

Trygve Panhoff “Norwegian Board of Film Classification” / Norway

END OF AN ERA: NORWEGIAN CINEMA CENSORSHIP TURNS CONVERGENT

From January 1st, 2005, the Norwegian Board of Film Classification (Statens filmtilsyn) will join the Board of Supervision of Ownership (Eierskapstilsynet) and the Board of Broadcasting Supervision (Statens medieforvaltning), creating a new fusion called Statens Medietilsyn (the Board of Supervision of Media), in the city of Fredrikstad, south of Oslo. The main intention is to create a Board better suited for our times of convergence, at the same time there is a political wish to move state jobs out of Oslo.

The Norwegian Board of Film Classification was launched in 1913, which means that October 2003 will see its 90 years jubileum. Its principal task has been the protection of children and young people. Norway was the first country to have a special children's rating (7), in 1954, together with a rating for young people (12). Before that, films were for adults (16) or children (under 16). Today's ratings are A (All Audiences), 7, 11, 15, and 18. Parents may bring children down to 3 years under the rating on their own responsibility (the 18 rating is still absolute). A proposal is made to free all films for adults (like it has been done in Finland). They will then, if not censored, probably get an automatic 18 rating.

The focus of the work has shifted from a bourgeois protectionism in the early years, to advice and information. For the past twenty years, genre and framework have been considered very important for ratings. Credibility and realism versus fantasy influence the impact of the action. Genres like science fiction and horror are rated more liberally than before. Cinema films are in principle never banned or cut any more, except commercial cutting made by the distributor, in extremely rare cases.

An important part of the information bit is our website (www.filmtilsynet.no) launched in 2000. Here all ratings with argumentations are put out, together with links and other usual material. The Board has got the responsibility for the SAFT project (Safe use of the Internet for young people) with its own net portal (x). One of the advisers has also got the responsibility for the European industry rating of computer games (xx).

Since video ratings, as well as the ratings of computer games and television emissions, all are the responsibilities of the industry, the thought that also cinema ratings may be done by distributors, has been launched. It will be natural to consider all media in the light of convergence. Till further notice work will go on as usual.

Another part of the information work is orientations for teachers, pupils, and students, mainly in the house. Some films of special interest may also be shown for pupils after they have been censored, and discussed.

The Board administers 2 million NOK for yearly support to pupils, students, researchers etc. working with media questions related to entertainment violence and general media education. Our advisers take part in some of the most important media conferences and film festivals to strengthen competence and broaden networks.

(x) Elisabeth Staksrud, Jörgen Kirksaether

(xx) Dag Asbjørnsen