
the grierson files

by Kirwan Cox



Although his style was that of a Scottish clan chieftan, Grierson's ideas were progressive and visionary

Author's Note—Most of the information quoted in this article was taken from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's files on John Grierson extending from 1942 to 1954. These files have become available as a result of the United States' Freedom of Information Act. Most of the documents, however, have been heavily censored by the FBI and some documents are missing. In cases where I have edited a quotation, I use the standard (...) and in cases where the FBI edited the passage quoted, I use the mark (xxx).

In 1945, John Grierson was at the height of his influence and power following his brilliant success organizing one of the world's best wartime propaganda agencies — the National Film Board of Canada. He was actively advising the British, Canadian and American governments on their post-war propaganda needs including the role of mass media in the new United Nations Organization.

Arnold Heeney, Clerk of the Pricy Council, described the Grierson he knew at this time to an American Embassy official, who recorded Heeney's thoughts:

"Heeney went on to say that Grierson had tuned down many very lucrative offers from Hollywood as he, Grierson, preferred to stay nearer to the political scene. Grierson's interests, he said, were not technical production of films. He was interested in the power of the film in politics, and wanted to stay near the centre of political activity where his knowledge of the use of films would be of most political value. Arnold thought he would like nothing better than a job with the UNO." (U.S. State Department memorandum from Lewis Clarke, April 3, 1946).

From this peak, at a moment when his future never seemed brighter or more secure, Grierson fell abruptly into obscurity. The Gouzenko Case broke, Grierson's name was mentioned in a Russian document, he was kicked out of the United States, and his career never recovered. He became a visionary without a future, living a life increasingly distant from his great triumphs.

The FBI files reveal a campaign of political investigation and harassment which destroyed the post-war career Grierson had planned. Grierson was one of the first victims of the post war Red Scare even before Gouzenko defected. What went wrong? The reason for this campaign stemmed partly from Grierson's personality.

He was a charismatic and arrogant man who aroused passionate responses. His ideas were progressive and visionary, but his style was that of a Calvinist Scottish clan chieftan. He inspired unquestioning loyalty among his friends and bitter enmity among his opponents. A man with Grierson's power and energy was an easy target for envious bureaucrats and others with real or imagined grievances.

During the war, his apparently close relationship with Prime Minister Mackenzie King kept his enemies at bay. Unable to cause this interloper's downfall directly, some were reduced to secret recrimination and rumor-mongering. The FBI was in the business of listening to rumors.

Wartime Rumors

The first of many informants against Grierson contacted the FBI in September 1942, as recorded in an internal memo:

"John Grierson is connected in some manner with the Canadian Government in the handling of motion picture films.

"xxx knows him. xxx and feels that Grierson is a definite communistic sympathizer. He is unable to understand how Grierson has been able to maintain his position with the Canadian Government. About a year ago when Grierson returned from a trip to England, xxx that he did not know how England could be able to hold out and his view was definitely that of an appeasement. (sic)" (1)

For a year this informant had been counting Grierson's *World in Action* press lineage in *Time* magazine and found he

had been given more space than Time Inc.'s own *March of Time* (a problem publisher Henry Luce shortly corrected). This informant may have been prompted by a movie column John T. McManus wrote in the August 7, 1942, issue of *P.M.* magazine. McManus complained that NFB films showed the Nazis in too strong a light except for one film, *Inside Fighting Russia*, which wasn't being widely distributed because United Artists considered it Communist propaganda.

The informant's report and the McManus article are apparently the only entries in Grierson's FBI file prior to 1945. In Canada, however, attacks on Grierson continued. In December 1942, the head of the Canadian Government Travel Bureau, Leo Dolan, wrote a note to Ontario Premier Mitch Hepburn with information on Grierson that might be used to embarrass Hepburn's arch rival, Mackenzie King:

"... Grierson is an out and out C.C.F. follower. He has been cheek by jowl with Coldwell and his group for several years... He has had the inside path with your pal Willie King because away back some years ago Grierson was a product of the Rockefeller Institute in Chicago... So Billy gives John the green light on all things because they were, or are kindred souls and cannot forget the old Alma Mater — the Rockefellers.

... There is a Jew named Gottlieb from New York who has a farm near Mimico I think... This guy Gottlieb is head of two or three distributing companies who have the sole right to distribute the Film Board's pictures. One of these is the Warwick Film Company, an organiza-

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL WAR SERVICES
CANADA
ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BUREAU

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TRAVEL BUREAU
OTTAWA, CANADA

Now Mitvh there is that chap who u sed to give us the picture shon at his farm. I forget hie name but know his wife is from Saint John and that he served good liquor . He ught to get you some real dope on Griersen's most affluent activity. There is a Jew named Gottlieb from New York who has a farm near Mimico I think .At any rate it is outside Toronto .This guy Goettlie b is head of two or three distributing companies who have the sole right to distribute the Film Board's picture.s One of these is the Warwick Film Company ,an organization formed one night in New York by Gottlieb and Griersen .The d8al was put over ina room in the Warwick Hotel ,New York . I think pur friend I spoke about cane tell you something of the others .At any rate I know that these New York Jews are always with Griersen and I'm convince the little bastard is an WnGLISH Jew.They came smell the blood you know .

This whole Film Board set up should be investigated. I know they have had some queer dealings vut of course I can't get the dope as I would want it .I do know Griersen sist at home a great deal of the time and apes the Hollywppd directors with sport shirts etc etc and does most of his business there .All the real films turnad out have been for the most part stolen from films taken in Russia or England or even in Germany .

Head of the Canadian Government Travel Bureau and one of many informants against Grierson, Leo Dolan, wrote a racist note to Ontario Premier Mitch Hepburn, hoping it might be used to embarrass MacKenzie King. The above is a collage of a few of the central paragraphs and the letterhead on which the note was written

tion formed one night in New York by Gottlieb and Grierson... At any rate I know that these New York Jews are always with Grierson and I'm convinced the little bastard is an English Jew. They can smell the blood you know.

This whole Film Board set-up should be investigated. I know they have had some queer dealings but of course I can't get the dope as I would want it." (2)

Along with Dolan's letter, an unsigned memorandum on the NFB in Hepburn's files added:

"7. It is suggested that the refusal to show the Victory Loan trailer in the Province of Quebec, and **Inside Fighting Russia**,... conclusively proves Grierson's communistic leanings.

8. It is understood that Mrs. John Grierson has contributed communistic articles to American magazines such as the *Nation* and the *New Republic*." (3)

- MEMORANDUM RE NATIONAL FILM BOARD
1. It is said that there is sufficient waste and corruption in the Film Board to defeat the King Government.
 2. Suggest cable to England to enquire why Grierson was fired by the Film Unit of General Post Office.
 3. The Film Board has expanded from a personnel of two or three to two or three hundred, and has increased its expenditures from \$100,000 to \$2,000,000.
 4. Suggest Gordon Graydon, M.P. ask Parliament to investigate the National Film Board as it has done with the C. B. C.
 5. It is alleged that D.H. Coplan, as Canadian District Manager of United Artists Corporation is using his position as Dollar a year Advisor to the Board to his own advantage and that of United Artists Corporation.
 6. It is understood that the true picture of the National Film Board is concealed by Inter-Departmental Appropriations.
 7. It is suggested that the refusal to show the Victory Loan trailer in the Province of Quebec, and **INSIDE FIGHTING RUSSIA**, made with Canadian taxpayers' money, and distributed commercially throughout the world, conclusively proves Grierson's communistic leanings.
 8. It is understood that Mrs. John Grierson has contributed communistic articles to American magazines such as the *Nation* and the *New Republic*.
 9. How many conscientious objectors and draft dodgers are employed by the National Film Board?

Found in Hepburn's files along with Dolan's letter, an unsigned memorandum on the NFB

While most of Grierson's critics accused him of being a communist sympathizer or worse, others accused him of being a crypto-Nazi. On October 16, 1944, former NFB employee Douglas Ross Sinclair wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King that the NFB:

"... is an organization as far as I can determine with definite Fascist leanings, an organization giving preference to the type of people whom we call Nazis...

"With John Grierson at the helm of the NFB... (Stuart) Legg has made a series of films in Canada with definite Nazi sympathies...

"Also, why was the World in Action film **Gates of Italy** banned in the USA, if not for it's (sic) fascist content?...

"Why was Mrs. Laura Bolton of the NFB arrested by the American Army Intelligence Officers for illegally photo-

graphing the U.S. Army air bases on Southampton Island when they were under strict military censorship?

"John MacMannus (sic) of New York's *P.M.* sums up the entire situation brilliantly in his article, concerning German propoganda entering the United States from Canada, propoganda (sic) in the form of the NFB of Canada..." (4)

John Grierson responded to these charges in a letter to King's principal secretary dated October 24, 1944:

"Sinclair was a boy on our staff whom we had to get rid of. He was an able young technician but, I am sorry to say, desperately unstable. He is now, I am informed, under psychiatric observation in the Army...

"As regards his comments, they are all somewhat familiar to us now. He has an *idée fixe* regarding myself on which of course I have nothing to say... As regards Mrs. Boulton, there is again no basis in fact... the suggestion of arrest or illegality is absurd. As for McManus of *P.M.* it is worth nothing that his subsequent retraction was as fulsome as his original attack. He is, incidentally, a friend of mine, and the attack was based upon a genuine disagreement with me on the use and effect of captured German material."

Corroborating Grierson's opinion, the NFB received a telegram from the U.S. Signal Corps which "stated that Mr. Sinclair was under average and could not be recommended highly." (6)

The rumors about Grierson were always there under the surface. Grierson was different, an enemy of some sort. The labels changed to suit the prejudice of the speaker – to the 1942 informant he was a communist sympathizer and an appeaser; to Leo Dolan he was a C.C.F.er, an English Jew, and worse, a friend of Willie King's; to Douglas Sinclair he was running an organization with Fascist leanings which gave preference to Nazis.

A Job in Washington?

On April 14, 1945, Al Sherman's Washington column in *Boxoffice* magazine reported "Grierson To Head State Department Film Unit." He said Grierson:

"... is slated to take over active operation of a film unit sponsored by the State Department, with Assistant Secretary Archibald MacLeish actively supervising...

It is believed that if the State Department wins full approval of such a program, (to explain American foreign policy) Grierson will assume active control of all productions. Grierson has been consulted at previous times by the American Government on documentary film production..."

Credibility was added to this rumor because Grierson had been in Washington on leave for a month and had helped the State Department with a film that Secretary of State Stettinius reportedly like very much. He was also a close friend of Archibald MacLeish. On April 20, 1945, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* picked up the *Boxoffice* story with the headline "Report Grierson Taking Film Post at Washington." Grierson returned to Ottawa right away and the Minister responsible for the NFB, J.J. McCann, announced:

"There was no foundation for the earlier report that Mr. Grierson was resigning his government post here to take a position with the United States government on film work."

Despite the official denial, the FBI were very concerned about this rumored job offer. J. Edgar Hoover was already convinced that Grierson was a subversive and whether the job

existed or not, the FBI Director was anxious to block it. On May 24, 1945, Hoover asked the American Embassy in London, England, for background on Grierson, who:

"... will possibly be appointed to a special post in the United States State Department. From information appearing in Bureau files, it is indicated that John Grierson is Communistically inclined and that several of the films he has produced in Canada appear to be written and directed from a pro-Soviet viewpoint.

... It is rumored that he changed his name at one time, although no positive information is available in this regard." (7)

The World Today Inc.

Grierson resigned from the National Film Board on August 7, 1945, effective three months later. By November 5, 1945, he had organized the non-profit International Film Associates Inc. in Ottawa and Washington with Stuart Legg and Mary Losey Mapes to promote the use of documentary film. Mary, the former wife of film director Joseph Losey, quit her job as an NFB employee in the Canadian Embassy in Washington to work for IFA. (8)

Five months later, on March 20, 1946, Grierson incorporated the World Today Inc. in New York with a paid capitalization of \$63,175. Grierson was President and Chairman of the Board, and owned 51 percent of the stock of this profit-making company. Stuart Legg was Vice-President and Raymond Spottiswoode was Treasurer. (9)

The main asset of the company was a four year contract with United Artists to produce 156 short documentary films, or 39 each year. Two series were called **World Wise** and **One Fact** dealing with world affairs and discoveries in science and nature. Grierson told prospective investors he expected to make \$300,000 to \$400,000 profit on the contract, but World Today never seemed to have enough money. Many NFB hands, beside Spottiswoode and Legg, were working at World Today in New York, including Lou Applebaum, Guy Glover, and Gordon Weisenborn.

At this time, Grierson was living in the United States on a visitor's visa. The American ambassador in Ottawa, Ray Atherton, wrote a top secret letter to the U.S. Secretary of State on March 6, 1946. It said Grierson:

"... may shortly make application for an immigration visa, and to suggest that no visa of any kind should be granted to him until his case has been subjected to searching investigation and clearance with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which, it is understood, is documented in this matter. The Embassy makes this recommendation because it has reason to believe that Mr. Grierson's name has been found in the files of the Soviet agents now being investigated for espionage by the Royal Commission in Canada." (10)

The Gouzenko Case

When Igor Gouzenko defected, files he brought with him proved there was a large Soviet espionage ring operating from the Russian embassy in Ottawa. Unfortunately for Grierson, one of his secretaries at the NFB, Freda Linton, turned out to be a Communist agent – albeit an unsuccessful one. Freda Linton was the only connection Grierson had with the Gouzenko affair, but it was enough to confirm the FBI's strongly held opinion that he was at least a dangerous subversive and probably a foreign agent. According to an NFB memo dated June 28, 1946:

"Freda Linton was interviewed in May, 1944, and was considered a likely candidate for a position in Distribution because of her experience with the International Labour Office. At the time, however, we did not have an opening in Distribution and it was suggested that for a temporary period Miss Linton might work as secretary to Mr. Grierson, in order to free Mr. Moffatt for other duties. As Miss Linton was not as interested in this type of work, it was agreed that she should spend approximately 6 months with Mr. Grierson and, at the end of that time, he would arrange for her to go to Distribution. This arrangement was approved by Mr. Grierson. Miss Linton joined our staff on May 22nd, 1944. She was then transferred to the Distribution Division and given charge of all correspondence with our American offices...

"During the summer of 1945, Mr. Malcolm Ross, then Director of Distribution, suggested the possibility of undertaking new duties in Distribution... Miss Linton did not perform these duties as competently as we had expected and we were considering the possibility of taking her off that work when she herself tendered her resignation. She left the staff September 30, 1945." (11)

When Gouzenko defected he brought, among embassy papers, a note later marked Exhibit 37, which said "Freda to the Professor through Grierson." At the Royal Commission hearing, Gouzenko was asked:

"Q. But was Grierson an agent?

A. Oh no, Grierson is not an agent, but the idea was to get Freda in the position where she could get a more important position in the organization through the influence of Grierson. She was a good friend of Grierson. With a better position she would be able to get more information for Boyer." (12)

Freda Linton had at one time decided to recruit Grierson as a Soviet spy. An FBI memo dated August 16, 1946, says:

"The documents from Zabotin's files and Guzenko's (sic) testimony reflect that at one time "Frieda" submitted to Zabotin a biographical sketch of John Grierson, recommending that he be recruited immediately as an active Soviet agent. The information furnished by "Frieda" was cabled by Zabotin to Red Army Intelligence Headquarters in Moscow, which instructed Zabotin to "stay away from Grierson." These instructions were interpreted by Guzenko and apparently by Zabotin and "Frieda" to clearly indicate that John Grierson was then being "run" as a Soviet agent either by the NKVD in Canada or by some other Soviet espionage network." (13)

The Freda Linton episode was the only "evidence" the FBI ever uncovered that seemed to incriminate Grierson as a Communist or a spy. First, she was his secretary. (However, the NFB's June 28, 1946 memo – which the FBI had – proved she didn't really want to be his secretary.) Second, Exhibit 37 implied that Grierson would help her get another job. That never happened and there was no evidence Grierson ever tried to get her a job outside the NFB. Third, Moscow said "stay away from Grierson." The FBI assumed Moscow's reply meant he already was a spy. Of course, it could also mean he was unrecruitable and Moscow knew that. The fact that Freda wanted to recruit Grierson meant, as far as she was concerned, he wasn't already an agent.

On August 16, 1946, FBI memo claims Gouzenko interpreted the "stay away from Grierson" order to mean Grierson already was a spy. This directly contradicts Gouzenko's actual testimony that "Grierson is not an agent." The FBI, it seemed,

was so intent on establishing Grierson's guilt, they were willing to contradict any evidence supporting Grierson's innocence.

The revelation that Grierson might be connected to the Gouzenko case in some way must have confirmed the worst suspicions of Grierson's enemies. The wartime rumors now made their way to the FBI through the Ottawa Embassy.

The main conduit for rumors from Grierson's detractors in Ottawa was Glenn H. Bethel, the FBI's officer at the American Embassy. He sent his memos, often on FBI letterhead, directly to J. Edgar Hoover. The first was dated April 9, 1946, and pointed out:

"xxx is in possession of considerable information relative to Grierson. xxx is said to be friendly disposed towards Grierson and reportedly has stated that he saw a photograph of Grierson in a Black Shirt Uniform marching with or in Mosley's organization in England."

"Canadian authorities" actively encouraged the American investigation of Grierson and suggested Legg should be included. Ambassador Atherton wrote to Washington:

"Mr. Legge (sic) may or may not have been connected with Grierson in this particular matter (Gouzenko), but it has been confidentially stated by Canadian authorities his activities warrant investigation." (14)

Evidence Against Grierson

Aside from Freda Linton, what did the FBI have on Grierson? Nothing, except that they didn't like Grierson's attitudes or his friends. The FBI files point out that "public statements made by Grierson have reportedly been consonant with the approach of the Canadian Communist Party"; that in January, 1945, Grierson had given a speech to the United Automobile Workers in Milwaukee; that the *Daily Worker* had commented favourably on an NFB film about the United Nations; that the Hollywood Writers Mobilization, which was "subject to strong Communist influence," planned to meet Grierson in December, 1944; that Grierson contributed an article to *The Hollywood Quarterly* which was published by a group "subject to strong Communist domination"; and that Grierson was in contact with such "subversives" as Joris Ivens or Ivor Montagu.

Another questionable contact was Dr. Malcolm Ross. Ross, in addition to running the NFB's distribution operation at the end of the war, was acting Director of the National Council of Canadian-Soviet Friendship. On April 1, 1947, the FBI man in Ottawa, Glenn Bethel, reminded Hoover of Ross' background and the fact that the FBI had a:

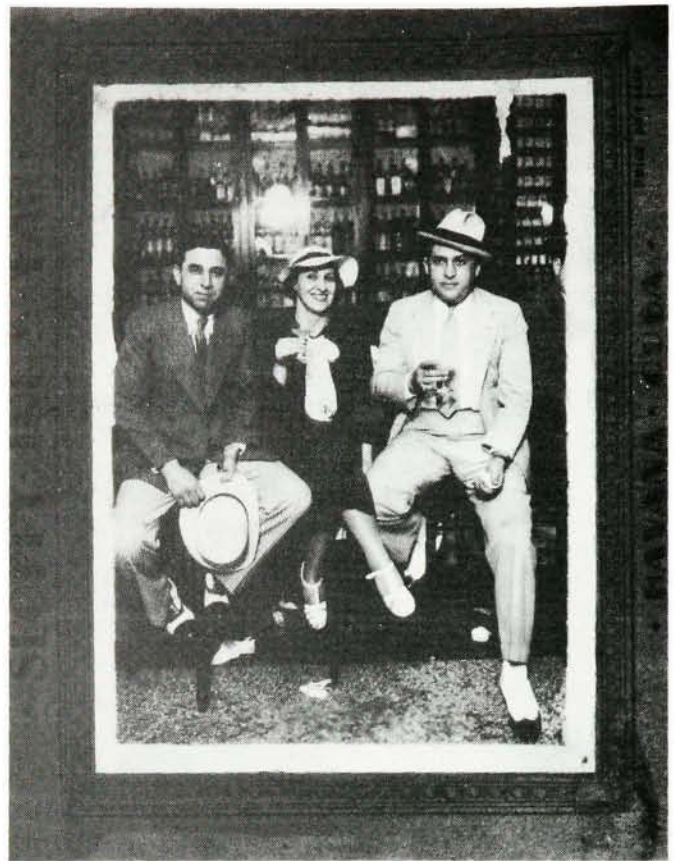
"... manuscript prepared by Grierson outlining the needs of the Canadian National Film Board and offering the names of Ross McLean, Malcolm Ross, and James Beveridge as his possible successor."

Hoover Intensifies The Investigation

On September 12, 1946, Hoover ordered the New York field office to begin a "full investigation" of Grierson. This meant the FBI would actively solicit informants, monitor his travel, check all of his personal and telephone contacts, and search his effects. Hotel staff were interviewed:

"Pursuant to Bureau request a search was made at the xxx for subject, Grierson's (sic), xxx with negative results.

At the Warwick Hotel xxx advised that Grierson was one of their most frequent visitors and first stopped at the Warwick in 1939 and since then has been coming down at least once every two weeks...He said Grierson used the hotel as a combination office and home while in New



Arthur "Killer" Gottlieb (right) with two of the Allen family at Sloppy Joe's Bar in Havana, Cuba in the early '30's

York City. Among the best contacts Grierson made in New York is Arthur Gottlieb of the Du-Art Film Labs, Inc.... Gottlieb has been seen by xxx in Grierson's presence practically every trip Grierson made to this country while stopping in New York." (15)

In some cases the investigation turned up information that contradicted the FBI's assumption of Grierson's guilt. One interviewee:

"xxx volunteered that Grierson refused to have Communists on his staff at any time and that he could never have anything to do with them." (16)

In November, the FBI searched the Liberty Warehouse where Grierson's effects were stored. Nothing was found. Hoover wasn't satisfied. He wanted the material in the warehouse searched again in greater detail.

At this time, the FBI found their best source of information on Grierson. This was "Confidential Informant T-1" who obviously knew Grierson very well and probably worked in The World Today offices. He was described in a December 9, 1946, memo as:

"a highly confidential source with access to the records of John Grierson which was effected through xxx Special Agents, and xxx photographer."

With the recruitment of "T-1", the quantity and quality of information on Grierson improved noticeably because the FBI seemed to have complete access to Grierson's files and correspondence. This material was laboriously re-typed in most cases. (Obviously the Xerox machine has been a god-send to the spy business.)

As the investigation of Grierson intensified, it also widened to include his closest contacts. Everyone whom Grierson reached on the phone was checked by the New York office against their "index" of names to see if Grierson was in touch with others subversives or known agents. There is no evidence from the files available that his phone was being tapped and conversations recorded.

However, during this time, many NFB people thought their phones were tapped. NFB personnel chief Beth Bertram sent Grierson Freda's employment record which ended up in the FBI's hands care of "T-1". An accompanying note said in part:

"... By the way, I shouldn't be surprised if my telephone at home is tapped. It seems to be quite usual these days..." (17)

Friendship with Grierson was sufficient reason for the FBI to begin an investigation. One memo mentioned in passing:

"Mary Losey Mapes has been the subject of considerable investigation because of her close association with John Grierson..." (18)

The FBI would even undertake a full investigation of someone whose name sounded like Grierson even if there was no other connection. One such innocent bystander was Bertram M. Gerson who lived in Miami Beach. On February 17, 1947, the New York office told the Miami office that Grierson held P.O. Box 4375 in Miami Beach. Even though it was quickly discovered Grierson did not hold this box, the investigation of Gerson, who did not hold it, began.

Gerson's background was checked, his neighbours and associates were interviewed and shown photos of Grierson and Linton. Eventually, the Miami office proved Gerson and Grierson were not the *same person*. The whole episode was a mistake which would never have been explained to Gerson or his neighbours who probably regarded him with suspicion from that point forward.

The Immigration Visa Is Denied

Meanwhile, Grierson was still trying to get a permanent visa. On January 30, 1947, Ottawa FBI agent Glenn Bethel wrote to Hoover from Ottawa that Grierson had:

"... called at the American Embassy at Ottawa in order to renew his request for a U.S. visa... and he will meet with little success in his efforts in this regard..."

The FBI made sure the State Department rejected the request. The reason for the visa denial was explained in a previous internal FBI memo somewhat melodramatically. It said Grierson:

"... was suspected of being a Soviet espionage agent. Recently the State Department denied his application for a visa on the grounds that he was an agent of a foreign power." (19)

A subsequent FBI memo stated more accurately that the visa:

"... has been refused consistently by the State Department because of the information available concerning Grierson's past activities and contacts." (20)

Just to be certain there was no mistake, Hoover wrote to the U.S. State Department that:

"... You will recall that a summary of the available information concerning Grierson was made available to you sometime ago. In view of the character of this information I desire to point out that I feel it is undesirable to permit Grierson to enter the United States on an immigration visa at this time." (21)

On February 15, 1947, Grierson's visa problems appeared

in the Ottawa press and four days later Tory MP Donald Fleming (Eglinton-Toronto) asked the Government whether it had: "... any information concerning the refusal of the United States authorities to grant him a quota visa for residence in the U.S., and any information concerning the reasons for such a refusal... Is he entitled to enter or reside in Canada?" (22)

On February 22, 1947, the *New York Herald-Tribune* reported Grierson:

"... said today that the State Department had refused his request for a residential visa eighteen months ago without giving a reason..."

"I am not a Communist and any inference of this kind is ridiculous," he said. "The whole thing is silly, since I have been a British public servant for years."

While there were never any specific public charges laid against him, Grierson assumed that the Freda Linton connection was the major reason for the visa denial. Yet, instead of using the Gouzenko testimony that he was not an agent to publicly defend himself, Grierson said the whole thing was silly because he "had been a British public servant for years." In the days of the Cold War, this was not a very convincing rebuttal to the charge that one might be a Soviet spy.

The master of propaganda failed in his own defence. He was either too proud to stoop to a defence of his character, or he thought a loud public defence might do him more harm by reinforcing the nameless "accusations."

The press publicity did make it increasingly difficult for Grierson to carry on his business and easier for the FBI to recruit patriotic informants as this undated memo shows:

"... further advised that he had learned from the papers about Grierson's apparent connection with the Canadian Espionage Case... He further advised that he would be willing to cooperate in any way whatsoever with the Bureau insofar as ascertaining Grierson's connections and contacts which are made through The World Today offices." (23)

Grierson had become a serious liability to The World Today Inc. and couldn't stay in New York to run it without a visa. On April 16, 1947, Stuart Legg took over as President although Grierson remained Chairman of the Board. Raymond Spottiswoode was replaced by Maynard Gertler as Treasurer and Eleanor Aaron remained Secretary of the corporation.

International Film Associates had already been winding down. At a meeting on August 28, 1946, at which Jean Benoit Levy resigned because of his job at the United Nations as Director of Films and Visual Information:

"... it was decided that the International Film Associates should be continued principally as a basis for the exchange of information on the development of documentary films in the international field inasmuch as most of the members of the International Film Associates were tied up either in "The World Today, Incorporated" or in other undertakings." (24)

Grierson's Career At The United Nations

As Canadian mandarin Arnold Heeney had pointed out in a conversation in Ottawa which ended up in the U.S. State Department files, Grierson "would like nothing better than a job at the UNO." (25) In the spring of 1946, Grierson was being considered for a job at the United Nations. The FBI found out, and just as Hoover had blocked Grierson's rumoured job at the State Department a year earlier, he now set out to block this job.

Hoover sent out Grierson's dossier to various senior bureaucrats in Washington. He was so concerned that he wrote to President Truman on April 16, 1946, through the President's military aide, Gen. Harry Vaughan:

"As of possible interest to the President and you, there is attached a strictly confidential memorandum concerning John Grierson who it is understood is presently being considered for appointment to the position of Assistant to the Secretary General of the United Nations in Charge of Press Relations."

The United Nations didn't hire Grierson. A year later, after Grierson's visa problems and his resignation from The World Today, a State Department official telephoned the FBI for more information on Grierson because "Grierson was seeking a connection with UNESCO." (26)

This time Grierson was successful because he was:

"... appointed by the British Government as adviser on Mass Media and Public Information to the Director General of the UNESCO." (27)

The Director General of the UNESCO was Englishman Julian Huxley and it appears the Americans, that is the FBI, couldn't veto his appointment. Hoover believed Grierson had friends at the U.S. State Department. At the bottom of a memo dated May 14, 1946, he wrote:

"I think we should make objection to Grierson's entry to U.S. and do so at once. It may smoke out his backer. H."

A press report in the *Washington Times-Herald* was headlined "Spy Suspect Gets U.N. Job":

"John Grierson, former Canadian government official questioned in the Russian Spy Case, has been appointed director of propaganda in thirty-one countries, including

the U.S., for (UNESCO), it was disclosed here today.

"The new UNESCO propagandist chief is unable to enter the U.S. legally. He was refused a visa last February. It was reported unofficially that the State Department turned down Grierson's application at the request of the FBI..." (28)

Unable to block Grierson's job, Hoover asked the State Department:

"... Whether or not Grierson actually has or will be granted any form of diplomatic immunity by virtue of his position as a representative of UNESCO." (29)

The FBI Director wanted Grierson's bags searched on his return to the U.S. The State Department had no objections to such a search if it was carried out by Customs officials. But, they pointed out Grierson was travelling under a United States 3(7) visa as a UN representative which entitled him to diplomatic immunity. Hoover explained all of this to his New York office and gave them instructions in a classic example of "if you're caught, I didn't tell you to do it" bureaucratese:

"The above information is being furnished you for your guidance in connection with the further investigation of this case and, of course, no baggage search should be made of Grierson's effects if it appears that it is likely to cause a public incident identifying the Bureau as having demanded the search of the baggage of a United Nations representative." (30)

Whether or not Grierson's bags were searched every time he entered the United States, the FBI found nothing and Hoover turned his attention to the fact that Grierson was able to enter at all.

The FBI Director wrote to the U.S. Attorney General on February 28, 1948:

"In spite of the efforts of this Bureau and the cooperative attitude displayed by officials of the State Department, Grierson was permitted entry into this country in March, October, and November of 1947. On each of these occasions he was granted a United States 3(7) visa entitling him to diplomatic immunity... Under such circumstances, complete protection of the security of the United States from the threat imposed by his presence in this country is impracticable."

Grierson's tenure at the U.N. was cut short. In an article datelined Washington, the *New York World-Telegram* on February 1, 1948 that "U.N. Fires Canadian Atom Spy Case Figure":

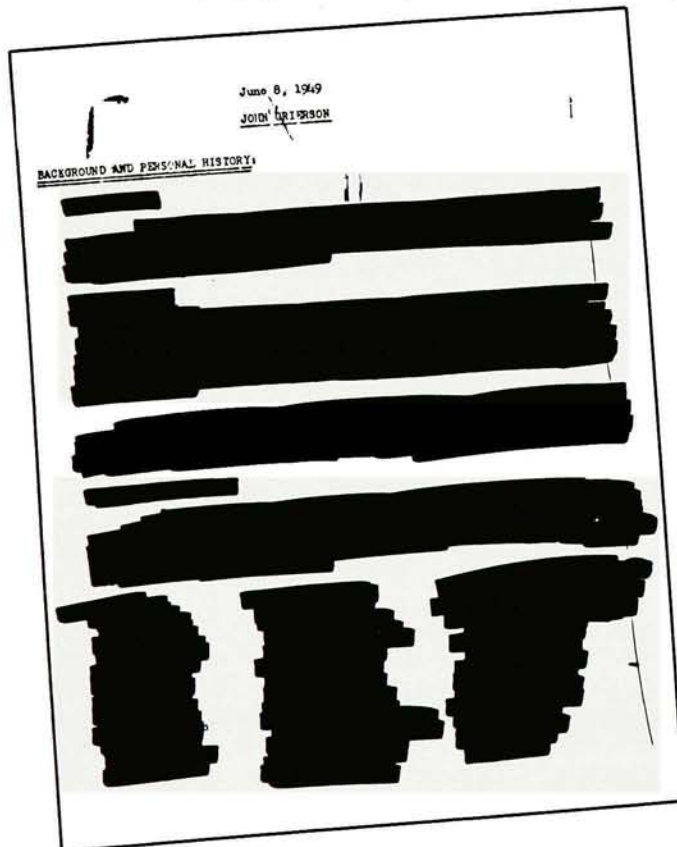
"A Canadian whose name figured prominently in the American phases of the Canadian spy case has been dismissed as an employee of the (UNESCO), informed sources disclosed today.

"He is John Grierson, former chairman of the National Film Board of Canada who was granted a visa to enter the United States as a U.N. employee over the objections of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

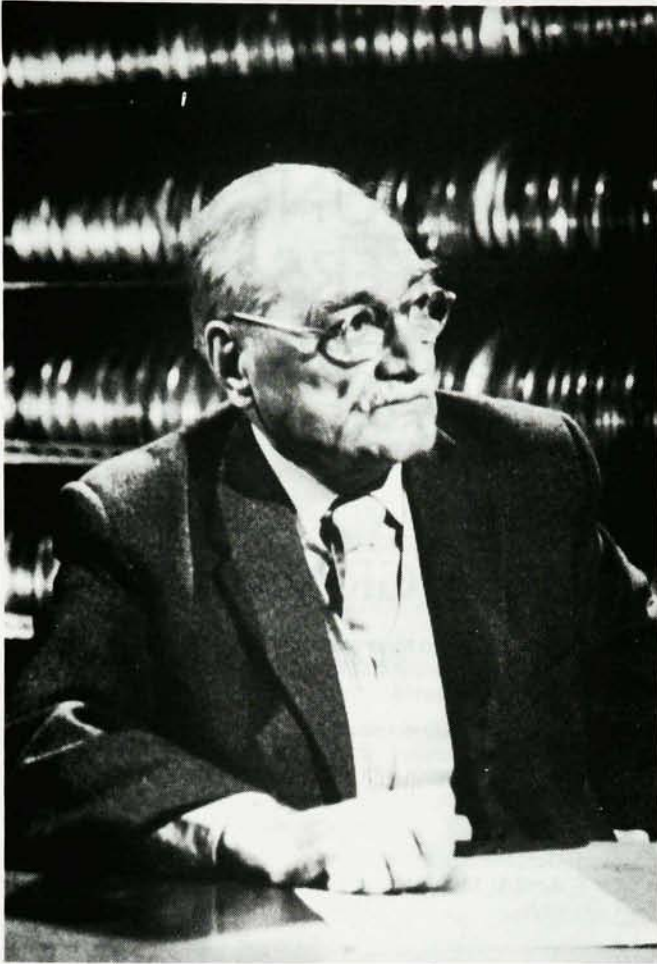
"He was one of 328 persons classified as "possible subversives" who entered the U.S. on U.N. credentials. A visa section employee drew an official reprimand for telling a Congressional committee about it..."

Other FBI memos later mark Grierson's "resignation" from UNESCO as March 30, 1948, The FBI and many other people would have looked at Grierson's firing in terms of 1 down and 327 possible subversives to go.

It is interesting to note that Grierson's close friend and "backer" at the State Department, Archibald MacLeish, was elected to a three year term on the Executive Board of UNESCO in 1947. He resigned the same year. It would seem



An example of the type of information on Grierson that is available from the FBI as a result of the Freedom of Information Act



Grierson back home on the set of *This Wonderful World* (Scottish Television)

that the cold war casualties at the United Nations included high ranking Americans as well as foreigners like Grierson.

Grierson Remembers UNESCO

Many years later, Grierson recalled his experience at UNESCO in biblical terms:

"I had a very particular responsibility at UNESCO at the time. I was in Mass Communications. I was only there for one purpose and one purpose only; to watch this situation of the "free flow of information" in relation to UNESCO.

"The Americans thought of taking over, of financing, UNESCO and taking over all the radio stations, which had been set up by the great warring nations, and putting a radio network around the world.

"Now we get to Archie MacLeish's great dream. You know: "It is in the minds of men that war, the spirit of war, is engendered and that war is created. In the minds of men, peace must be found, etc, etc,"The World Radio Network was going to do this and we were to declare... that the free flow of information was to be an absolute in our thought between nations.

"I was approached as the guy who was going to be the key in this great World Radio Network, and in the preaching of peace throughout the world. The money, of course, was so vast that the budget of Mass Communications of UNESCO would have been eight times the size of the whole of the rest of UNESCO.

"So, this totally excellent scheme was offered to me. You talk about somebody being taken up to the heights and tested there. The character was taken up – that was me. All these domains should be mine. Well, I've been there and this is against my principles in some fundamental way. It sounded so beautiful and I love Archie MacLeish – an awful good nice man – but this is against my principles... We were handing over this vast machine to American know-how, to American technicians, to an inevitable American stranglehold on information." (31)

The Last Informant

Once Grierson is out of the United Nations and unable to return to the U.S., the FBI loses interest in his case. A March 30, 1949, memo says:

"John Grierson reported discharged as employee of UN Economic Social and Cultural Organization. No further investigation outstanding."

The American Embassy in South Africa reports on October 20, 1949, that Grierson would be in Pretoria for seven weeks to advise that government on its film needs. The FBI file seems to end with this information.

After a five year hiatus, Grierson's file was reopened in 1954 when an informant called the FBI office in Newark, New Jersey, and belatedly pointed out that the National Film Board was a nest of Communists. This informant was Douglas Sinclair, the same Douglas Sinclair who wrote to the Prime Minister in 1944 that the Board was a nest of Nazis. Sinclair's interview with the Newark FBI was passed on to Hoover in a memo dated November 5, 1954. It said:

"... During the war the Canadian Government expelled Grierson for Communist activities..."

"All of the individuals mentioned by Sinclair in the course of interview were at one time closely associated with Grierson in the National Film Board... basis for characterizing those individuals as subversive and as still engaged in the production of films connected with subversive propaganda is based on their association with Grierson..."

Sinclair went through a list of people including Ross McLean, Grant McLean, Sydney Newman, Ralph Foster, Robert Anderson, Ernst Borneman, Boris Kauffman, Gordon Weisenborn, Stuart Legg, Lawrence and Evelyn Cherry, and others, claiming all were subversives. He claims erroneously that many, including Grierson, were expelled from either Canada or the Board as a result. In nearly every case, Sinclair's version had obvious factual errors. Sinclair said that Laura Bolton:

"... was arrested during the war for photographing the U.S. Air base on South Hampton Island, Hudson Bay, but believes little was made of this episode through the efforts of the National Film Board and Canadian Government."

Despite the voluminous FBI files on Grierson which made it obvious Sinclair was fabricating information, J. Edgar Hoover repeated Sinclair's allegations and misinformation verbatim in a memo dated November 19, 1954, to the CIA and State Department. Hoover said:

"According to the informant John Grierson was the Director of the National Film Board of Canada from 1938 until sometime during World War II. During the war the Canadian Government expelled Grierson for Communist activities and he proceeded to New York City where he organized a film production company named, World-Today Film Company (the informant is not sure if this is the correct name of the company)..."

