

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SPEECH

BY

The Rt Hon. J. G. GORTON, M.P.

ON

AUSTRALIAN FILM DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION BILL 1970

Second Reading

[From the 'Parliamentary Debates,' 5 March 1970.]

Mr GORTON (Higgins—Prime Minister)
[8.00]—I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill will fulfil the Government's undertaking to assist the Australian film industry. It provides for the establishment of an Australian Film Development Corporation which will administer a fund with an initial capital of \$1m. The Corporation will make loans to film and television producers. It will be able to guarantee repayment of loans, including bank overdrafts, made to producers of Australian films. It will be able to join with producers of Australian films under arrangements which will entitle it to receive a share of the proceeds without being liable for any debts which may be incurred. It may also, subject to ministerial approval, participate in the formation of a company for the distribution of Australian films. The Corporation will seek to encourage the production and distribution of Australian films of high quality. I should perhaps say, Mr Speaker, that when I refer to films of high quality I do not confine my meaning to films of technical excellence or those with an artistic content which could win a

festival award, but be commercially unsuccessful. The Corporation will seek to encourage the production of films which are box office successes and which have those excellences of production, camera work and technical presentation which justify the description 'high quality'.

The fund is intended for investment in films: It is not intended as a giveaway project. It indicates our optimism that such investment will be successful in all ways but it is not intended as a vehicle for underwriting the full cost of a film or films. Producers of films will still be expected to have a substantial equity in a film and to show faith in their artistic and commercial judgment, and I hope that distributors will also be prepared to invest, at their judgment, in such enterprises. We believe that after a period of time properly made investments will be returning profits to the Corporation and there will then be no need for the Government to replenish the fund each year. That is our objective and the measure of the scheme's success will be judged partly on this.

So we expect profits in money terms but at least as importantly we expect profit in

human values. A flourishing film industry in Australia will employ talented Australian writers, artists, directors, actors, musicians and technicians. Many of them have all too often had to leave this country to pursue their chosen careers. Their talents have added distinction to the productions of other countries. But I know many of them wish to return again home. We hope that they will be able to do so as a result of the action here suggested. Further, film and television distributed throughout the world is perhaps the most effective means by which the image of a country can be projected abroad—the most effective means by which the ideas and way of life of a nation can become known throughout the world. We hope this Bill will help Australia in this way.

It is now apparent that Australian interest and support is beginning to be available for local productions and it is my Government's hope that money provided by the Corporation will act as a catalyst to encourage private capital to invest in Australian productions. In other countries considerable investment in film production is forthcoming from banking and other financial institutions. Let us hope and urge that this support, along with that support from distributors and exhibitors which I have mentioned, will be forthcoming here.

The corporation will consist of a chairman and four other members—each

appointed for periods not exceeding 5 years but eligible for reappointment. Members will be appointed from amongst persons of standing and varied experience but without pecuniary interests in the business of making, distributing or exhibiting films, or in a corporation carrying on such a business. The Corporation will be required to report annually to the Minister with appropriate financial statements. The Minister will be required to lay the report and financial statements, together with the report of the Auditor-General, before each House of the Parliament.

It gives me great personal pleasure to introduce this Bill. It expresses the Government's belief that we should devote ourselves not only to building great new factories and smelters, not only to wresting produce and minerals from the earth of Australia, not only to material standards, but also to involvement in and encouragement and development of the Arts. The human values we will thereby nurture, the satisfaction we will offer to individual development, the improvement of the quality of life are essential for any nation if it is to merit the description 'great'.

I believe this Bill will help us to attain these aims and I commend it to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Hayden**) adjourned.