

JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

G4 / Personal papers, October 18, 1939 - November 7, 1945

Scope and Content:

In October 1939 Grierson was appointed the first head of the newly-formed National Film Board of Canada, a post he held until 1945. Initially the Board produced documentaries about Canadian life but with Canada's increasing involvement in World War 2 the focus shifted to producing more patriotic films in support of the war effort. Grierson also encouraged the development of experimental and animated films including the works of Norman McLaren. In 1940 he visited Australia and New Zealand to report on their film industries for the Imperial Relations Trust.

Material relating to this period of Grierson's life includes papers relating to his visit to Australia and New Zealand for the Imperial Relations Trust in 1940; papers relating to his time at the National Film Board of Canada including correspondence, notes and reports; papers collected by Grierson on the American film industry and notes and reports written by Grierson on the subject; drafts of sections of a proposed book on democracy and propaganda entitled *Eyes of Democracy* and related notes and correspondence; articles, lectures, transcripts of radio broadcasts and notes on various subjects including film, propaganda, education and democracy; general correspondence (1939 - 45); press cuttings; notebooks kept by Grierson during his time at the National Film Board of Canada containing drafts of letters and articles and notes on various subjects including visits to Australia and New Zealand; photocopies of material relating to this period of Grierson's life from Forsyth Hardy.

Papers relating to JG's commission to visit Australia and New Zealand and to investigate government film activities there on behalf of the Imperial Relations Trust

G4	1	Papers on educational film in Australia 18 items	
		Including:	'Memorandum on the proposed establishment of an Australian Board of Visual Education'
	2	Government and other papers relating to use of film in Australia 21 items	
		Including:	'Publicity for Australia in USA by means of film'. Report submitted by the Australian Government Trade Commissioner in the USA, January 15, 1940 Annual report of the Department of Commerce, Cinema and Photographic Branch, 1938-1939 JG: 'Memorandum to the Prime Minister', April 29, 1940 - on the use of film in Australia
	3	Australian Acts of Parliament relating to film, cinemas and theatres, 1908-1939 15 items	
	4	Imperial Relations Trust papers 17 items	
		Including:	'Report on the distribution of Empire films in Great Britain and of British films in the

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			Dominions and India'. Plans for JG's visit to Australia JG's report on his trip to Australia (incomplete)
	5	Memoranda on the use of films in New Zealand 9 items	
		Including:	Report on film in New Zealand 'Principal recommendations for the attention of Mr Fraser and Mr Langstone' 'An explanation of how the sterling funds have been spent'
	6	Papers relating to the New Zealand centennial celebrations, 1940 5 items	
	7	Miscellaneous papers, including letters of introduction to persons in Australia and New Zealand, press cuttings of general interest 56 items	

National Film Board of Canada and other Canadian papers

G4	8	NFB papers 37 items	
		Including:	Film publicity material 'Memorandum to the Government Film Commissioner re war conduct, war aims, and film' JG's letter of resignation from the Commissionership to W L Mackenzie King, August 10, 1945 Script for film designed 'to be shown immediately after the Armistice in the West' MSS by JG NFB submission to the Manitoba Royal Commission on Adult Education Report by Isabel Jordan: 'Postwar plans for promotion of government films by the Canadian film industry'
	9	Papers relating to the Canada Committee, 1942-1944 12 items	
	10	Papers relating to the Canada Foundation, 1945 13 items	
	11	Papers relating to the National Council for Canadian-Soviet Friendship 8 items	

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		Including:	JG's address to the Council on Soviet films, November 1943 Correspondence, 1943-1944
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Papers relating to the United States of America

G4	12	Papers relating to the American Film Centre, and to the International Film Centre 19 items	
		Including:	Correspondence between JG, Donald Slesinger, and Joseph and Mary Losey concerning the AFC, December 1938 - July 1940 Correspondence between JG, Donald Slesinger, Mary Losey and Basil Wright concerning the IFC, January 1940 - December 1945
	13	'Report on film activities of Washington film agencies of the American Government and semi-governmental nature and of the British information services, National Film Board of Canada and the United Nations Information'. Compiled by the Bureau of Motion Pictures, Office of War Information, Washington D C, September 4, 1945 1 item	
	14	Papers, reports and articles relative to the Commission on the Freedom of the Press, c. 1943-1945 14 items	
		Including:	Memorandum by JG on 'Problems and procedures'
	15	JG's MS notes on the Commission on the Freedom of the Press 6 items	
	16	Correspondence relating to Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1943-1945 27 items	
	17	Miscellaneous American papers 14 items	

Writings by JG

G4	18	Sections of a book on democracy and propaganda variously titled <i>Eyes of Democracy</i> or <i>Searchlight on Democracy</i> , with MS emendations by JG, and related correspondence, 1939-1943 23 items	
	19	Articles and speeches on education	
		Contains:	'Education and the new order', Winnipeg, May 1941

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		<p>Radio talk beginning 'I don't think that there was ever a time when it was more important to ask what education is doing', September 23, 1942 (2 copies)</p> <p>'My father was a teacher - what would he teach now?' For <i>The Land</i>, 2(3), 1942-1943</p> <p>'Propaganda and education', November 15, 1943 (3 copies)</p> <p>'Films and the ILO', address at Philadelphia, April 26, 1944 (2 copies)</p> <p>'Searchlight on democracy', written for an adult education conference in England, Summer 1939 and reprinted in <i>Food for Thought</i> (published by the Canadian Association for Adult Education), 4(7), April 1944 (2 copies)</p> <p>'Education in a technological society', address given to the National Conference on Adult Education, Winnipeg, May 28, 1945</p> <p>Radio talk on the adult education conference at Winnipeg. May 28, 1945</p> <p>'Education and political reality', condensed version of 'Propaganda and education' reprinted from the <i>OEA Annual Report</i>, 1945, and headed 'Dominion Film Commissioner speaking to the Ontario School Inspectors' Association'.</p> <p>'The shift of power in education' (3 copies, one headed 'First draft of <i>Fortune</i> article "Education and propaganda"')</p> <p>'Education and total effort'.</p> <p>4 untitled articles, one headed 'December 12 th - Mr Grierson'.</p> <p>22 items</p>
G4	20	Articles, speeches and broadcast, January 1940 - June 1945.
		<p>Contains:</p> <p>'The eyes of Canada', January 21, 1940, address on the NFBC</p> <p>Letter to Elton on the 'present Canadian film situation' and opportunities for Shell, January 23, 1940</p> <p>Untitled article on the record of British war films in North America, August 10, 1940</p> <p>'Films and the war', November 1940, reprinted by The National Film Society of Canada</p> <p>'Can we make good?', digest of comment from radio discussion programme <i>Citizens All</i>, December 11, 1940 . With MS notes by JG</p> <p>'Relations of the government to the film industry in time of war'. Address to the National Board of Review, New York, November 13, 1941, reprinted by The Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences</p> <p>'The art of showmanship', transcript of radio discussion programme <i>Art in Action</i>, September 16, 1942</p> <p>Address on the contribution film can make to international relations given to the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, New York, October 11, 1942 (2 copies)</p> <p>'The documentary idea', 1942, article on the current state of documentary (2 copies)</p> <p>'Wartime Information Board - It is not done with mirrors'. April 3, 1943</p>

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			<p>'The necessity and nature of public information', address to the American Informational Association, Montreal , June 3, 1943 (2 copies, one in French.)</p> <p>'Notes for Irene Baird', October 1943, on the role of Canadian film-making</p> <p>St Andrew's Day address to Rotary Club of Ottawa, November 29, 1943 (2 copies)</p> <p>'The industry's public relations in war and peace', December 1943</p> <p><i>A Film Policy for Canada</i> , for <i>Canadian Affairs</i> , 1(11), June 15, 1944</p> <p>'Talk on a visit to Normandy and Brittany', broadcast August 20, 1944</p> <p>'Information on the services overseas', September 7, 1944</p> <p>'The film in international relations', November 21, 1944., for <i>The Nation</i> , January 13, 1945</p> <p>'Films as an international influence', address to the Vancouver Advertising and Sales Bureau, December 11, 1944</p> <p>Article on internationalism and its relevance to the film industry, December 19, 1944, headed 'Variety'.</p> <p>'Letter to Roly Young, <i>Toronto Globe and Mail</i> ' on war films, January 16, 1945</p> <p>'Background for the use of films - or anything else - by rehabilitation officers', February 15, 1945</p> <p>'Note on the political economy of the arts', June 18, 1945. For <i>Canadian Bookman</i> magazine</p> <p>'The future of the films' ('The challenge of peace'), address to the Conference of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, New York, June 23, 1945 (2 copies)</p> <p>29 items</p>
G4	21	Articles, speeches and broadcasts, n.d.	
		Contains:	<p>Letter headed 'Dear Ray' for later publication as 'Talking of propaganda' (2 copies, one with MS alterations)</p> <p>'Art in action' (2 copies, one with MS alterations)</p> <p>'Documentary films - safe and unsafe' (with MS notes)</p> <p>'The documentary film'</p> <p>'Nature and form of a government information service'</p> <p>'The nature of propaganda'. In 3 parts: 'Propaganda on the offensive', 'Relativity in propaganda', 'Democracy's special need of propaganda'</p> <p>Short untitled article on films and the war, 'Notes on documentary by JG'. Outline of documentary theory (2 versions)</p> <p>Memorandum on 'The Information Service'. With MS alterations</p> <p>'Canada's international position', marked 'Not for circulation'.</p> <p>Review of Frank Badgley's <i>Royal Visit</i> film, with MS alterations</p> <p>Short article on the use of film by the Church, with MS notes</p>

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		Transcript of radio discussion programme on the mobilisation of the arts to help the war effort. Review of 'the Steiner-Van Dyck film' and comment on <i>The World Beyond War</i> , projected film by Basil Wright 'On <i>The Song of Cylon</i> Article on 'the films for New York controversy' Article on internationalism and JG's Scottishness Memorandum on 'the position of Audio and ASN . if the Government set-up in Ottawa develops as intended'. Headed 'Confidential'. 21 items
	22	MS drafts of articles 4 items
		Including: Article beginning 'In a sense the influence of the public on the cinema is absolute'.

Correspondence

G4	23	Correspondence, October - December 1939, with, among others:
		Arthur Elton (14, 47) Imperial Relations Trust (46, 48, 67) Norman McLaren (12, 51, 54) Stephen Tallents (35, 70) Basil Wright (2, 18, 22, 62) 71 items
	24	Correspondence, largely relating to work in New Zealand and Australia, 1940, with, among others:
		Arthur Elton (7, 19, 76, 129, 140, 134, 140, 145, 176) J G Gardiner, Canadian Minister of National War Services (147) Imperial Relations Trust (60, 63, 67, 146, 162, 180) Lord Lothian (1) Paul Rotha (15, 133, 135, 138, 139, 142, 143, 154, 169) Stephen Tallents (26, 66, 174) Evelyn Spice (167) John Taylor (14, 175) Basil Wright (8, 13, 22, 27, 131, 153) Australian and New Zealand government ministers 182 items
G4	25	Correspondence, 1941, with, among others:
		Cavalcanti Wyndham Lewis

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			Paul Rotha Stephen Tallents John Taylor Basil Wright 17 items
	26	Correspondence, 1942, with, among others:	
			Arthur Elton Stuart Legg Paul Rotha Stephen Tallents Basil Wright 21 items
		Including:	Short appreciation of Robert Flaherty
	27	Correspondence, 1943, with, among others:	
			Cavalcanti (2) George Ferguson (101-103, 137, 138) Duncan McLaren (22) Stephen Tallents (12, 80) Basil Wright (1, 37, 143) 191 items
	28	Correspondence, 1944, with, among others:	
			George Ferguson (62, 135) Robert Flaherty (68) Malcolm MacDonald, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canada (21, 30, 125) Stephen Tallents (1) 286 items
	29	Correspondence, January - October 1945, with, among others:	
			The Rt. Hon. W L Mackenzie King (87) 125 items
		Including:	Memorandum on choosing a successor as Film Board Commissioner
	30	Correspondence, n.d. Mainly items relating to travel for IRT 12 items	

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Writings by authors other than JG

G4	31	Articles 15 items	
		Including:	'EB': <i>The Documentary Film in Canada</i> , October 20, 1945 Hon. N McL Rogers, Canadian Minister of National Defence: 'Canada's war effort', December 20, 1939 Stephen Tallents: 'History of the EMB' Donald W Buchanan: 'Projection of Canada' Arthur L Mayer: 'Fact into film'
	32	Series of lectures on modern painting by Rudolf Weisenborn. 5 items	
	33	Miscellaneous articles, authors unknown 6 items	
		Including:	'Drama on your doorstep', digest of comment by JG on films, radio and propaganda

Press cuttings

G4	34	Press cuttings on or by JG, and on Ruby Grierson and the NFB, early 1940s 39 items	
	35	Press cuttings of general interest, early 1940s. 30 items	
		Including:	Walter Lippmann: 'Government can by proper use of funds create a condition of full employment'

Miscellaneous

G4	36	Miscellaneous papers, expense sheets and lists of contacts.	
		Including:	Passport, 1939-1941 MS notes by JG 40 items

Notebooks

G4	N1	Brown spiral notebook c. 1939	
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		Including:	Cable to Flaherty, and other correspondence Notes on 'Six educationals'
	N2	Black ledger c. 1939	
		Including:	Sections of <i>Eyes of Democracy</i> Letters
	N3	Brown Government of Canada notebook c. 1940	
		Including:	Notes on the early days of the NFB
	N4	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Letter to Stephen Tallents, and other personal letters Articles on propaganda
	N5	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Sections of, and letter relating to <i>Eyes of Democracy</i>
	N6	Brown Government of Canada notebook c. 1940	
		Including:	Notes Articles Letters ff. 6-12: article on <i>Royal Visit</i> and other films ff. 13-22: drafts of 'The film at war' ff. 23-31: letter to Stephen Tallents on information services ff. 28 v. -24 v. : communiqué 'to the ministers of the dept. of defence . national war services'
	N7	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Letters
	N8	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Extensive writing on visits to New Zealand and Australia and the possibilities for government film activities there. Articles Letters Notes Loose press cuttings

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			<i>ff.</i> 5-11: letter to Arthur Elton on Shell films in New Zealand <i>ff.</i> 50-57: letter on films for war information purposes <i>ff.</i> 126 v. -87 v. : report on government film boards
	N9	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Letters (one attempting resignation from NFB)
	N10	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1940	
		Including:	Articles Letters Notes <i>ff.</i> 3-15: article on film distribution <i>ff.</i> 24-26: letter to Stephen Tallents on wartime situation in Britain <i>ff.</i> 54-66: notes on film distribution
	N11	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1941	
		Including:	Articles Letters <i>ff.</i> 8-9: letter on distribution agreement between NFB and MGM <i>ff.</i> 12-17: letter to Beddington on the relationship between NFB and the British Ministry of Information <i>ff.</i> 22-26: letter to Mr Robertson on distribution of Canadian films in the USA <i>ff.</i> 59-70: untitled article on the arts <i>ff.</i> 80-86: text of interview on the 'art of showmanship' <i>ff.</i> 87-99: article on film as part of the war-effort
	N12	Notebook c. September-October 1941	
		Including:	Letters <i>ff.</i> 1-16: notes and article on the wartime situation in Britain after a visit there. <i>ff.</i> 24-25: letter to Anthony on NFB films
	N13	Black ledger c. 1941	
		Including:	MSS and typescript: 'A letter from England', on the psychological effects

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			of the blitz and evacuation, and England's attitude to them, and the effectiveness of Canadian films there.
	N14	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1941-1942	
		Including:	Articles on NFB Letters Notes ff. 8-10: letter to Hitchcock ff. 64-65v: letter to Tallents on good prospects for the NFB
	N15	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1942	
		Including:	Letters Expense accounts Writings on his illness and on a visit to Mexico
	N16	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1942	
		Including:	Articles Letters
	N17	Black Minute Book c. 1942	
		Including:	Articles and correspondence on the Canadian Wartime Information Board and public information services
	N18	Brown Government of Canada notebook c. 1942	
		Including:	Letters Typescript notes on NFB film about wartime developments in Newfoundland, Labrador, North Quebec and Baffin Island ff. 17-18: letter to Anthony on <i>Eyes of Democracy</i> and personal topics f. 23: letter to JPR Golightly about Basil Wright and Jack Beddington
	N19	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1942	
		Including:	Articles on propaganda, education and other topics Letters Notes ff. 3-7: letter on work of WIB ff. 41-60: article: 'Total effort' ff. 78-102: article on the state using propaganda for inspiration, especially

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			in wartime f. 103: article: 'A film board for England'
	N20	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1943	
		Including:	Articles Letters Notes ff. 1-17: article on the WIB and Canadian information services in general ff. 36-50: article: 'Education 1 - The anarchy in education' ff. 51-64: article: 'From documentary film on' ff. 107-117: St Andrew's Day dinner speech for Ottawa Rotary Club, November 29, 1943
	N21	Black Government of Canada ledger c. early 1940s	
		Including:	Lectures Letters
	N22	Black Government of Canada ledger c. early 1940s	
		Including:	Notes Letters Articles on propaganda
	N23	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1942	
		Including:	Letters Sections of <i>Eyes of Democracy</i> 'Privilege of the artist' 'The artist in the public service'
	N24	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1944	
		Including:	Article on information services in Canada
	N25	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1944-1945	
		Including:	Notes Articles Letters ff. 43065: 'Canada-US relations' ff. 73-76: article on NFB with reference to his resignation as Commissioner

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	N26	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1944-1945	
		Content similar to G4: N25	
		Including:	Notes Articles on government use of documentary relating to troops overseas Letters ff. 93-104: letter to Basil Wright on documentary organisation
	N27	Black Government of Canada ledger c. 1945	
		Including:	Notes Articles Speeches Letters about leaving the NFB, and giving advice for the future ff. 2-8: 'Writers and documentary' ff. 12-16: article on private enterprise

Publications

G4	P1	<i>National Education</i> - The journal of the New Zealand educational institute, 22 (233), April 1, 1940	
		Including:	JG: 'Dramatic interpretation', pp. 96-99: on the use of film in education
	P2	The <i>Spectator</i> , 5858, October 4, 1940	
	P3	<i>The Land</i> , 2 (3), 1942-1943	
		Including:	JG: 'My father was a teacher', pp. 188-190: on changes in education
	P4	<i>Public Affairs</i> - A maritime quarterly for discussion of public affairs, March 1944	
	P5	<i>Canadian Film Weekly</i> , 9 (51), Christmas edition, 1944	
	P6	<i>The Nation</i> , January 13, 1945	
		Including:	JG: 'Tomorrow the movies (2) - pictures without theatres', pp. 37-39
	P7	Louis Delluc: <i>Charlie Chaplin</i> , London and New York, 1922	
		Marked 'Canada' by JG	
	P8	<i>Canadian Affairs</i> , 1 (11), 15 June, 1944	

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	JG: 'A Film Policy for Canada'
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Acquisitions

G4A	1	Miscellaneous papers (from HFH)	
		Contains:	Press cutting mentioning JG from <i>New Masses</i> , October 3, 1944 Letter from JG to HFH on <i>Grierson on Documentary</i> and JG's plans after his resignation as Commissioner of the NFB, September 17, 1945 Correspondence with Stephen Tallents, HFH 6 items
	2	Poem: 'The grete Film Borde fyre', June 1942 (from HFH) 1 item	
	3	<i>A Film Policy for Canada</i> by JG, published as <i>Canadian Affairs</i> , 1 (11), June 15, 1944 'The changing face of propaganda' by JG, for <i>Free World</i> , January 1945 Photocopies from HFH 'Facts about the National Film Board', 1944 (photocopy) 3 items	
	4	Miscellaneous Canadian papers. January 1940 - January 1944 (photocopies from HFH)	
		Including:	Letters on the death of Ruby Grierson. October 1940 Terms of JG's attempted resignation as Commissioner of the NFB, 1941 Terms of JG's resignation as General Manager of the WIB, January 10, 1944 14 items
	5	'Manpower versus workpower' by RJ Spottiswoode (?), August 23, 1942 (photocopy from HFH) 1 item	
	6	'The Canadian wartime documentary: <i>Canada Carries On</i> and <i>The World in Action</i> ' by William Goetz, <i>Cinema Journal</i> , 16 (2), 1977 (photocopy by HFH) 1 item	
	7	'Tomorrow the movies, parts 1 and 2' by JG, <i>The Nation</i> , January 1945 4 items	
	8	Letters from JG to Paul Rotha, 1938-44 13 items	
	9	Letter to Basil Wright, 1941	

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		1 item
	10	Address given by JG at Academy Awards, Hollywood, 1942 1 item
	11	'Canada's film voice', <i>The New York Times</i> , July 1, 1945 (photocopy) 1 item
	12	Press cuttings on JG 2 items
	13	Letter to HFH re. resignation from NFBC, <i>Grierson on Documentary</i> , September 17, 1945