

CINEMA TAX RELIEF STORY.

There are 4,305 cinemas in Great Britain. Every night they have brought you the excitement, the drama, the glamour of the great names. They have brought the world to your home town; they have made famous stars your familiar friends. The entertainment they offer has become an accepted part of your standard of living; perhaps you have taken it a little too much for granted.

Today the industry is facing a crisis - a crisis for which it is not to blame. A seat at your local cinema may cost as little as one shilling and twopence - the price of three and a half hours of the finest entertainment in the world. One shilling and twopence - but of that, the whole film industry receives - one shilling! From every pound paid at the box office, Entertainment Tax removes six shillings and fourpence. What is left must pay for everything; for the skilled technicians who bring to your screen all the 20th-century magic trapped in those gleaming tins.

It must pay for the men who report to you on the events of our times - the newreel cameramen, and their backroom colleagues, with their intricate and costly equipment; it must pay for the huge studios where the feature films are made - features which may cost hundreds of thousands of pounds each, without a penny being wasted. Directly and indirectly, the film industry is a source of livelihood for a quarter of a million people; men and women skilled in hundreds of different trades and professions.

To pay for all this, two-thirds of the box-office takings are not enough. Hence the crisis in the industry. And what is happening? This! Last year, 216 cinemas in Britain were forced to close their doors - one in every 20! And some of them were the only cinemas for many miles.

Here is one town that has recently lost its only cinema. We asked the Chairman of the Urban District Council to tell us about it.

"We used to have a cinema in this town - in fact, only one. Now it is closed, and I and my council are very perturbed about it. People of all ages are affected. When families have to travel to the next town for their entertainment, their home town starts to lose its identity - which is a great pity. Hardest hit, of course, are the old-age pensioners, who can get into a cinema for sevenpence, just by showing their pension books. Now they have to add on the bus fare, which they can ill afford. And believe me, going to the pictures means a lot to these old people. We did all we could to save our cinema. The Council even considered subsidizing it - but our budget wouldn't run to that. If a cut in the entertainment tax can help towns like ours to save their cinemas, I believe it should be cut now."

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Your cinema is a human place - a family place. Every Saturday, for a few pence, it gives your children a morning of wholesome laughter and excitement. It takes them off your hands for an hour or two - without your having to worry about them.

Not only does it cater for the healthy child; it remembers the sick child as well. With your generous help, local cinemas have raised millions of pounds, over the years, for deserving causes. Nor does it forget the old people, who have supported the cinema since the early silent days, like 101 year old Mrs. Budd for whom her local cinema held a birthday party. Yes, a human place - a welcoming place. But today, in town after town, managers are having to close their cinemas and say goodbye to their staffs. Cinemas which should be prosperous are being crippled by a tax which robs them of a third of their takings. Unless part of this burden is lifted, many more screens will be darkened - many more friendly lights will go out for the last time.....