

PUBLICITY FILM AGAIN DISCUSSED

Matter referred to Special Council Committee

C.T. February 21, 1942

PROLONGED DISCUSSION AT LAST THURSDAY'S COUNCIL MEETING CENTERED ROUND A MOTION BY ALDERMAN E. RUSSELL OAKLEY THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD PURCHASE THE CHRISTCHURCH PUBLICITY FILM FOR THE SUM OF £146 AND RECEIVE IN FUTURE ALL ITS BOOKING FEES.

Much information was given during the debate and a number of questions were asked. The matter was referred back to a special Committee of the Council.

Prior to the proposition being made, the Town Clerk read the section of Standing Orders dealing with the members' obligation to disclose any interest in the matter under discussion, the breach of which, he said later, might involve a fine of up to £50 upon summary conviction.

Councillor Lane disclosed that he had guaranteed an amount of £5 and had paid it up. Councillor Laphorne said he had no pecuniary interest so far as hopes of profit were concerned, but he was a guarantor. Alderman Oakley said he had no pecuniary interest in the film. All this declaration business, he added, was "to frighten everybody off the grass." He said he was perfectly within his rights in putting the matter on the agenda paper. It concerned the Publicity Committee of 1939 and no one else.

From 1932, Alderman Oakley began, when the committee was formed to explore the possibilities of doing something to advertise the town, until the year 1939, it had consisted of four members of the Council and three members of the Chamber of Trade. Early in 1939 the idea of film advertising was brought to the notice of the committee and a number of meetings took place between April and July and eventually a contract was signed costing £300 or so. A bank agreed to advance the money.

A Difficult Position.

"It could not have been foreseen," said Alderman Oakley, "that war would come in September, 1939, when £200 had already been paid and the film had been made. I felt we were in a very difficult position as the expenditure of another £100 was necessary to complete."

There were more negotiations before the film could be certified by the Board of Trade. It was finally released on the 13th November, 1940. After a firm had been found to market it, the film was shown, during the next year, at a very large number of houses, Mr. Oakley continued, but demand had been nothing like what it would have been if war had not come. Booking fees amounted to £52 12s. 0d., of which we receive half. These were paid into the bank as they came in.

Alderman Oakley went on: —

"The overdraft was £300. We paid off the difference between £300 and £146, also bank charges £20 and Board of Trade fees £8; but the rate of reduction was not swift enough for the bank, which wanted the balance to be repaid at the end of 1941. The bank decided to issue a writ for the balance; but it has not been issued though it will be unless they receive the sum in the next few weeks."

Who Is Liable?

Alderman Oakley then asked who was liable.

The Council, he said set up the committee for a certain purpose. The Publicity Committee had done very fine work for Christchurch. It consisted of four members of the Council and three of the Chamber of Trade, who are now faced with a matter that may involve a considerable cost. It was not quite the thing that people who did such a public service should be "landed" in this way.

(At a later point Alderman Oakley said that the names of the committee members were: Alderman Oakley, Councillor Laphorne and Mr. A. E. Shave representing the Council, and Mr. C. E. Keith, Councillor Lane and Mr. E. Mayner representing the Chamber of Trade.)

"Alderman Oakley couldn't say what the future bookings of the film would be. A letter from the agents dated 17th February, 1942, said there were seven to mature between now and May 3rd, with an approximate value of £5 10s. 0d.

Attended As Mayor.

Seconding the motion, Councillor Laphorne said he thought he had detected a feeling of animosity. He appealed to his colleagues to consider the matter from the everyday point of view of what was right and what was wrong. He never had been a member of the committee but, as Mayor, had attended its meetings because he had received notices from an official of the Council, Mr. Larne. He received these invitations to attend, and the minutes, as with any other committee of the Council.

We were given, said Councillor Laphorne, a guarantee by the distributors that revenue would be not less than £200 in the first twelve months. That guarantee was accepted by the bank, but when war broke out the Government took practically all the film industry's staff and that was how the matter fell on the shoulders of other guarantors.

What was done, he said, was done for the interests of the Borough: not with any idea of making money. Any profits from the venture were to be spent in advertising.

Appealing on business grounds, Councillor Laphorne said the film was an asset whether it earned a profit or not. After the war, it would make good publicity even if we had to pay to have it shown.

From the moral point of view, too, the Council should relieve the committee which had had nothing but the best motives. The Council would be very uncharitable if it did not take on the film.

Councillor Wyatt said he was glad stress had been laid on the moral aspect. He wanted the Council to take the film and not turn it down as it had turned down other assets in the past.

Who Owns It?

Councillor Stevens who, at one time, was chairman of the Publicity Committee, said it was not true that this was a sub-committee of the Council. It never had to report to the Council. "Who are the owners of the film?" he asked. He had asked that question before, he said, and we did not even know if the owners were willing to sell. Back in the summer we had been told that the Council could not spend one penny on the film.

Councillor McArdle observed that much that had been said had come as news to him. He thought the film not too bad a speculation. If the Council did not do it, why not the Councillors do it themselves? He would give his share.

Several questions were asked by Councillor Newman. He had been a member of the Joint Publicity Committee and could get no satisfaction: neither could the secretary get any information.

"Have the guarantors been asked whether they consent to the film being sold?" asked Councillor Newman.

We have been told, he continued, "that the film is the sole concern of the 1939 committee; but when a committee is given a job to do, surely it must continue to do it: otherwise why keep minutes? Surely later committees should continue the work started by earlier ones."

How About Guarantors?

Councillor Newman then asked about the guarantors who had not paid up, and he asked what was to be done with those who had paid up.

"Are we going to refund their money?" he queried, "we have an obligation to them as well." There had been a certain amount of feeling, he emphasised. And we were now asked to pay a sum that a guarantor or guarantors—whether there were 1, 2, 3 or 4 of them—had not paid up. It was a matter of principle that ought to be thrashed out with everybody concerned.

Alderman Gallon said he firmly believed that what had been done in connection with the film was done for the good of the Borough.

Referring to the resolution, he asked whether the members of the Council as individuals would pay £146 without going into the matter as to who was to sell. £146 was the amount due to the bank. What were we going to do with the other guarantors who have paid up? It would not be fair, he said, to leave them out in the cold. He moved, as an amendment, that the matter be referred to a special committee to be appointed by the Council.

Councillor McArdle seconded and Councillor Laphorne supported, saying he most certainly would not wish any advantage to be taken of other guarantors.

The following committee was appointed for the purpose: Alderman Galton, Councillors McArdle, Preston, Stevens and Wyatt.

Christchurch Publicity Film Council decides to purchase

C.T. May 22, 1943

At last month's meeting of the Council, in committee, a decision was taken to acquire the Borough Publicity Film, "New Forest Borderland," and in doing so to pay off the overdraft outstanding on the film account at Lloyds Bank, and also to pay off the amount advanced by one of the guarantors—Alderman E. Russell Oakley.

The Ministry of Health, after reconsideration of the matter, has decided that the Council might purchase the film under Section 1 of the Health Resorts and Watering Places Act.

Prior to the meeting of the Council at which the decision was made, guarantors and other persons interested received a circular asking whether they were prepared to waive any claim in respect of the sums paid by them and any other claim whatsoever in connection with the film.

According to the Council's minutes, the following replies had been received:-

(a) From Mr. E. R. Oakley, stating that he was not prepared to waive his claim in respect of the sum which he had recently advanced to the credit of the bank account;

(b) From Messrs. A. Hornby, B. A. Mead and J. Vaughan, stating that they desired the repayment of sums paid by them as guarantors when the income from the film showed a profit; and

(c) From the remainder of the guarantors (with the exception of Mr. P. Allfree and Messrs. Strong and Co., who had not yet replied) waiving any claim they may have.

The Council's resolution is worded as follows: —

That the, film be purchased by the Council for the sum of £150 (including the sum advanced by Alderman Oakley) under Section 1 of the Health Resorts and Watering Places Act.

That on the transfer of the ownership of the film to the Corporation, the sum advanced by Alderman Oakley be repaid to him, and the balance outstanding on the account at Lloyds Bank be paid off.

That the guarantors referred to in paragraph (b) above be repaid the sums paid by them as guarantors, namely £5 in each case, when the purchase price has been repaid by the income from the film and there are sufficient funds in hand to enable the payments to be made.