

MANAGERS COLD TO MIDNIGHT SHOW PROPOSAL

Swing-Shift Workers Show No Enthusiasm for Experimental Bills

Theatre managers representing a cross-section of Toronto's 125 movie houses and approximately the same number of theatres operated by chains throughout Ontario, turned "thumbs down" last night on the proposal of O. J. Silverthorne, head of the Ontario Motion Picture Censor Board, that midnight shows be operated for "swing shift"—4 p.m. to midnight—war workers.

"Impractical" for a dozen reasons including scarcity of help, "not wanted by most workers," "tried and found unsuccessful," right down to declaration by one chain official that the idea was "crazy" fairly well sums up the attitude of theatre heads.

R. W. Bowstead, vice-president of Famous Players' Canadian Corporation, operating about 30 theatres in Toronto and 100 throughout the Province, pointed out that one of the company's theatres on Bloor Street West had experimented several weeks ago with three midnight shows. Not a single person turned up for the first and the other two were cancelled. One of the large downtown theatres also tried it and had five customers.

No Need for Comment.

"There is no need for any comment," Mr. Bowstead said.

An official of another chain of forty theatres in Ontario said: "With the manpower and equipment situation as grave as it is today, the theatres are carrying on, providing recreation for civilians, troops and war workers under extreme difficulties." He thought that if the Government felt late shows were necessary for morale "it might be worked out in specific situations with their co-operation."

S. E. Gosnell, manager of the Uptown Theatre, said: "The problem of staff would require great and careful consideration before we could make any decision as to the feasibility of such a plan."

"Tried and found wanting" was the comment of another downtown theatre manager on late shows.

Samuel Ulster, an official of 20th Century Theatres, operating 20 neighborhood houses in Toronto and 20 outside the city, declared the idea "crazy" and pointed to scarcity of projection machines, parts, carbons and help and the difficulty of keeping theatres clean under such conditions. His firm, too, had tried downtown midnight shows. "We're not in favor of it at all," he said of the nightly late show idea.

An official of B. and F. Theatres (19 in Toronto) felt equipment which must last "for the duration" could not stand extra use without cutting down the lifetimes of the theatres themselves. He cited a theatre trade paper as reporting 25 admissions at a midnight show in one west end theatre.

Workers Not Interested.

Probably the closest theatre to the big John Inglis plant with its thousands of war workers, the Orpheum on Queen Street West tried midnight shows for three or four weeks but discontinued them at the end of April both for lack of help and because of small attendance.

"I felt, too, that the attendance at these shows was hurting the attendance at the theatre during the daytime." **Norman Rittenberg**, owner and manager, explained.

He said that theatre capacity was 650 and attendance was never above 250 to 300. Help could not be obtained and he couldn't carry on alone. Furthermore, he said, he didn't think it paid.

Many theatre managers agreed that "swing shift" workers had ample opportunity for entertainment at daytime shows and that these amply met the need.