realised in offering an educational strain. Crucially however, the commitment to make an economic benefit to the town meant that the municipal cinema had to cater to the taste of its audience rather than be prescriptive in the choice of film content. This limited the cinema's ability to deliver the social messages to which a socialist

municipal cinema might have aspired. Just like a commercial cinema, it had to be popular to be viable and could not limit its address to a narrow constituency.

The mediation of the cinema's local function has to be seen in relation to the close vicinity of two commercial rivals, first the Pavilion Picture House and later the Black Bull Cinema. The immediacy of commercial rivals meant that the municipal cinema's programmes were constantly negotiated with an audience that could always choose between the public and private cinemas. Only a few months after its commencement the cinema adapted swiftly to what the Pavilion offered. Not only did it compromise on its ideological and educational aspirations, it also changed the initial film-only programme for a bill that, on Saturdays, included live variety acts and contained more comical elements. In doing so it effectively copied the programme structure of the commercial picture house. Any ambitions to use the cinema for political propaganda or for education were tempered by its primary functions as an economic asset and could, hence, only be partially fulfilled in marginal shows, for example, on Mondays and Saturday afternoon. On Friday and Saturday night the selling of cinema tickets was the priority and the focus was firmly on entertaining and amusing the audience. This reflects the nascent crystallisation of cinema's social role as commercial entertainment, a model that began to dominate during the later 1910s and early 1920s and which relegated alternative uses to the margins. This trend has already been observed in relation to the educational film in Chapter Five and is further explored in the following chapter.

In contrast to its commercial rivals, Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema possessed a specific civic identity. This was achieved through the promotion of local talent and participatory elements, for instance, a competition that invited people to act as film censors. Its organisers were involved in annual events such as the children's gala in the summer, which was filmed and later replayed and enjoyed as part of the cinema programme in the communal space of the town hall. Children were a key audience and the committee developed a scheme to reward their loyalty and offered special programmes at matinees. Ultimately, it was the municipal cinema's civic role that managed to connect traditional entertainment cultures with a modern way of seeing and communicating about the world through watching films. It is not surprising then that it was also the civic function that outlived the municipal cinema itself and continued to thrive in the space of the town hall as a communal space that hosted many different forms of entertainments. This further supports the idea that the

significance of cinema's social role lay not exclusively in the content of films, but in the physical and communal space that it occupied. In some senses, it was the town hall or the classroom that was communal, collective and municipal rather than the films or entertainments that were shown.

As an example in socialist economics, the cinema's successes during the war and immediate post-war years displayed the feasibility of municipal enterprise. Naturally, this was an undesirable situation for the cinema trade as it defined cinema as commercial leisure, not as public service. At the time, constantly haunted by the possibility of state intervention in terms of censorship, commercial exhibitors regarded municipal cinema as a further encroachment of what they perceived to be their territory. The notion that the municipal cinema's success might cause socialist practices to spread also provoked a more general resistance among defenders of more traditional political structures, even if they did not directly profit from the commercial cinema trade. This political tension as well as the accountability of municipal cinema as a public service meant that the organising committee was repeatedly called upon to justify how its funds were spent and needed to fend off suspicions of mismanagement continually. Such attacks could be fought off while the cinema was financially successful. But at the beginning of the 1920s Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema came under pressure due to a recession and increased commercial competition. When it failed to recover from falling revenues and left liabilities to be paid by the rate payer, it was exposed as a failure and doubts about its legitimacy and sustainability that had accompanied the cinema from the beginning appeared vindicated.

The fall of Kirkintilloch's municipal cinema was not an individual case but coincided with the end of parallel schemes elsewhere in Scotland. The recession of the early 1920s affected the entire economy and without supportive governmental and broader institutional structures municipal cinemas were not in a position to subsist. A further reason relates to changes within the cinema industry. With programmes increasingly dominated by long feature films and commercial exhibitors promoting the architectural luxuries of their cinemas, promising relaxation as well as entertainment, the lack of comfortable seating in town halls

contributed to the move of film exhibition out of make-shift venues.¹¹³ As a result, while town halls continued to be used for cinema showings in rural communities where there was no established commercial cinema, municipal cinema as an exhibition practice that challenged commercial picture houses largely disappeared from Scotland's cultural landscape.

The idea of a public service that gave access to entertainment and information lived on in other forms of media, most notably radio and television. The British Broadcasting Corporation, established by John Reith in 1922, similar to the municipal cinema negotiated its role in the face of commercial competition catering to popular demand, albeit decades later.¹¹⁴ Moreover, John Grierson campaigned for a public service cinema that would be independent of commercial constraints and popular demand.¹¹⁵ Conclusively, in its conception as a public service, early municipal cinema anticipated some of these arguments and developments. It demonstrated that cinema's social role did not need to be confined to the realm of commercialised leisure but that authorities could give it a place within civic culture where its role could be controlled more directly and shaped according to civic values.

¹¹³ Ibid., 125-127.

¹¹⁴ Asa Briggs "The End of The Monopoly," and Paddy Scannell "Pubic Service Broadcasting: The History of A Concept," all in *British Television: A Reader*, ed. Edward Buscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁵ John Caughie, "Broadcasting and Cinema 1: Converging Histories," in *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, ed. Charles Barr (London: BFI, 1986).

7. The Cinema and Film Work of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, 1902 to 1928

As previous chapters suggested, civic institutions like town councils and education authorities envisaged cinema as a cultural institution. For them, it was less defined by the commodification of pleasure than it was for the commercial distributors and exhibitors; it was defined more by its potential to inspire sociability and by its attributes as an educational medium. In Kirkintilloch, municipal cinema was part of a larger project that tried to set an example by expanding municipal services into the realm of information and leisure, attempting to offer a cinematic diet that matched the aspirations of town council representatives with the taste of the burgh's denizens. In Glasgow, educationists conducted an experiment about the didactic potential of film and pioneered the use of film as a teaching aid in schools during the early 1930s. In both cases, the civic institution was attempting to reinvent cinema as a social, educational and cultural asset for the community rather than a commodified good. This chapter sketches out the different roles early cinema inhabited in the hands of one national agency operating outwith the realm of civic institutions as well as outside of the cinema industry, the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society (hereafter SCWS). As part of a movement that offered an alternative socio-economic model, the SCWS shared the vision of a less commercial and a more aspirational cinema. The story of the Society's relationship with cinema is interesting also because it was in constant flux and took on manifold forms, corresponding to broader developments in Scottish cinema history and reflecting the shifting boundaries of cinema's social function typical of the early period.

While previous chapters have focused on particularly significant moments, this chapter will approach the question of the SCWS's engagement with cinema diachronically, exploring developments over a period of twenty-six years. The main source for this exploration are articles, editorials and adverts published in *The Scottish Co-operator*, the main journalistic outlet of the Scottish Co-operative movement. The paper, established in 1863 by J.T. McInnes, 'a giant amongst the founding fathers of the SCWS', was published fortnightly at three half pence and edited by the educationist Henry Dyer for most of the period under consideration

here.¹ Other sources include the Society's minute books, catalogues and commissioned films.

The chapter will show that, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the SCWS utilised cinema in three ways - for entertainment, education, and for product advertisement. While these functions overlapped to some extent, it will be argued that they corresponded to three phases in Scottish cinema history. First, two years into the twentieth century, the SCWS began to exploit cinema's sociability and entertainment value as a technological novelty which is consistent with the ways in which other civic and reform agencies used cinema at the time. Secondly, the Society's engagement with cinema as an educational tool correlates with the institutionalisation of cinema as an industry and the accompanying critical discourse around its social role which is described in detail above. Thirdly, the Society began to commission films to promote individual Co-op produce towards the end of the 1920s and exhibited these in non-theatrical venues. The context of production and exhibition as well as the textual composition of these advertisement films anticipate the emergence of the sponsored documentary, the prevalent genre in Scottish film production for many decades to come. All three uses are at the same time symptomatic of the SCWS's specific relationship with cinema as a vehicle for publicity. In all three forms, cinema was to consolidate existing members and attract new members to the Co-operative movement and represented the SCWS as a progressive organisation.

Founded in Glasgow in 1868, the SCWS was part of a larger Co-operative movement that had grown in conjunction with the increasing commercialisation of British society in general and Scotland in particular. While individual co-operative societies, like the Fenwick Weavers Co-operative (founded in 1761), preceded the Industrial Revolution, co-operation emerged as a more widespread movement in the middle of the nineteenth century. An event that is widely regarded to have marked the beginning of the British Co-operative movement is the formation of the Rochdale

¹ James Kinloch and John Butt, *The History of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Limited* (Manchester: Co-operative Wholesale Society, 1981), 18. The journal was subsumed in the *Co-operative News* in 1871, but revived by the Kinning Park Society in 1893. See James Lucas, *Co-operation in Scotland* (Manchester: The Co-operative Union Limited, 1920), 61, *Internet Archive*, accessed August 23, 2015, <https://ia700400.us.archive.org/1/items/cooperationinsco00lucarich/cooperationinsco00lucarich.pdf>.

Equitable Pioneers Society in 1844 in Lancashire.² The Society set up a store to sell quality foods and clothes at fair prices, but its ambitions were not confined to pragmatic self-help. Inspired by Robert Owen's socialist ideals, the Rochdale Pioneers sought to produce and distribute goods, provide employment and housing as well as educate members in co-operative principles.³ While Owenite co-operative communities that tried to realise these principles during the 1820s were short-lived, the Rochdale Pioneers' venture succeeded and grew.⁴ One important reason for this was that they did not eliminate the principle of profit *per se*, as advocated by Owen, but allowed for the Society to accumulate and reinvest capital as a collective. A system of dividing profits between the consumer-members was innovated to reward participation, commonly known as the dividend or more popularly as the 'divi'. This ensured the sustainability of the project and inspired other societies to adopt the Rochdale Pioneers' approach.⁵ In 1862, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act was passed which legitimised the corporate status of co-operatives and allowed the movement to fledge. This was followed by the establishment of the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Society (later shortened to CWS) in 1863 as a federation of co-operative societies. As Alan Burton argues, the expansion from co-operation to wholesale was crucial in cutting out what was considered 'by many co-operators and socialists, a particularly repugnant form of profit-taking' - the so-called 'middle-man'.⁶ The Scottish equivalent was established five years later in Glasgow. Thirty years on, the two wholesale societies had between them absorbed most British co-operative retail societies as shareholder-members, manufacturing and supplying co-op produce to their local stores and by 1907 it was listed among Britain's 'largest

² Based on Beatrice Potter, *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, 3rd ed. 1891 Reprint (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company, 1987), 59-84.

³ Ibid., 62; For discussion of Owenism see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd ed. 1968 Reprint (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 857-887. See also Gregory Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millenium: from Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-60* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁴ For example, the Owenian, Friendly or Practical Society founded in Edinburgh in 1821 and the Orbiston Company established in the South of Glasgow in 1824 were earlier attempts to put them into practice in Scotland, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Owen, Robert (1771-1858)," by Gregory Claeys, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/article/21027>.

⁵ Potter, *Co-operative Movement*, 63-65.

⁶ Alan Burton, *The People's Cinema: Film and the Co-operative Movement* (London: National Film Theatre, 1994), 18.

industrial employers'.⁷ Although the CWS and the SCWS were separate entities, the societies did not act as competitors and were part of the Co-operative Union.⁸

The SCWS functioned initially as a depot and distribution agency for co-operative retail societies in Scotland. In 1881, it started to venture into manufacturing goods by opening a shirt factory which was followed by numerous other production lines, such as shoes, hosiery, drapery, soap, furniture and groceries. Its industrial complex at Shieldhall, Morrison Street in Central Glasgow was inaugurated in 1887, and was also the location of the SCWS's central offices.⁹ The SCWS operated side by side with its English counterpart for more than a century. However, when it failed to recover from liquidity problems in the early 1970s, it was taken over by the CWS in 1974.¹⁰

Despite initial intentions to remain neutral, the Co-operative movement had affinities with the politics of Labour. In 1917, the Co-operative Union sought direct parliamentary representation by forming the Co-operative Party in response to what was perceived as unfair economic legislation.¹¹ In 1918, the first Co-operative MP was elected and five years later this had increased to six MPs. Two of them represented Glasgow: T. Henderson, who had earlier served on the Labour and Trades Council and as Labour member of Glasgow City Council, acted for the Tradeston Division (where the SCWS central offices were located) and Andrew Young, who had previously acted as Labour member for Edinburgh City Council and now represented the Partick Division. The Co-operative Party's agenda overlapped to some extent with that of the Labour Party and candidates forged alliances on the constituency level and from 1927 also on the national level. Thus, the Co-operative movement was about more than the production and distribution of goods; ideology was integral to its existence and

⁷ Alan Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film, 1890s-1960s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 15.

⁸ Initially called the Central Co-operative Board and founded in 1869, Potter, *Co-operative Movement*, 89-90.

⁹ Kinloch and Butt, *History of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Limited*, 111-114.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 364-375.

¹¹ Sidney Pollard adds a further dimension by arguing that the co-operative movement got involved in politics due to a 'general swing to the left of all sections of the labour movement' at that time, "The Foundation of the Co-operative Party," in *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923*, eds. A. Briggs and J. Saville, (London: MacMillan, 1971), 186.

structuration. It tried to build an alternative society, a community which co-operatively owned the means of production, distribution and consumption - a so-called co-operative commonwealth.¹² As a vehicle for sociability, entertainment and visual education, cinema was part of that agenda.

The Co-operative movement has been described as the most successful workers movement in Scotland. Catriona MacDonald notes that 'Co-operative membership in Scotland by 1916 numbered over half a million and it kept on rising'.¹³ As Scotland's central co-operative agency, the SCWS played an important socio-economic role for the movement. In 1928, the Society estimated that out of 4,882,970 people living in Scotland, an overwhelming majority of 3,450,880 had 'their daily wants supplied through the Co-operative movement'.¹⁴ Although this estimate has to be seen as a publicity stunt and should be taken with a pinch of salt, it hints at the significance of the movement in general and the SCWS in particular in Scotland at the time.

Yet, as Alan Burton laments, social and especially labour historians have failed to take the Co-operative movement seriously. He sees this neglect rooted in a political rejection of the movement's inherent gradualism and an apparent absence of a defined ideology, arguing that co-operation should be seen as a counter-cultural movement opposing capitalism, not just a consumer initiative.¹⁵ But unlike trade unionism which operated in the industrial work place, co-operation occurred in the sphere of working class consumption and

represented to many of its million members a crucial expression of community identity and ... through the myriad incidence of daily acts of consumption ..., the creation of a distinct socio-political identity.¹⁶

¹² See *Co-operative Party: Politics for People*, accessed August 23, 2015, <http://party.coop/about/history>.

¹³ Catriona MacDonald, "A Different Commonwealth: The Co-operative Movement in Scotland," in *The Co-operative Models in Practice: International Perspectives*, eds. Diarmuid McDonnell and Elizabeth McKnight (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen: 2012), 15, *Aberdeen University* website, accessed August 24, 2015, https://www.abdn.ac.uk/cets/documents/The%20Co-operative%20Model%20in%20Practice_International%20Perspectives.pdf.

¹⁴ Official Catalogue and Programme of the National Co-operative Exhibition, Kelvin Hall, March 7-24 1928, inside cover, GB 243 CWS 1/14/33, Glasgow City Archives.

¹⁵ Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film*, 11-13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

This perspective is fundamental to Burton's work about the Co-operative movement's engagement with cinema, and is central to the present chapter, too. Showing films in co-op halls at the end of the nineteenth century, he maintains, it was one of the first labour affiliated groups that recognised cinema as an important part of popular culture and film as an educational and propagandist tool.¹⁷ This was crucial, because at the time the disposable income of workers rose and with it the opportunities to spend it on commercial leisure activities, potentially transforming them into mass consumers rather than co-operators.¹⁸ Acting as exhibitor of selected subjects, including self-produced and commissioned films about co-operative events and activities, the movement offered an alternative cinema just as it offered a different kind of society.

The Co-op's relationship with early cinema is comparable with those of other Labour affiliated groupings. Stephen G. Jones' study, *The British Labour Movement and Film*, discusses socialist attitudes towards cinema and identifies three ideological strands: a cultural elitist tradition that sneered at cinema as worthless entertainment; a libertarian approach emphasising the workers' right to choose how to spend free time; and a Marxist socialist perspective that regarded cinema as a tool deployed by capitalist society to keep workers passive.¹⁹ Given that the Co-operative movement's socialism was moderate and pragmatic, only the first two are relevant here. The cultural elitist approach to cinema and cinema-going among Labour socialists derived from Victorian Christian socialism of the nineteenth century. This form of socialism stressed the importance of self-help, education and rational recreation to bring about social and economic change, an approach reflected also in the Co-operative movement's ideology. Jones argues that the emphasis on character formation led to an almost puritanical 'ordering of amusements into useful or useless'.²⁰ Outdoor leisure such as sports or gardening, elevating hobbies like reading or going to the theatre and educational pursuits were sanctioned as useful because these were seen as active, challenging and healthy activities. Cinema-going did not fit this category as it took place indoors, was regarded as passive, and played an

¹⁷ Ibid., 86-95.

¹⁸ Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film*, 19-21.

¹⁹ Jones, *The British Labour Movement and Film*, 37-59.

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

entertaining rather than an educative role.²¹ Moreover, the imported films from American studios that dominated commercial cinema programmes were perceived to subvert ‘traditional working-class culture, as well as “high” culture’, a position expressed especially by *Cinema Quarterly*, a journal associated with the independent film movement of the 1930s.²² As will be seen below, a comparable viewpoint was taken by editors and authors writing in *The Scottish Co-operator* during the late 1910s and early 1920s. While cinema-going as commercial leisure activity was scorned, it was not the lowest form of entertainment. Drink and illegitimate sexual relations could be found at the bottom of the ladder. The cinema was argued to facilitate the latter by some socialists and at the same time acknowledged as an alternative to the public house by others. The founder of the Independent Labour Party Keir Hardie, for instance, had shares in BB Pictures, the company of Scotland’s best known promoter of cinema as a vehicle for sobriety, J.J. Bennell.²³ Thomas Johnston, too, was a temperance reformer and was not opposed to cinema. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, socialists like him preferred to see a more civic and less commercial form of cinema flourish, a cinema that addressed citizens rather than consumers. As will become apparent, the relationship of the Scottish Co-operative movement was similarly complex and ranged from critical to supportive positions. Crucially, socialists and co-operators shared an oppositional viewpoint on the institutionalisation of cinema as a capitalist industry and the consequent confinement of cinema’s role to that of popular leisure. The main part will analyse how this position was reflected in the SCWS’ uses of cinema. It will be divided into three sections correlating with the various roles cinema played in the outreach activities of the Society.

7.1. The Sociability of Early Cinema

The first function to be exploited by the Co-operative movement as a whole and the SCWS in particular was cinema’s sociability and novelty at the beginning of the twentieth century. With cinema’s primary function not yet narrowed down to that of entertainment, its uses in education and science were equally possible paths. It was

²¹ Ibid., 42.

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 39.

a medium associated with technological progress as well as popular culture, which goes some way in explaining the universal appeal of cinema to socially diverse groupings such as the temperance movement, churches and educational associations, and the Co-operative movement.²⁴ Also, with purpose-built cinemas not yet in existence and the absence of health and safety regulation limiting the use of film to closely defined spaces, it was relatively easy to stage film shows anywhere.

In 1902, the SCWS acquired a portable bioscope²⁵ apparatus as part of its newly founded optical and photographic department which was managed by J.R. Hunter and subsumed under the Society's furniture branch.²⁶ The exploitation of the cinematograph as a technological instrument by experts of the optical trade was not unique. As Griffiths and Velez-Serna have demonstrated, businessmen who had previously dealt in magic lanterns, like J. Lizars or Fraser and Elrick, were among the first in Scotland to sell cinematographs, and to hire and exhibit films.²⁷ Lizars, for example, offered no less than 280 subjects as early as 1897 and from 1898 travelled to venues across the country to exhibit them.²⁸ Similarly, from the very beginning the acquisition of the apparatus for the SCWS was coupled with its use for a travelling cinema service:

[T]he cinematograph which the new department possesses ... is prepared to give exhibitions to any society carrying on a concert or entertainment. ... customers have a long programme of animated pictures from which to make their choice.²⁹

The educational committee of the respective society planning an event that included a cinema display had to apply to the furniture department to see the list of films on

²⁴ The diversity of what has been called non-theatrical or 'useful' cinema has only recently become a central subject of scholarly enquiry, as demonstrated for instance in volumes like Acland and Wasson, *Useful Cinema*; or Braun, *Beyond the Screen*.

²⁵ *The Scottish Co-operator* reported that Hunter gave shows to the Royal Family at Balmoral and the SCWS apparatus was referred to as Royal bioscope in 1907 and 1908. See for example "Scottish Co-operative Festival," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 10, 1908, 35.

²⁶ The optical department's administration at times overlapped with other departments, such as the musical department around 1910 and the advertising department four years later. See for example "Current Events," *Scottish Co-operator*, October 14, 1910, 862.

²⁷ Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918," 80.

²⁸ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 18-19.

²⁹ "SCWS's Optical and Photographic department: A New Venture," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 26, 1902, 596.

offer, from which it selected a programme lasting fifteen, thirty or forty-five minutes.³⁰ Programmes were arranged annually and announced in the *Scottish Co-operator* around September and October. Applications were usually submitted around that time with a view to staging cinema shows between December and March, ‘the interval which separate[d] the out-door from the concert season’, the latter commencing in September and ending in December.³¹ The out-door season remained reserved for excursions and gala days with no mention of cinema shows in the paper. The cinema’s place in the cultural calendar hints at its place in the hierarchy of leisure activities. It was important to engage with popular culture to which cinema belonged, but it ranked lower than music and out-door activities and was reserved for months where the former had been exhausted and the latter were unfeasible.

When the *Scottish Co-operator* announced the new programme no detailed description of the films was given. The advert inserted into the price list of the furniture department also lacked an itemised description of the programme.³² Societies had to approach the department directly to see the programme in detail. This indicates that the content of the films was less important than the cinema display which in itself was an exciting new attraction.

³⁰ “S.C.W.S. Bioscope,” *Scottish Co-operator*, December 11, 1906, 1210.

³¹ “S.C.W.S. Cinematograph,” *Scottish Co-operator*, October 2, 1903, 789.

³² SCWS Furniture Department Price List, Season 1907-08, 383-386, GB 243/ CWS 1/16/21, Glasgow City Archives.



Figure 9: Advert for SCWS Royal Bioscope for season 1907-08, source: SCWS Furniture Department Price List

There are a few exceptions that allow some insight into what those programmes looked like. In 1903, for example, the paper reported that the apparatus was used to exhibit a variety of biological curiosities such as

a startlingly realistic panorama of the fire-fiend ... [and] cheese mites pictures photographed with the micro-bioscope.³³

Other first subjects during that season included

steamers arriving and departing from "Sweet Rothesay Bay;" and ... some exclusive pictures of the King and Queen's visit to Scotland.³⁴

These pictures were not different from what audiences would see at cinema exhibitions elsewhere and it is likely that the films were obtained from commercial distributors. What co-operators would not get to see anywhere else, however, were films depicting their own activities, for instance, 'the S.C.W.S. quarterly meetings'.

³⁵ Another example of programmes comes from an article published in 1907. By then the novelty of depicting moving objects and panoramic views on a screen had worn off and the programmes offered more comical elements such as 'The Maniac

³³ "S.C.W.S. Cinematograph," *Scottish Co-operator*, October 2, 1903, 789.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Juggler', 'The Fatal Sneeze', 'The Shortsighted Cyclist', 'The Adventures of the Bath Chair' and other short narratives and non-fiction films:

The Village Fire Brigade at work presents the havoc that can be wrought when the undrilled butcher and baker and candlestick maker undertake the work of the fire brigade. The same film shows the town brigade coming to the rescue.³⁶

Hunter's shows were instantly popular which indicate his expertise as an operator and, importantly, also as commentator and even showman. As Burton points out in relation to the travelling cinema service of the CWS in England which had commenced around the same time, the operator of the cinematograph would provide a running commentary 'in the manner of the lantern lecture'.³⁷ Although this is not mentioned explicitly in the *Scottish Co-operator*, it is likely that the same practice would have been applied by Hunter; it was a common feature of travelling lantern and cinema exhibitions at the time. As Griffiths points out, early cinematograph operators had to engage with local audiences while managing 'the often abrupt transition between different items on the programme'.³⁸ The centrality of the operators is mirrored in the reviews of Hunter's shows. As the *Scottish Co-operator* notes in October 1903:

Mr J.R. Hunter was kept constantly on the move with the cinematograph and ... [had] booked for his department a sufficient number of engagements to cover at least one half of an entire season's work.³⁹

Hunter's cinematograph service visited a considerable number of places. These included districts in and around Glasgow like Kinning Park, Clydebank, Whiteinch, Barrhead and the East End of the city. The service, in addition, went beyond the boundaries of the city to events of Co-operative societies in Stirling, Alloa, Blantyre, Dunlochter, Perth, West Calder, Kilmarnock and Leith. In 1906, the SCWS even considered to run the 'bioscope work from Chamber St in Edinburgh', but seems to have abandoned plans as it did not receive enough inquiries from societies in the East of Scotland.⁴⁰ Apart from local Co-operative societies, the cinema service was

³⁶ "The SCWS Royal Bioscope," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 20, 1907, 937.

³⁷ Alan Burton, *The People's Cinema*, 19.

³⁸ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 28.

³⁹ "S.C.W.S. Cinematograph," *Scottish Co-operator*, October 2, 1903, 789.

⁴⁰ "S.C.W.S. Bioscope," *Scottish Co-operator*, December 11, 1906, 1210.

occasionally booked by town councils. In September 1908, for example, ‘eleven engagements ha[d] been booked with the Glasgow Corporation and several with the Govan Corporation’.⁴¹

The SCWS bioscope was typically exhibited for free in co-operative and public halls and was a common feature at social gatherings, festival, soirees and concerts around Christmas time. A moving picture show would be part of a programme that included musical and other live acts. On Christmas Eve 1903, for example, Clydebanks Town Hall was packed with 1800 children waiting to be entertained by the SCWS. For 2d

every child on entering received a bag of pastries and a bag of fruits and sweets. The entertainment was sustained by the Brothers King (comedians and musicians), Mr George Jackson (ventriloquist), and the Wholesale cinematograph.⁴²

The cinema was also used to entertain adult members. During the festive period of 1907, the members of Barrhead co-operative society were ‘kept in continuous roar’ by the SCWS cinematograph. For a ticket costing up to 6d, co-operators at the Scottish Co-operative Festival in Glasgow’s St. Mungo’s Halls were entertained by a programme featuring musicians, sketch artistes, amateur performances and the cinema.⁴³ At such occasions it was not unusual for the musicians performing to also accompany the films.⁴⁴ Typically, the film shows finished with an illustrated song and occasionally a dance followed.

Within five years, the cinematograph entertainments had become a persistent feature at co-operative social events and festivals, taking place alongside traditional forms of amusements and performances organised by co-

⁴¹ “S.C.W.S. Royal Bioscope Entertainments,” *Scottish Co-operator*, September 18, 1908, 940.

⁴² “Children’s Entertainment at Clydebanks,” *Scottish Co-operator*, January 1, 1904, 17.

⁴³ “In Festive Mood,” *Scottish Co-operator*, December 6, 1907, 1217. “Scottish Co-operative Festival,” *Scottish Co-operator*, December 20, 1907, 1274.

⁴⁴ For example artist Miss Nellie McNan performed often in a programme where also the cinema featured: “Social, Concert and Dance,” *Scottish Co-operator*, February 10, 1911, 119. See also “Successful Propaganda Meeting,” *Scottish Co-operator*, November 1, 1907, 1081.

operative amateur drama groups. In this capacity, the SCWS cinema service provided a cine-variety show that was typical for the period.⁴⁵

But the SCWS's cinema service was not only there to amuse its members; it pursued a propagandist agenda. Connected to the movement's tradition of delivering lantern slide lectures to promote co-operative values, this agenda was a cross between education and publicity.⁴⁶ Even at social events without an explicit propagandist objective, films of an entertaining character were mixed with pictures promoting the SCWS or the Co-operative movement as a whole, as the programme examples mentioned earlier indicate. So-called education committees responsible for the organisation of co-operative propaganda and social events realised that the combination of propaganda and entertainment was indispensable if their outreach activities were to be effective. This position was expressed poignantly in an editorial of the *Scottish Co-operator* from 1905:

All work and no play makes Jack and Jill a dull boy and girl. Co-operators ... Have to press their propaganda among the multitude of their fellows "by every wile that's justified wi' honour;" ... Most of us feel that what the work-a-day world requires is more sociability - more socialism, .. and less of what is anti-social...⁴⁷

The willingness to instrumentalise and rationalise the pleasure offered by the cinema was articulated along similar lines by J Bayne in an address regarding the progress of Co-operative Society in Stirling:

classes and entertainments organised by the educational committee would be the means of stimulating the interest of the members, making them loyal to the society, and so advancing the interest which they all had in view.⁴⁸

Thus, the appearance of the SCWS bioscope at events designed to entertain its members during the early years should not distract from the rationale behind such use. Cinema's sociability was utilised to inspire loyalty while the power of the

⁴⁵ For an outline of a typical variety bill audience would encounter in music halls and other venues where early cinema shows took place see Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 32.

⁴⁶ Alan Burton, *The People's Cinema*, 18.

⁴⁷ "Co-operation: Its Social Side," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 6, 1905, 6.

⁴⁸ "Concert at Stirling," *Scottish Co-operator*, November 1, 1907, 1093.

moving image was employed to promote co-operative ideas and practices in a manner that appealed to the visual sense. This strategy was neither new nor unique as religious and reform societies had long embraced popular entertainment to promote their values and, like the Co-operative movement, were among the first civic or religious organisations to add moving pictures to traditional forms of visual instruction and amusement.⁴⁹

Despite the restrictions imposed upon film exhibition, the passing of the 1909 Cinematograph Act did not discourage the use of the SCWS portable bioscope. A new list of films was announced in October 1910 and societies assured that they 'will have no difficulty with police regulations as such regulations do not apply to exhibitions in which ... new kinematograph non-inflammable films ... are used'.⁵⁰ The new decade changed the way the SCWS travelling bioscope was utilised for other reasons. The SCWS cinema transformed from a device used mainly for entertainment and sociability into a tool primarily utilised to support education and propaganda. The following section will outline this function and consider the reasons for the shift.

7.2. Propaganda and Education

By the end of the 1900s, moving pictures had ceased to be a novelty and were associated with commercialised popular culture rather than with technological-scientific progress and visual instruction. A boom in the building of purpose-built picture houses was symptomatic of the increasing institutionalisation of cinema as a growing industry. Out of ninety-seven venues licensed to show films in Glasgow in 1914, for instance, twenty-nine were purpose-built cinemas, a number that had risen from none at all in 1908.⁵¹ The industrialisation of cinema culture increased provision but also attracted significant criticism. Disapproval was expressed by the aspirational wing of the working classes, especially socialists who supported the notion of rational recreation and condemned the unlimited pursuit of pleasure at the expense of healthy outdoor, educational and political activities. Such a position was articulated by Glasgow's Trade Council at a Trade Union meeting in

⁴⁹ Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 18-19

⁵⁰ "Current Events," *Scottish Co-operator*, October 14, 1910, 862.

⁵¹ Data on number of venues, unless otherwise stated, originates from Early Cinema in Scotland Database (venues table), accessed July 11, 2015, <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/>.

Glasgow in September 1912 to promote the cause of an eight-hour day. While the cinema was recognised as an important cultural asset, the tenor of the Council was critical:

Picture theatres might have a very important place, not only in recreation, but also in education; but it is to be feared that in many cases they are neither elevating nor instructive. Even when they are good, too much time should not be spent on them, as they are apt to prevent that concentration of mind which is necessary for all intellectual development.⁵²

The council recommended that cinema, like popular theatres and music halls, was to 'be used in moderation'.⁵³ Leisure time was a contested arena; apart from recreation and sociability, it was the only time workers had to educate themselves and engage in political activity.

The *Scottish Co-operator* endorsed a similar view. As an editorial from the previous month demonstrates, leisure time was deemed important because it 'render[s] us more efficient in body and mind and better fitted to perform our part in the world.' Free time was not to be wasted but filled with 'healthy recreation and social enjoyment', activities that would make 'good citizens' and good co-operators:

It has been said with truth that what a man does from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the morning is, from a social point of view, more important than what he does from 6am to 6pm.⁵⁴

Co-operators were aware that the private cinema exhibitor had to make a living and that the primary motive for running a cinema was to make money, not to educate. Some, thus, called upon authorities to provide civic entertainment. One correspondent to the *Scottish Co-operator*, naming himself Scoticus, criticised the laxity of Glasgow Corporation for not doing enough in 'raising the standards' of the entertainment culture. Instead, it was left to private showmen, whom he attacked for holding the audience responsible for the low standards of their programmes:

Rather they come down and cater to what they consider to be the common tastes of the people. In doing so they really *make* the standards.⁵⁵

⁵² "Leisure and Efficiency," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 6, 1912, 853.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Education for Leisure Time," *Scottish Co-operator*, August 30, 1912, 817.

While this was a common argument among critics, cinema's commercialisation and transformation into a capitalist industry represented a particular problem to the Co-operative movement. Writing for *The Co-operative News* in 1908, Jean Benoit-Levy, who would become a prominent maker of educational films, pinpointed this issue by comparing the conventional picture house to a conventional shop that offered unwholesome commodities and exploited the consumer.⁵⁶ He suggested an alternative, a cinema that, similar to the 'good shop', would replace vulgar subjects with educational topics, especially 'films dealing with crafts and manufacturing'.⁵⁷ From this perspective, cinema was part of a greater vision of wholesale provision for co-operative members with all necessities and amenities their daily life required and this included 'wholesome' pictures. Crucially, it resembles the role municipal cinema was to play within the larger project of municipal socialism and reveals the shared ambition of socialists and co-operators to create a cinema that did not address the spectator as consumer but rather as citizen or, in this case, as fellow co-operator. But with sociability and entertainment offered by a growing number of cinemas, the co-operative cinema service had become redundant by the end of the 1900s, a process that undermined the basis from which a co-operative cinema could be built that combined the aspirational with the sociable and entertaining. As a result, attention shifted to uses neglected by the commercial cinema, especially film's educational and propagandist attributes as a technological tool.

Marking the beginning of the new focus in the movement's engagement with cinema, the CWS started a continuous cinema lecture service for the North of England around 1910. The cinematograph-aided lessons often concerned particular trades and goods, blurring the boundaries between education, propaganda and product advertisement.⁵⁸ The SCWS started a similar scheme around 1914. At a so-called propaganda meeting in Kilwinning, head of the SCWS's advertisement department, James Orr, kicked off the new service by speaking about 'The Rise and Progress of the Scottish Co-operative Society', a lecture which was to become his

⁵⁵ "Our low standards," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 5, 1918, 509. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁶ For more information see *Jean Benoit-Levy* website, accessed August 21, 2015, <http://jeanbenoitlevy.com/>.

⁵⁷ Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film*, 92.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

trademark over the following three years. In contrast to its English counterpart, the Scottish lecture service was confined to this general subject and appears not to have advertised individual products at this stage. Like other co-operative educationists before him, Orr used lantern slides to support the lesson, which was followed by a cinematograph exhibition of short entertaining films.⁵⁹ By April of the same year, the cinematograph had become part of the actual lecture:

Not the least enjoyable part of the evening's entertainment was the lecture (illustrated by limelight and kinematograph views) on "The Rise and Progress of the Scottish Co-operative Society."⁶⁰

Touring Scotland between 1914 and 1917, James Orr spoke mainly at co-operative meetings in the South-West of Scotland, venturing not too far from the central belt. The places reported to have staged his lecture included Barrhead, Greenock, Camelon, Fife, Paisley, Leith, Douglas Water, Blairgowrie, Hamilton, Port Glasgow, Greenock and Aberfoyle. While Orr was busy talking, the cinematograph display was handled by an operator from the photographic department who was not named in the newspaper reviews. This indicates that the content of the films and lecture was deemed more important than the handling of the apparatus by the operator, which had been part of the event in the previous decade.

A certain degree of performative skill was still required, however, and the numerous bookings and reviews praising Orr's habit to spike his speech with 'humorous touches' suggest that he possessed this.⁶¹ The combination of an engaging lecture with films to support it seemed to have worked well. Its effectiveness was stressed, for instance, after a propaganda meeting in Greenock:

[T]he figures and views prov[ed] a revelation to many present. His [Orr's] pawky remarks kept the audience attentive and in good humour. If "seeing is believing" then more practical interest in Wholesale productions by the Greenockians in the future may be expected.⁶²

⁵⁹ "Propaganda at Kilwinning," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 30, 1914, 117.

⁶⁰ "Social at Wishaw," *Scottish Co-operator*, April 10, 1914, 345.

⁶¹ At this one occasion the operator was named as Mr Neil: "Douglas Water Society," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 14, 1916, 25.

⁶² "Greenock Central Propaganda," *Scottish Co-operator*, December 18, 1914, 1153.

Occasionally this was complemented with a marketing stunt. Following a meeting in Hamilton in January 1917, the lecture was described as an 'interesting and practical object-lesson of the varied ramifications of the Wholesale Society' at the end of which small parcels of SCWS products were handed out to members of the audience.⁶³

The lecture was, at times, feared as undesirable publicity for the Co-operative movement. In March 1917, for instance, Orr was prevented by a local landlord and trader to bring 'the glad message of co-operation' to the village of Buchlyvie near Aberfoyle, when he received

an intimation ... that ... ordinary cinematograph films, but no lecture would be permitted, a further condition being that no mention was to be made by the chairman or any speaker of co-operation, nor were any samples of co-operative productions to be given away.⁶⁴

Orr's lecture tour seemed to have stopped around that time, but was revived again by a colleague during the 1920s.⁶⁵

Coinciding with the end of Orr's tour was the display of a critical attitude towards cinema by the editor of the *Scottish Co-operator*, Henry Dyer, who began to question its educational merit. In the editorial 'The Future of the Kinema', he articulated a measured but directive view when commenting on the report of the 1917 Cinema Commission. Acknowledging the cinema's 'place in the life of the nation' in providing 'healthy and educative recreation', the author warns that too frequent cinema-going represented a hazardous distraction from 'serious thought':

In the future, with all the difficult problems before us, serious thought will be absolutely necessary, and the lighter recreations should only be used sparingly and as means of relaxation. Even as a means of education, while we recognise that it may be of considerable use, we must remember that education which is lightly given very soon dissipates itself.⁶⁶

⁶³ "A typical Co-operative Lecture," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 5, 1917, 5.

⁶⁴ "Propaganda Meeting Abandoned," *Scottish Co-operator*, March 16, 1917, 180.

⁶⁵ "Lecture on S.C.W.S Progress," *Scottish Co-operator*, March 22, 1924, 269.

⁶⁶ "The Future of the Kinema," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 4, 1918, 15.

Given the aloofness presented here, it is not surprising that the SCWS cinema lecture service disappears from the pages of the *Scottish Co-operator* and that lecture services using traditional visual aids, like lantern slides, were promoted instead. James Orr, meanwhile, continued as head of the SCWS's advertising department and would play an important role as instigator of the Society's first longer film projects, commencing ten years in 1927 and discussed in more detail below.

Illustrating Orr's lecture was not the only function of the SCWS cinematograph during the war years. The cinema was still used to exhibit entertaining and humorous films, sometimes immediately following the lecture, sometimes on their own.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, an important shift took place that meant that its use for entertainment dwindled significantly. Entertainment-only shows were increasingly organised for the benefit of specific groups - as a treat for children, the poor, wounded soldiers and Belgian refugees.⁶⁸ Moving pictures ceased to be part of the co-operative entertainment programme for ordinary men and women co-operators. Their sociability was instead catered for by live music, concert parties and organised dances, as had been the case before moving pictures were introduced. Adverts for cinematograph shows were replaced by adverts for gardening utensils and musical instruments, and, by the end of the decade, entertainment cinema, like the lecture service, seemed to have vanished from the co-operative cultural agenda, at least as far as the *Scottish Co-operator* was concerned.⁶⁹ This was most likely due to provision increasingly catered for by purpose-built commercial cinemas and the negative position towards their popularity displayed by the paper's editor and cited above.

As a topic for discussion, cinema made a comeback during the early 1920s when the *Scottish Co-operator's* aloof attitude changed, perhaps as a result of

⁶⁷ For example at the Kilsyth Society's jubilee in September 1911, "Kilsyth Society's jubilee," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 15, 1911, 858.

⁶⁸ See for example "Christmas at Calderwood," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 1, 1915, 13.

"Entertaining wounded soldiers," *Scottish Co-operator*, December 29, 1916, 922; "Hogmanay Treat to Poor," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 5, 1917, 11.

⁶⁹ "Music and Refinement go hand in hand," *Scottish Co-operator*, September 17, 1915, 904.

Henry Dyer's untimely death in 1918.⁷⁰ This also fitted with developments in the public debate on cinema, which shifted from a focus on the problems associated with cinema-going to social scientific explorations into film's potential for educational work. The second Cinema Commission had carried out experiments on the effectiveness of film as a classroom teaching aid, and education authorities had begun to look into the possibilities of using films in schools. Municipal cinema projects had demonstrated that cinema did not have to remain in private hands but could work as a public enterprise.

Public ownership and education were two topics that played a significant role in co-operative thinking and the *Scottish Co-operator* was always up to date with the affairs of local authorities in such matters. In 1921, when the debates about municipal and educational cinema were at a peak in Scotland, the paper published an article on its front page that addressed both issues. In the piece called 'Everybody's University: Going to School at the Movies: Miracles and Discontent', author Alan Breck encouraged the use of the cinema by public bodies in order to harness its potential as 'popular university' and 'agitator'. He stressed that the mass medium could be taken out of the private exhibitor's hand if 'better pictures for ourselves and our children' were demanded by the public:

But it will only be when the people themselves, either through some co-operative organisation or through the municipalities, take command of it that the motion theatre will come into its own as the great provider of clean and sweet pleasure and amusement for the multitude, and at the same time as a common university to which all classes can come, assured of being put into close and living touch with the facts of existence.⁷¹

This demonstrates how support for a more regulated and more educational cinema overlapped with ambitions to create an alternative cinema that was not based on popularity and profit but on civic principles.

Breck, who described himself as a 'regular visitor to the picture theatre', was not against the commercial cinema *per se* and accepted its functions as popular

⁷⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Dyer, Henry (1848-1918)," by Olive Checkland, accessed August 24, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40808>.

⁷¹ Alan Breck, "Everybody's University," *Scottish Co-operator*, June 10, 1921, 489.

cultural institution, but he saw the development of alternative forms of cinema as an important supplement that should be initiated by civic agencies:

[t]his educative function ... will not interfere with the pursuit of mere entertainment, but may give it a new form and will certainly direct it to better ends.⁷²

He sketched an almost prophetic picture of the independent film movement that would emerge in Scotland at the end of the 1920s. As Breck anticipated, the establishment of numerous film societies and official institutions, such as the Scottish Film Council and the Scottish Educational Film Association, would bring about an alternative cinema culture. Funded by the state and fulfilling a public service function, this alternative cinema was not dependent on economic success and popularity and could, thus, focus on the development of the informative non-fiction film, especially the sponsored documentary, a genre that would define Scottish film production till the 1980s.⁷³

The discourse on cinema as a public service was important in inspiring the Co-operative movement to start engaging more seriously with film work during the 1920s, but it was not the only reason. Another significant factor was the economic slump that had followed the growth of the post-war years and the necessity to survive among large retailers, such as Marks and Spencer and Woolworths. These retailers pioneered increasingly sophisticated methods of salesmanship and advertising, and in an economy marked by post-war inflation, the SCWS could not afford to ignore such developments. So, the Society began to explore different methods of advertising which led to the organisation of propaganda campaigns, small and large product exhibitions and the commission of films documenting the manufacture of goods.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Whether this cinema was indeed an 'independent' cinema and to what extent it was determined by the agenda of certain state departments is under scrutiny in *British Cinema: Traditions of Independence*, ed. Don MacPherson (London: British Film Institute, 1980).

⁷⁴ Kinloch and Butt, *History of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Limited*, 291-295.

7.3. Films for Publicity

In the wake of an economic crisis affecting most industries across Britain, the early 1920s saw an expansion of co-operative advertising campaigns and a review of the layout of stores. The SCWS, for example, began to offer courses in shop window dressing and held regular competitions to stimulate interest.⁷⁵ Other efforts included the organisation of local and regional exhibitions of co-op produce as well as the introduction of novelties such as flashlights and moving advertisements to enhance the visibility of the co-operative brand outside of local shops. One such innovation was showcased at Glasgow Central Station in January 1924, where

moving pictures ... should, particularly during the New Year holidays, educate people as to the magnitude of co-operative products. ... The upper part of the case is occupied by a very ingenious piece of mechanism, which revolves, showing different commodities, the under half being used to display some of the goods advertised.⁷⁶

Film work became another important path for co-operative societies to promote themselves and their products, increasingly so during the second half of the decade. Two events in particular stimulated the interest of British co-operative societies in film and cinema advertising, the International Co-operative Congress in Stockholm and the commencement of the National (British) Propaganda Campaign ‘under the auspices of the Co-operative Union’, both taking place in the spring and summer of 1927.⁷⁷ The latter constituted a nationwide fortnight-long activity designed to attract customers and new members to the Co-operative movement. One Scottish society taking part in this campaign, for instance, was the St. Rollox Co-operative Society in Glasgow. In February 1927, ‘special window dressing displays’ culminated in festivities taking place in the City Halls including

a cinema display, ... musical items supplied by the society’s senior and junior choirs ... and the distribution of samples of U.C.B.S. and S.C.W.S sundries and confection productions.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See for example, “Clydebank Window display” and “Window-dressing competition in Kilmarnock,” *Scottish Co-operator*, February 16 1924, 155 and 158.

⁷⁶ “SCWS Advertising Novelty,” *Scottish Co-operator*, January 5, 1924, 15.

⁷⁷ Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film*, 113.

⁷⁸ “St Rollox in the Limelight,” *Scottish Co-operator*, February 5, 1927, 142.

In regard to film work, the more important event seems to have been the Stockholm Congress taking place in August. The Congress included a special conference on the 'Methods of Co-operative Propaganda and Education' which emphasised the effectiveness of films and a resolution for the support of national co-operative film propaganda projects was one of its main outcomes.⁷⁹ The event functioned as a platform where film work already occurring in other European countries was presented. An interesting case in point was the German film *Susie Kerkstraten*, commissioned by the Reichsverband deutscher Konsumvereine (National Union of Consumers' Societies), a film praised in the English co-operative press for its departure from the factual depiction of the manufacture of co-operative goods in factories and the inclusion of a narrative built around the housewife as consumer.⁸⁰ As will be seen shortly, it was this departure that would also mark the difference between the films commissioned by the CWS and those commissioned by the SCWS during the following year.

Representing the SCWS at the Stockholm Congress were Chairman William Allan and advertising manager James Orr who reportedly found the Congress 'very interesting and instructive'.⁸¹ What the Congress delegates had to say and show must have confirmed Orr's existing belief in the value of the filmic medium as he had suggested the production of films for propaganda work already in July at a SCWS board meeting. At this occasion he had recommended 'that two short films be prepared ... showing the manufacture of Margarine and Soap', and 'at a cost approximately of £100 each' his proposal was instantly approved by the managers.⁸²

The two films subsequently commissioned by the society were *Making Soap* (c.1928) and *How Guild Margarine is Made* (c.1928). Clips of both are available for viewing on the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive.⁸³ A third

⁷⁹ Burton, *The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film*, 113-115.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁸¹ SCWS Board Meeting Minutes, August-November 1927, August 26, 1927, 21, GB 243/ CWS 1-1-261, Glasgow City Archives.

⁸² SCWS Board Meeting Minutes, July-August 1927, July 8 1927, 135, GB 243/ CWS 1-1-260.

⁸³ *Making Soap: SCWS Soap Manufacture* (Unknown producer for SCWS, 1928), silent, from *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 1:10, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0877>; *How Guild Margarine is made* (Unknown producer for

film, sharing identical sequences from the SCWS creamery in Bladnoch with the latter film, was made around the same time and called *How Bluebell Margarine is Made* (c.1927).⁸⁴ ('Guild' and 'Bluebell' were two separate co-op brand names for margarine produced and sold by the SCWS.)

The films fulfilled a variety of functions and brought together textual features of different genres. First, all three films were informative and can be described as process films. They document the manufacture of a particular product from the collection of raw material, via the different steps of manufacture, to the presentation of the finished commodity for the camera.⁸⁵ The two films showing the production of margarine, for example, both no longer than ten minutes, show the preparation of milk and fats arriving at Bladnoch creamery. *How Guild Margarine is Made*, in addition, contains sequences of the ingredients being tested in laboratories, processed and packaged at the SCWS margarine factory in Wigtownshire. *Making Soap*, about twenty-two minutes in length, depicts operatives and machines engaged in the manufacture process at the SCWS soap factory at Grangemouth in even more detail.

Two of the films, in addition, possess characteristics that qualify them as advertisement. The intertitles of *Making Soap*, for example, highlight the merits of the product itself. As Burton observes,

the intertitles make a specific female address, suggesting that [the film] was aimed at consumers (conventionally identified as Women by the movement).⁸⁶

SCWS, 1928), silent, from *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 9:00, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0859>.

⁸⁴ Only part one of the film has survived: *How Bluebell Margarine is made* (Unknown producer for SCWS, 1927), silent, from *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 15:13, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0876>.

⁸⁵ Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, "Record, Rhetoric, Rationalization: Industrial Organisation and Film," in *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity Ofmedia*, Film Culture in Transition, eds. Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 44. Frank Kessler and Eef Masson "Layers of Cheese: Generic Overlap in Early Non-Fiction Films on production processes," in *Films That Work*, 77.

⁸⁶ Alan Burton, *The British Co-operative Movement Film Catalogue* (Wiltshire, England: Flicks Books, 1997), 9.

A specific female address is also present in *How Guild Margarine is made* which includes many shots of women in the production line, testing and packing the product. At the end of the audience is encouraged to take a packet of Guild Margarine home with them, referring to the function of the film as part of a larger marketing strategy, a reference lacking in the other margarine film.

The films reveal a propagandist dimension. Burton points out that *Making Soap*, for instance, displayed

a trading activity where the conflict between Co-operation and capitalism was particularly acute ... [as] both the CWS and SCWS operated their soap works in the face of aggressive tactics from private interests and trusts.⁸⁷

James Orr, defined the pictures as 'educational films', further underpinning the various roles the films had to play.⁸⁸

Interestingly, the three SCWS films under consideration here are different from films commissioned by the CWS around the same time. The latter, in addition to sequences depicting the manufacture of co-operative produce, contained narrative sequences 'spelling out the distinctive ownership structure of the movement'.⁸⁹ *The Magic Basket* (1928), for instance, is structured around a shopping trip of the fictional character of a housewife whose benefits and contribution as a consumer are emphasised. The film set the tone for a series of promotional films made by the production company Publicity Films for the CWS over the following five years. Burton contends that it secured over one thousand bookings in commercial cinemas across Britain and was screened at Co-operative Exhibitions.⁹⁰

Less is known about the company that produced the three co-operative films north of the border. However, two filmmakers qualify as likely candidates. Ronald Jay, for example, an amateur cameraman and filmmaker for most of the 1920s, founded a professional business - Jay's Film Service - at the end of the decade. He has been accredited with the production of numerous industrial and educational films, among them SCWS films made during the early 1930s and very

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Exhibition Manager Interviewed," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 28, 1928, 90.

⁸⁹ Burton, *The British Co-operative Movement Film Catalogue*, 8.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

similar in style to the films described above.⁹¹ The other potential producer of the earlier SCWS films is Paul Robello. At the time of their production in winter 1927/1928, he co-owned Topical Productions, a company that acted as Scottish representative for the UK wide Pathé-Gazette Newsreel.⁹² During the early cinema period, Pathé was Europe's main producer of industrial films, which confirms Robello's status as potential producer of the SCWS films made during that time.⁹³

In the context of this chapter, more important than who made the films is the question what or who they were made for. To answer this question, Thomas Elsaesser suggests regarding sponsored industrial films as events rather than aesthetic entities.⁹⁴ Instead of looking at the people who were paid to make the films, he argues, it is essential to understand the purpose of their production and the context of their exhibition. This approach might also hold the key to explaining the differences between the CWS and the SCWS films established above. Researching the exhibition context of the CWS films, Alan Burton found that these were shown in commercial cinemas to a general audience. Importantly however, he could not find any evidence for the theatrical exhibition of the SCWS films. Considering the absence of an 'ideological message' encouraging non-members to join evident in the English co-op films, he proposes that the Scottish films, in 'dealing exclusively with the manufacturing process', were likely to be screened at member's meetings, where they would be shown to people already aware of the movement's goals and the benefits of membership.⁹⁵ While this is a valid suggestion, research carried out for this thesis led to the discovery of one particular event that gives a clearer insight into the films' purpose and address.

⁹¹ For example *Keeping in Step with the Times* (Jay's Film Service for SCWS, 1933) about the manufacture of shoes at Shieldhall, silent, 35 mm, *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 19:56, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0858>. See also biographical note on Ronald Jay, *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10020>.

⁹² See *British Universities Film & Video Council*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://bufvc.ac.uk/newsonscreen/search/index.php/person/769>.

⁹³ Kessler and Masson "Layers of Cheese," in *Films That Work*, eds. Hediger and Vonderau, 77.

⁹⁴ Elsaesser proposes the model of the three A's referring to the initials of the German words for the company commissioning the film (*Auftraggeber*), the occasion of its production (*Anlass*) and the audience the film was aimed at (*Addressat*). Thomas Elsaesser "Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction in Contemporary Media," *Films That Work*, 23.

⁹⁵ Burton, *The British Co-operative Movement Film Catalogue*, 9-10.

The National Co-operative Exhibition taking place in Glasgow's Kelvin Hall on Argyle Street from 7th to 24th March 1928 was the fitting occasion for the production and exhibition of the SCWS films. The exhibition was one of the first large ventures of the newly formed National Propaganda Campaign, enormous in size and ambition. The SCWS was heavily involved in its organisation and overseeing the work was no other than the manager of the Society's advertising department, James Orr. The exhibition occupied a floor space of four acres and featured seventy-two stalls of which forty presented working machinery displaying on site the manufacture of commodities such as shirts, hosiery, soap, candles, shoes and many other products. Apart from that, the exhibition featured a cinema capable of seating up to one thousand people. The scale of the exhibition and diversity of displays indicates that it addressed a variety of audiences: workers engaged in the manufacture of SCWS produce, consumers of co-op produce and the general public.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ "A Survey of the Exhibition," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 21, 1928, 62.

larger advertising and entertainment programme, including mannequin parades showcasing the work of the drapery department and performances by the SCWS brass band, cinema shows commenced three times daily 'at 11:15 a.m., 3 and 6:15 p.m.'. Fittingly, the two films featuring in the exhibition cinema alongside 'a number of star pictures' were those consisting of a specific consumerist address - *Making Soap* and *How Guild Margarine is Made*.⁹⁷ As mentioned above, they contained pictures of women as producers and slides encouraging the audience to take home samples of the product.

But the hybrid character of the films fitted also with the ambition of the exhibition as a comprehensive showcase in co-operative production, a publicity event that sought to reach out to operatives and consumers alike, men as well as women. As James Orr stressed in an article preceding the event, the exhibition would 'delight the heart not only of the ladies, but of the men, who, after all, have to foot the bill'.⁹⁸ The exhibition was open to non-members as well, so the films' audience, while most likely comprising people sympathetic to the co-operative cause, potentially included the general public.

The cinema at the 1928 National Co-operative Exhibition synthesised the various functions the medium had assumed previously and added a new one. First, its function corresponded to the traditional roles the co-operative cinema played during the 1900s and 1910s. The mix of amusing narrative pictures and non-fiction films about co-operative activities, for instance, reminds of the use of the travelling bioscope for publicity during the 1900s. Similar to the older programmes, the cinema bill in the exhibition catalogue was non-itemised, simply referring to the times when the shows commenced, underpinning the eventful and sociable appeal a cinema display as such still carried during the 1920s. Second, James Orr, who commissioned the films for the exhibition certainly drew on his experience during the 1910s when his cinema lectures propagated the work of the SCWS.⁹⁹ Third, the films produced for and shown at the National Co-operative Exhibition not only functioned as publicity for the Society or the Co-operative movement as a whole, but focussed on particular

⁹⁷ "Exhibition Manager Interviewed," *Scottish Co-operator*, January 28, 1928, 90.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

commodities, thus expanding the role of its cinema as a platform for product advertisement.

As suggested above, the production and exhibition context of the SCWS films prefigures to some extent what would become the dominant form of film-making in Scotland until the 1970s - the sponsored documentary. Within that genre, films depicting industrial activity played a prominent role. This applies especially to documentaries produced by Films of Scotland, a committee formed by Scottish Secretary Walter Elliott and advised by John Grierson to produce publicity films about Scotland for the 1938 Empire Exhibition.¹⁰⁰ The committee regrouped in 1954 with the sponsorship of the Scottish Council for Industry and Development, producing a collection of about 150 such films between 1955 and 1982.¹⁰¹ According to Duncan Petrie, most of the films the committee produced were 'extended advertisement or instructional films for various industries, corporations and institutions', relying to a great extent on traditional and eschewing alternative or new forms of representations¹⁰²: A case in point is *Weave me a Rainbow*, for example, a documentary commissioned by Films of Scotland and National Association of Scottish Woollen Manufacturers in 1962 or *Metal in Harmony*, co-sponsored by British Aluminium and produced in the same year. Both display traditional features of the process film.¹⁰³ The SCWS films similarly adopt traditional representational forms and they avoid fictional narratives. They are affiliated with the documentary genre and their sponsored production anticipates an important phase in interwar and post-war Scottish cinema history.

¹⁰⁰ Unionist Walter Elliott was Secretary of the State of Scotland between 1936 and 1938. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v "Elliot, Walter Elliot (1888-1958)," by Gordon F. Millar, accessed August 24, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33003>.

¹⁰¹ For more information on Films of Scotland Committee see *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, accessed Aug 23, 2015, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10037>.

¹⁰² Duncan Petrie, *Screening Scotland* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 119.

¹⁰³ See *Weave me a Rainbow* (Templar Film Studies for Films of Scotland, 1962) sound, *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 27:02, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/2245>; and *Metal in Harmony* (Anglo Scottish Pictures Ltd, for Film of Scotland, 1962) sound, *National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive*, streaming video, 19:44, <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/2239>.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the specific relationship of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society with early cinema and outlined the diversity of cinema's social functions under its auspices. This relationship was determined by the Society's interest in cinema as a vehicle for publicity and the promotion of the Co-operative movement as a whole, profiling the image of the SCWS as well as of the specific goods produced by the Society. Corresponding to this overall function, the cinema was used for a range of different purposes.

Its initial purpose was to entice members to attend the meetings of respective co-operative branches and to reward co-operators for their loyalty at special cultural events. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the SCWS cinema service offered a programme that audiences would have recognised as cine-variety and included films about the society's own activities. This diversity reflected the co-operative ideal of wholesale provision and has been shown to overlap with socialist ideas about the pursuit of rational recreation.

The SCWS's attitude towards cinema changed with the approach of the 1910s. In the hands of a growing industry, cinema's function became mainly defined as entertainment with cinema-going taking place increasingly in purpose-built picture houses, some of which acquired a questionable reputation. Accordingly, the Scottish co-operative press began to view cinema-going as an inferior leisure activity. Correspondingly, the educational and, thus, more legitimate use of the cinematograph was exploited by a lecture service that operated mainly during the First World War and screened films about the SCWS. This service correlated with efforts to implement municipal cinema as an alternative exhibition practice in Kirkintilloch and the commencement of debates about cinema's potential as an educational tool as part of the 1917 Cinema Commission.

Like the SCWS travelling cinema services of the 1900s, the cinema offered as part of the 1928 National Co-operative Exhibition once more united its educational and entertaining functions. In addition, the SCWS produced several publicity films specifically for the event. This move corresponded to an increasing emphasis on the role of film in co-operative advertising internationally as well as growing interest among educational civic authorities in Britain to use film as a teaching aid. Sharing important contextual and aesthetic features with the sponsored documentary, the

films mark the beginning of an alternative cinema funded by civic authorities and indigenous industries with a firm focus on self-publicity and the depiction of the factual.

Crucially, the SCWS's cinema schemes and film projects have to be understood in the context of the co-operative ideal of wholesale provision, perhaps best summed up in the movement's slogan 'from the cradle to the grave' and mirrored in the increasing diversification of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. This notion was consistent also with contemporary socialist attempts to expand the provision of public services on the municipal level in which cinema played a small part. The SCWS engagement with cinema during much of the 1910s and 1920s was based on a critical reflection of cinema's social role as commercialised leisure activity, which, due to the process of industrialisation had come to dominate the conventional picture house. Co-operative criticism of this process drew on the movement's traditional opposition to capitalism in general. Accordingly, the conventional picture house symbolised a system that exploited consumers by giving them 'low-standard' pictures rather than providing them with nourishing content that was educational and 'wholesome'.

As the thesis has demonstrated, this perspective was shared by other sections of society opposed to what had become the prevalent form of cinema culture. These included municipal socialists that envisioned an alternative mode of cinema as a public service that was run for the benefit of the collective rather than the individual. Like the municipal agencies, the Co-operative movement in general and the SCWS in particular, contributed to the mediation of cinema's social role in Scotland by envisioning and developing cinema's social role outside of the conventional picture house.

CONCLUSIONS

8. Conclusions

This thesis examined how early cinema's social role was mediated by Scottish institutions and agencies in order to contribute to a better understanding of cinema's reception and integration as a cultural institution in Scotland. Adopting a social-historical methodology and drawing on extensive archival research that focused predominantly on primary source material hitherto unexplored by cinema historians, it approached the task from three distinct angles which are reflected in the structure of the thesis. To get a picture of the specific structural conditions within which cinemas were allowed to operate, the first part established the legal and administrative framework for film exhibition and provided two examples of its application locally. Forming the core of the thesis were two major British investigations into cinema's social impact as a commercial institution and film's potential as a visual tool for instruction, which provided the context for local Scottish contributions to these important debates. In order to capture how Scottish institutions and agencies responded positively to the arrival of cinema, the third part looked at attempts to develop cinema outwith the conventional picture house, focusing on two particular case studies.

8.1. Research Outcomes

The thesis showed that Scottish institutions and agencies mediated early cinema's social role through both constraining and constructive strategies: attempts to limit cinema's impact as commercialised leisure facility and efforts to create other, more 'useful' functions and to realise its didactic potential. The research demonstrated that both types of strategies were connected through recognition that cinema's integration into modern societies was irreversible and that its ensuing cultural dominance meant that film had become a mass-communicative medium with a powerful social impact that needed to be controlled to inhibit its potential to do harm and could be harnessed for its potential to do good.

More specifically, the research conducted for the first part of the thesis established that the role of the Scottish Office was crucial in determining how cinemas were regulated. Due to political motivations to maintain Scotland's legal autonomy, legislation passed by the British parliament was only partially adopted. This meant that the 1909 Cinematograph Act was interpreted as an accompaniment

and not a replacement of older municipal police acts in order to preserve the country's characteristic primacy of municipal authority. This interpretation of municipal autonomy gave Scottish local authorities a distance from guidelines set out by the Home Office and adopted in England and Wales, and meant that Scottish magistrates were, unlike their counterparts south of the border, urged not to act as film censors. In explaining this complex situation, the thesis makes a valuable contribution to previous knowledge on how cinemas were regulated in Britain, adding a local perspective that diverted from the norm. The case studies of Edinburgh and Glasgow indicated that Scottish municipalities exercised control principally via regulating physical conditions. While most of these were to ensure the physical safety of cinema patrons, individual by-laws were created to regulate the behaviour of the audience, especially children's attendance at evening performances. In both cities, the education authorities unsuccessfully pressed magistrates to censor films locally due to concerns regarding their impact on juvenile behaviour. The resistance of the licensing authorities in both cities to act as censors reflected the specificity of the Scottish legal framework. It may also suggest an alignment of magistrates with cinema trade interests. Self-regulatory strategies imposed by the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association achieved more effective results than pressure from education authorities. In Glasgow as well as Edinburgh the trade organisation urged the recognition of the British Board of Film Censorship as the main agent of censorship. However, as adherence to the Censor's guidelines was decided on a film-to-film basis, and depended on commitment to the CEA as a representative body, it varied. Glasgow magistrates exercised more discretion than their Edinburgh colleagues, revealing the fragmentary nature of cinema regulation in Scotland. To sum up, the first part demonstrated that a discrepancy existed between the Scottish regulatory framework and rules set out elsewhere in Britain and that practices regulating Scottish cinemas were not unified but based on municipal legislation and subject to the discretion of the local authority.

The second part of the thesis centred on two comprehensive investigations into cinema's social impact and potential for education: the 1917 and the 1925 Cinema Commissions, as well as one local experiment carried out in Glasgow testing the usefulness of film as a teaching aid. It found that the complexity of the Scottish framework was reflected in the statement of Edinburgh's Chief Constable to the 1917 Commission. His cross-examination had revealed that he could not interfere with the content of film shows once a cinema licence had been granted by the magistrates.

His statement, however, was generally positive and tried to dispel the notion of a direct link between the rise of cinema and increasing juvenile crime statistics during the 1910s. Overall, the Commission report acknowledged the power of film as a visual mass-communicative medium that could alter a juvenile's outlook on life and influence their behaviour. To regulate the social impact of cinema, it recommended the establishment of an official censor and the development of film's instructive potential by civic and education authorities. Following on from this, the National Council of Public Morals itself carried out an enquiry into this potential during the first half of the 1920s, using statistical methodology to test whether films could support children's ability to memorise and recount factual information. The delineation of educational cinema's function as teaching aid for the instruction of school children was mirrored by an experiment that Glasgow's Education Department undertook at the beginning of the 1930s. Crucially, Chapter Five discovered that this experiment was co-lead by Charles Cleland, who had chaired Glasgow Education Authority through a long-lasting campaign to establish an official censorship system in the previous decade. The experiment can, therefore, be interpreted as a continuation of this institution's struggle to understand cinema's impact on children and to control film content, this time not by limiting access to films but by offering an alternative to the commercial picture house. Proposing the use of factual films to support school teaching defined a new, useful and legitimate function for films and identified the classroom as a safer and more controlled environment than the cinema. The ambition to create special screenings for juveniles was shared by film societies that emerged in Scotland at the end of the 1920s and which began to offer special children's programmes on Saturday mornings. Furthermore, the experiment was part of a wider movement aiming to create an alternative film culture based on civic rather than commercial values and which resulted in the founding of the British Film Institute and the Scottish Film Council. The linkage between constraining and constructive efforts to regulate cinema's social role appeared, thus, most noticeable in discourses about films' moral attributes as its influence was perceived to be potentially harmful in the realm of the commercial cinema but its instructive capacity was acknowledged as useful in the realm of education.

The third part looked more exclusively at alternative cinema schemes, focusing on two particular case studies. Analysing the role of municipal cinema in Kirkintilloch between 1914 and 1923, Chapter Six found that this was a product of Independent Labour Party policies to expand the responsibility of local authorities as

public service provider. Significantly, cinema from this perspective was recast as a public service and was a significant extension in this regard as it was recognised by the local councillors as an important cultural institution that drew in many people as audiences, which could be exploited in two ways. First, in the context of municipal socialism, the cinema was to raise funds for other public services and second, municipal ownership and management of the cinema, in theory, spelled more control of what would be seen on the screen. Based on the latter realisation, efforts were made to show more educational as well as politically challenging films than the commercial cinema. Nevertheless, as the main function of the municipal cinema was to raise money for the town, the research showed that this aspiration was only fulfilled to a very limited extent and that municipal programmes overall tended to resemble the programmes of the commercial rival down the road. This reflects the ongoing crystallisation of cinema's social role at a time when the commercial entertainment model began to dominate cinema culture and other functions were increasingly marginalised. Although municipal cinema as an exhibition practice faltered due to an economic recession at the beginning of the 1920s, its conception as a public service anticipated developments that would subsequently define British media culture: the establishment of the BBC as a public service broadcaster and the emergence of an alternative cinema culture in the Documentary Movement, funded by the state with the aim to produce and exhibit films based on civic rather than commercial values. Similarly, the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society (SCWS) envisioned a cinema that was less defined by the profit motive. As a leading corporation at the heart of what could be called a counter-cultural movement, the SCWS initially embraced cinema as a technological and cultural novelty but developed a critical position towards its industrialisation and the reduction of cinema's function to that of commercialised leisure from the 1910s onwards. Corresponding to this process, the Society began to focus more on film's instructive function, a shift reflecting broader debates on cinema's social role represented by the two Cinema Commissions discussed earlier. Chapter Seven also showed that the SCWS was increasingly invested in film's value as a vehicle for publicity and started to produce advertisement films during the second half of the 1920s. Interestingly, the research revealed that the production context and some of the aesthetic qualities of the films resemble those of the sponsored documentary, a form of filmmaking that would dominate Scottish film production, through, for example, *Films of Scotland*, during later decades. Hence, like municipal cinema, the film work

of the SCWS anticipated to some extent what would become a staple feature of Scottish film culture.

The research outcomes of the third part imply starting points for potential future research. One question that could be explored, for instance, is whether the distinctive socio-political structures prevalent in Scotland, especially the strength of the Labour and Co-operative movements, fostered the emergence of a cinema culture during the 1930s that centred on the idea of public service. Another area requiring more focused research is the comprehensive body of films commissioned by the SCWS between 1930 and the 1970. What was the place of these films in the larger context of Scottish film production and did they retain or divert from the documentary style of the early films discussed in this thesis? Civic efforts to shape the social role of cinema were more adequately supported by institutions emerging after the early cinema period, such as the Scottish Film Council. A future research project could, for example, compare the production and exhibition strategies of these institutions with commercial practices and explore what role both types of cinema played in the everyday lives of spectators through oral history interviews.

8.2. Original Contribution

This thesis made an original contribution in offering a social history of early cinema that synthesised a historiographical methodology with a focus on institutional mediations of cinema's social function in Scotland. Scotland has only recently become a clearly defined entity for investigations into the history of cinema as a cultural institution and the present piece realised research aims proposed by John Caughie in relation to the AHRC funded project 'Early Cinema in Scotland, 1896-1927' and expanded on work pioneered by Trevor Griffiths and María Vélez-Serna in this area.¹⁰⁴

The main contribution of the thesis lies in its deployment of extensive archival research, bringing to light primary source material that has hitherto not been explored in the context of cinema history, such as Scottish Office records and documents informing about the role of town councils, education authorities and the

¹⁰⁴ *Early Cinema in Scotland* <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/> accessed Sept 01st 2015. Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*; Vélez-Serna, "Film Distribution in Scotland before 1918."

Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society in shaping cinema's social role in Scotland. The thesis also offered fresh insights into documents that are well known, like the 1917 Cinema Commission report, by foregrounding and reading the Scottish material it contains against local primary sources, thus, putting it into a different context. To conduct an empirical examination based on new primary material was important because it revealed how cinema was received as a cultural institution and so complements a film studies that predominantly centres on textual analysis of individual films.

The thesis provided an innovative perspective on Scottish cinema history. First and foremost, in offering a wide definition of cinema regulation, linking constraining and constructive strategies, it contributed new insights into an area of film studies that has tended to focus on the censorship of films as the main regulatory approach. The broader definition helped to tease out the main themes essential to both, attempts to limit the accessibility of films as well as constructive efforts to develop alternative cinema and film practices. These themes were identified as the recognition of film as a powerful mass communicative tool and the opposition towards a narrow delineation of cinema as industrialised mass entertainment many civic agencies shared. In revealing these themes, the present work contributed to a holistic understanding of the regulation of cinema's social role and attempts to diversify it in Scotland. Second, the thesis expanded the definition of what has come to be known as Useful Cinema by diverting from a focus on films and technologies to include exhibition practices that were defined by cinema's usefulness outside of the commercial realm.¹⁰⁵ Discourses on film's utility in education suggested a place for cinema in the classroom while municipal and Co-operative exhibition practices outlined other 'useful' functions, such as, propaganda in the Griersonian sense and civic responsibility.

A final argument is that the present work has highlighted important connections between mediations of cinema's social role present during the early period and those emerging later. First, some of the tensions Scottish regulatory practices had created during the 1910s and 1920s in regard to children's cinema-going were picked up by the Wheare Committee and addressed also by the 1952

¹⁰⁵ Acland and Wasson, introduction to *Useful Cinema*, 3.

Cinematograph Act, which tried to bring Scotland's legal framework of film exhibition closer to that south of the border.¹⁰⁶ Second, the idea of producing and presenting useful information films as an alternative to the commercial cinema has been one of the intentions behind the experiment carried out by Glasgow's Education Department and was integral also to the agendas of the Scottish Film Council and Scottish Educational Film Association during the 1930s. Third, the desire to create a civically responsible cinema has been noticeable in the municipal and co-operative projects analysed above and equally fed into efforts to institutionalise such a cinema through the establishment of publicly funded agencies like those just mentioned as well as others, such as Films of Scotland or the Highland and Island Film Guild which delivered a mobile cinema service to Scotland's rural regions following the Second World War.¹⁰⁷ What this thesis has shown is that at the heart of all these strategies and practices was a shared concern to define cinema as a cultural institution that was shaped by civic as well as commercial principles.

¹⁰⁶ Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law*, 124-125.

¹⁰⁷ The Highlands and Islands Film Guild was established in 1946 and subsidised by the Carnegie UK Trust among others, Griffiths, *Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland*, 239.

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