

MOVIES AND THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER.

As you read the title of this week's Congressional Front, you may feel impelled to say that the Charter drafted at San Francisco does not mention the movies; and that's quite right. But the fact is that American movies do have a real relationship to the Charter. When all is said and done, the United Nations Charter which looks toward peace and security must rest upon the great moral force of understanding. In proportion as we understand other countries and peoples and they understand us, the frictions and problems which are bound to arise in the period ahead are more likely of amicable settlement than if understanding is lacking. That understanding of course comes from information. We cannot understand other peoples unless we know them, know their countries and the things in which they are interested; nor can they understand us unless they know what and who we are, how we live and what our interests are. And how shall they get to know us and how shall we get to know them? You guessed it. Not only by means of newspapers, photographs, radio and other methods of disseminating information but through the movies as well.

AMERICAN MOVIES ABROAD.

American movies are extremely popular abroad. Pick up a telephone book in Baghdad for instance and under the name of the movie distributor is listed the names of the stars who make pictures for the company which the dealer represents. Whether it be in the beautiful little island of Ceylon or in the teeming city of Calcutta; whether it be in Baghdad or the shimmering city of Cairo on the Nile in Egypt; whether it be in ancient Damascus or in Istanbul Turkey - there American movies are popular over any other pictures and people stand in line for hours waiting to obtain a ticket and a seat. In these far off lands of the earth, humble people to whom a ticket to the movies may represent two days wages know all of the popular movie stars of America quite as well as we know them and perhaps better because over there it is the one top diversion for so many hundreds of millions of people. Manifestly, when our movies can command such a world audience, it is fair to believe that what people see on the screen makes a deep impression.

SOME EXAMPLES.

A wheezy taxicab was making it's way along the road that runs from the port of Colombo in Ceylon to the capital city of Kandy. The author of the Front observed that it was called the Tarzan Taxi. A garage near by bore the same name - Tarzan Garage. There were other examples and not until later did it dawn that the taxi owner and the garage owner had simply borrowed it from Tarzan of the movies. In London, a British girl of fine family who was then employed as an official driver for the U.S. Army Visitors Bureau wanted to know if all girls in America were delinquent. Upon making a rather surprised inquiry of her, it was learned that only a day or two before, she had observed an American movie called Juvenile Delinquency among girls in the U.S. and got the impression that all girls must be delinquent in this country. At a dinner in Iraq, the first secretary of one of the foreign legations wanted to know whether American movies accurately portrayed American life. We, of course know that movies are make-believe but elsewhere in the world, they get the idea that what they see is really America. So the moral of all this is that American movie producers could do a good job of selling America abroad by means of pictures that reflect American life and traditions and objectives. If the world gets the idea that characters like Al Capone and Tarzan and gangsters are typically American, we have an even bigger job of portraying to them the real America. It must be done by information and every means of disseminating that information must be utilized.