



Peter Ustinov as a comical embezzler attempting to rig a computer in "Hot Millions."

Valenti: New Watchdog of Film Morals?

By BILL RING
(NC News Service)

Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, may emerge as the most powerful figure in the nation's movie industry since Will Hays won the sobriquet of "czar" and stemmed a flood of objectionable movies back in the 1930s.

Valenti has prepared the way for the Oct. 7 launching of a nationwide rating system of movies, under which youngsters 16 and under will be barred by the theaters themselves from viewing some movies, even when accompanied by a parent.

Officials of the two religious organizations concerned with moral evaluation of movies — the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures (NCOMP) and the National Council of Churches Broadcasting and Film Commission (BFC) — have adopted a watchful waiting policy pending launching of the new rating system, before evaluating it.

The new system can be compared to one which has been operating in England for years. It will run parallel to the Production Code, but will not replace it.

Valenti forged the system not only through conferences with the industry's producers, but also through regional conferences with exhibitors who are members of the National Association of Theater Owners.

The tie-in of the exhibitors to the project is expected to have an outstanding effect where foreign-made movies are concerned. The new rating system will apply to both domestic and foreign-made movies.

The cryptic GMRX rating system goes like this:

G—for general audiences.

M—for adults and mature young people.

R—restricted for those over 16, unless those younger are accompanied by an adult.

X—barring those under 16 whether or not accompanied by a parent or adult. An X rating will be given to films not submitted for classification.

In launching the program Oct. 7, Valenti is expected to announce the names of those who will serve on the rating board and also spell out the appeals machinery available to those dissatisfied with ratings. It has been disclosed that an appeals board of 25 members will be established. It is planned to have the program in operation in November.

The careers of Jack Valenti and Will Hays ran on a parallel course before each became involved with the movie industry. Hays was Postmaster General under President Warren G. Harding before he became the movie "czar." Jack Valenti was a top aide to President Johnson before he became head of the MPAA.

When Hays took over in 1930, there was a public outcry against the pictures being produced in Hollywood—violence was rampant in gangster films; law enforcement agents and agencies were ridiculed; sex was accentuated.

There were frequent threats of national legislation to regulate the Hollywood product. State and city censor groups were established and for years controlled in their localities the types of movies allowed to be shown.

To help stem the tide of unsavory movies, the Catholic bishops of the nation some 30 years ago formed a committee on movies which established the National Legion of Decency, forerunner of the NCOMP, to evaluate films from the moral standpoint.

The Legion, from time to time, was ridiculed, criticized, even threatened with court action as an unconstitutional "censorship" organization.

But it had a telling effect in affording, especially for parents, a guide to the type of movies available.

The crowning achievement of "Czar" Hays was establishment of the production code machinery. Under it there were taboos against glorifying criminals; against themes of drug traffic and addiction, and immorality in costuming, and other restrictions.

The code continued in force until about five years ago, when it was modified, giving

producers a greater leeway in film making.

Valenti took over as head of the MPAA. When he took office movie makers, taking advantage of the relaxed code provisions, were turning out movies specializing, in violence; nudity and near nudity; themes such as homosexuality, lesbianism and drug addiction; use of profanity and vulgar language.

Religious groups have grown highly critical of the modern-day film fare. National organizations of women, especially mothers, repeatedly have protested. A number of legislators, particularly U.S. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, have proposed legislation to regulate the movies.

Recent threats of federal censorship or classification of films is admittedly one factor in the development of the new policy.

However, Valenti reportedly said that a real concern about the effects of films on children was a major factor.

Mr. Valenti pointed out that the new policy of separating pictures into various categories will actually ease the restraints on the filmmaker because he will know who his audience is. "The first objective of classification," he explained, "is to free the filmmaker, to loosen the artistic fetters around his creative ankles by segregating pictures."

There's Audience For Family Films, NCOMP Claims

(Catholic Press Features)

New York—There would be many more family-type films once Hollywood realizes that television's grip on the family audience is not what filmmakers fear it is, according to the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures.

"As 'Sound of Music' demonstrated, the audience is there for general entertainment films. But most movie-makers are simply not willing to take the chance on investing money and skill in trying to lure the family from the living-room screen," NCOMP complained.

NCOMP made its observation in its "Catholic Film Newsletter," where it has lauded three entertainment-type films—"Hot Millions," "Finnian's Rainbow" and "Funny Girl"—and again criticized Hollywood's record in the area of children's films.

The Catholic film office suggested that when Hollywood does set out to make a family film, it wrongly assumes that it has made one that only children will enjoy.

"The American movie tradition has always been that of the 'family film,' which normally means something for everybody regardless of whether the whole film will satisfy any one particular age level," said NCOMP. "From a purely business point of view, it is understandable as simply a question of box-office economics based upon the widest possible audience for the maximum profit. For children, however, such films mean being bored half of the time."

NCOMP also accused the American film industry of not knowing how to promote worthwhile children's films: "It is unfortunate that the films of Robert Radnitz, for instance, never reached the potential audience that existed for them, primarily because of their unimaginative distribution and promotion." Radnitz has made such films as "Dog of Flanders," "Misty,"

"Island of the Blue Dolphins" and "And Now Miguel."

Praising "Hot Millions," which was rated for adolescents and adults by NCOMP, the film office called it "a film that accomplishes what it sets out to do, which is to amuse its audience." "The film is purely escape entertainment which reminds one of the great comedies that England was justly famous for years ago," NCOMP added.

Ironically, "Hot Millions" is about a professional embezzler who seeks revenge on the computer system (one was responsible for his serving a prison sentence) by illegally programming one so that it will send him fat checks. The embezzler, played by England's Peter Ustinov, succeeds, and although the film is a comedy, the film office in another day would certainly have objected that crime is glorified.

"When he succeeds," said NCOMP, "one can't help but enjoy it as a moral victory for the human race."

"Finnian's Rainbow" was given an A-1 (for general audiences) rating by NCOMP, which described it as "an enjoyable entertainment, not quite the light-headed romantic fantasy that it might have been, but something that is pleasant to watch and, more especially, to listen to."

"One might understandably be apprehensive about how it would fare 20 years later on the giant screen instead of staying in summer stock. Never fear, there is still plenty of magic left in its songs and romantic dreams," added NCOMP.

The Catholic film office called "Funny Girl" (about the career of Fanny Brice as interpreted by Barbara Streisand), a "handsome film" that "offers essentially the kind of world in which people belt out lyrics anywhere, anytime, without collecting a crowd except at the boxoffice." It was classified by NCOMP for adolescents and adults.

New Office Makes Radio TV Plans

New York—(RNS)—The National Catholic Office for Radio and Television, which has just been handed a major assignment, will have to study its situation and resources before announcing detailed future plans, NCORT executive director Charles Reilly said here.

Reilly's office, a part of the new communications department in the recently reorganized U.S. Catholic Conference, has been given the responsibility for regularly scheduled national radio-television network religious programming which had for 38 years been assigned to the National Council of Catholic Men. It will assume this new role on Jan. 1, 1969.

The three-year-old NCORT has served so far not as a producing agency for radio and television broadcasts but as a consultant. It has advised Catholic organizations which were seeking

radio-television outlets and networks which needed technical advice or suggestions on Catholic subjects.

A major future production in which it has collaborated is an hour-long television special based on Michelangelo's paintings for the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The program will be broadcast by ABC in prime time on Thursday, Dec. 5.

If it is to assume the role held by the NCCW in programming, the NCORT will need a thorough reorganization, large staff increases and a substantial budget increase.

Reilly denied the charge of a radio-television producer for the NCCM that the shift of responsibility from the national laymen's group to the NCORT meant an effort by the bishops either to silence or to gain increased control of national Catholic programming.

New Music Offered In 'Celebrations' 'Own Code': NCOMP

Three area composers will present new works at Celebrations, a symphonic program of Rochester premieres arranged by the Cultural Affairs Commission of St. John Fisher College.

The program is set for 8:15 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, in the Nazareth College Arts Center.

David Fetter, director of the Rochester Chamber Orchestra and the Opera Theatre; D. Donald Cervone of the music faculty at the State University College at Brockport, and William Ferris, organist and choir director at Sacred Heart Cathedral will conduct first performances of their own works. The program features also the Rochester premiere of William Walton's Parita for Orchestra.

More than 50 musicians from the Rochester Philharmonic will be joined by the St. John Fisher Glee Club, under the direction of H. Wendell Howard, and the cathedral choir of men and boys.

Tickets are available at the Arts Center box office, at \$2.50.

Film Industry Violates Retirement Plans Vary for Priests

New York—(RNS)—The National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures has accused the movie industry's Production Code Administration of "quite patently" violating one of its own principles in regard to nudity on the screen.

The NCOMP made its charge in announcing "C" or "condemned" ratings for five films: "Barbarella," "Birds in Peru," "If He Hollers, Let Him Go," "Weekend," and "The Killing Game."

Concerning Paramount's "Barbarella" which stars Jane Fonda, the Catholic film office stated: "This science fiction film is basically structured around repeated sexual encounters involving the heroine. It is a sick, heavy-handed fantasy, it relies for its appeal on a crass exploitation of nudity and graphic presentations of sadism rather than on sophisticated wit and imagination."

"In granting a seal of approval to the film, the Production Code Administration of the Motion Picture Association of America has quite

patently violated one of its principles which states that 'undue exposure of the human body shall not be presented.'"

In addition, the NCOMP rated the Franco Zeffirelli production of "Romeo and Juliet" as A-4, morally objectionable for adults, with reservations. The film stars two teenagers, the youngest performers ever to play the title roles professionally. The Catholic film office observed:

"Because the film is being promoted for school viewing, parents should be aware that it contains a brief scene of nudity which is not only in itself an unnecessary element in motion picture treatment but is also particularly inappropriate for an adolescent audience."

Albany—(NC)—There are 1,688 retired priests in the United States receiving varying types and amounts of retirement income, according to a nationwide survey reported by CRUX of the News, a bulletin published here for priests.

The report was based on a 100% response to questionnaires sent to 153 dioceses. Highlights of the report included:

—Forty-one dioceses have a mandatory retirement age—30 of these at 75 and 11 at 70.

—Sixty-seven dioceses report formal retirement programs with the matter currently under study in another 34 dioceses.

—Retirement stipends vary from continuation of salaries to a top pension of \$800 per month. Forty-six dioceses have a retirement stipend of \$300 per month or more.

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