

GUSTAVE CAUVIN, THE INVENTOR OF EDUCATIONAL CINEMA

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From the 1880s onwards, long before the birth of cinema, French anarchists were asking themselves questions about art and its potential for bringing about change in society. Initially they tried to spread their ideas to the widest audience through literature and then through the theatre. Thus they were among the first “socialists” to set up Théâtres du Peuple at the prompting of committed militants like Fernand Pelloutier (first secretary of the Bourses du Travail) or Jean Grave and Paul Delesalle from 1895 on. The anarchists’ first encounter with cinema came through Delesalle, a precision mechanic, who set up the Lumière brothers’ cinematograph in June 1895 and made improvements to the original film reel mechanism within the device¹. Such special contact between the militant and the moving image had no impact upon the libertarians of the time. It took another ten years, until 1908, before the anarchist press eventually turned their gaze in the direction of the cinema. Initially worried about the working conditions of the movie-makers, it later occurred to them that this recent invention might prove “useful and educational” if directed at the people. Lamenting the commercial side of things, they wanted to turn movie-making into a playful learning device for the labouring classes. This quest was driven by a handful of libertarian militants who included Gustave Cauvin, the inventor of *Cinéma Educateur* who had to contend with the skepticism of his comrades at the time.

The anarchists’ negative view of cinema

Movie-making, a business launched by the Lumière brothers, interested only a very few late 19th century French anarchists. They and especially labour militants found little about the overwhelming majority of artistic productions to commend them. At the time of a lecture on “Art and revolt” delivered in the Faubourg du Temple on 30 May 1896 under the aegis of L’Art Social, Fernand Pelloutier, one of the most fervent champions of the Bourse du Travail, set out where he stood on the people’s leisure time and the cinema:

Ground down by day by his exertions, brutalised by night by tainted alcohol and smutty shows, the mass has neither the time nor the open-mindedness required to reflect upon its lot; hence the indifference and cowardice with which the people who were behind 1848 and 1871 endure the worst outrages today. It rinses away the slap in the face with absinthe, the uncertainty of the future is forgotten at the singing cafe and the manliness of insurrection is exercised in the whore-house instead².

When the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists did spare a thought for the content of the shows to which the masses had long been flocking, their assessment was scarcely any better. True, the people and social movements were depicted on screen but most often through the prism of ridicule or tragedy. The trade union leader was frequently represented as an alcoholic. In *Le Libéraire* of 27 May 1911, an anarchist journalist – Emile Guichard – had this at once bilious and sneering analysis to offer of what was still being called the Seventh Art:

*There can be nothing more repugnant than the scenes enacted before the eyes of the public. Patriotism, respect for the law, all of the bourgeois virtues are eulogised there... Good people, your naivety knows no bounds... But, look, can't you see that these showmen are making you into brutes? Look, here's a strike; see how they depict the workers in revolt; the leader, a CGT delegate no doubt, was shown in the last scene speechifying in a bar; he stands the honest working men a round of drinks and gets them drunk; and the money that pays for the drinks he got from a rival employer from a foreigner, and here we have the poor boobs smashing up the "good guy's" machines, smashing up everything in the establishment of the fellow who wants to see the workers happy. [...] Bully for you, good folk!*³

Besides, the use of cinema as a police resource did nothing to foster a *rapprochement* between this new artistic technology and the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movements. The use of photography for the purpose of identifying and classifying the Communards in 1871 continued in the case of cinema. One landmark, as an example of this practice, was the revolt by the vine-growers of the Aube in April 1911. The courts came down hard on them and, capitalising upon the presence of a 40,000-strong army of men, conscripted the cinema for service in its mopping-up operation. The director of the Pathé movie-hall in Epernay had the brainwave of filming the violent demonstrations. The bench and the police slowly reviewed the 600 metres of the movies *A Cavalry Charge*, *Insulting the Army* and *The Looting of the Gauthier Company*, shot during the events in question. The jerky movement of the film provided detailed pictures of those who rioted throughout 12 April⁴. In the wake of this, an article appeared in *Le Libéraire*, pointing to this scurrilous use of cinema:

*Since the newspaper vendors and businessmen of the cinema are merely tools of the police, let us be ruthless and let us sabotage both the folk who lead us by the nose [...] and the outfits from Pathé, Gaumont and the rest who are operating like narks these days*⁵.

When not deploring its use as a policing resource, the libertarians were ranting about the sordid commerciality and poor quality of the screenplays on offer from the cinema. Which in part accounts for the omission of cinema schedules from the "Entertainments" columns on anarchist newspapers and reviews between 1895 and 1908.

The moving image in the service of libertarian propaganda

It was initially through the trade unions that anarchists came to reconsider their views on this technology. The libertarian press followed the activities of the Operators' Union in 1908 and of the Cinematography Staff Union which mounted impressive strikes in the Pathé cinemas in 1909. But, looking beyond the social issue of wages, the libertarians very quickly turned their attention

to cinema as a medium and how it might be used for purposes other than entertainment. The issue of education by means of the moving image was raising its head. What they had initially taken for an instrument for the stultification of the workers now became the focus of all their educational ambitions. After some considered thought, they realised that cinema can educate the workers much faster than the book as images seep into the consciousness that much more easily. In Switzerland, a fiefdom of anarchists ever since the exiles who had lived there in the years following the Commune, an «association for instruction by means of the image and cinematography» was launched in 1908⁶. The venture prompted the French to do likewise. And shortly after that in *Le Libertaire* of 6 December 1908 we find the first mention made of screenings by anarchists. It came in the form of an advertisement for a *causerie* in Marseilles dealing with aerostatics, a very popular subject at the time; the talk would be illustrated by a number of films. Stress was laid on the fact that admission to the screenings was free of charge, the object being to enlighten as many people as possible. Lots of talks (*causeries*) complete with screenings organised by militants for a working class, trade unionist audience in the People's Universities and Bourses du Travail soon followed. The films screened were Gaumont, Pathé or Eclair productions with commentary and criticism from a libertarian compère. This, for instance, was the case with Ferdinand Zecca's and Lucien Noguét's film *Les Victimes de l'alcoolisme* in 1911 or Albert Capellani's *Germinal* in 1913. There was criticism of the negative depiction of workers and strikers in the films and above all the commentary concluded with a lengthy propagandistic rant on topics ranging from teetotalism, anti-militarism, strikes and neo-Malthusianism, complete with a promotion of contraceptive devices.

It was from such talks that Gustave Cauvin emerged in 1910. He drew up and distributed a pamphlet designed for cooperatives, Bourses du Travail et des Syndicats; it bore the title *L'Avenir cinématographique*. At the time, Cauvin was the most active advocate of propaganda by cinema. Linked to the Seine Union des Syndicats, he was the first person to found a movie-making association, the Cinéma social association in 1911, which laid on screenings.

A singular militant

Born on the outskirts of Marseilles in 1886, Gustave Cauvin grew up in a business family. He left his native Provence very early for different towns, like Lyon, where he arrived at the age of 17 before moving on to Paris where he worked as a hair-dresser. Excused from military service due to nervous problems, Cauvin, who had a reputation for being quick-tempered, became embroiled in lots of punch-ups. He was known to the police even then. Returning to Marseilles some months later, he gave up his hair-dressing business and became an agent for Singer sewing machines. But he was very promptly accused by the company of embezzlement and dismissed on 18 January 1908. This dismal episode drove him into the arms of the trade unions. The police recorded his presence at several trade union and libertarian meetings, and at the time of a labour meeting in the Bourse du Travail on 13 June that year, a report by the Prefecture of the Bouches-du-Rhône noted that Cauvin was «very vehement about the government which he refers to as a government of assassins»⁷. At that meeting, he turned Clemenceau into a specific target of and he wound up the meeting with these words: «The workers gathered in the Bourse du Travail invite the working class to organise in order to drive from power the "bandits who govern us"»⁸.

And Cauvin accompanied his spoken words with printed words. Thus he had an article pub-

lished in *L'Ouvrier syndiqué*, the official bulletin of the Bouches-du-Rhône union des chambres syndicales ouvrières, two days after that, on 15 June 1908, where we read:

Government of cowards and assassins. Yet again the sinister slipper of the Place Beauvau has just been drenched with blood and tears. In the wake of the carnage in Narbonne and Nantes [...] here comes more, the carnage in Draveil Vigneux. For upwards of a month, the workers from the Vigneux quarries had been on strike. Their tenacity and their energy exasperated their ferocious employers and from then on, those craven employers spared no vile and base means in an attempt to get them to don the halter again⁹.

Cauvin denounced the pressures brought to bear upon workers by the employers. When strikes became overly irksome, the owners of the factories and firms concerned had no hesitation in calling in the army to force the workers back to work. Death was a frequent occurrence in this sort of dispute between 1908 and 1911. Given his stance, this militant was beginning to attract the attention of certain prefectures of police which added his name to the *Carnet B* blacklist, listing him as an anti-militarist, a revolutionary and a propagandist.

Not only did he back the workers but he also backed the big anarchist causes such as the Francisco Ferrer affair in 1909. He took violent exception to articles by Guy de Cassagnac carried in the rightwing newspaper *L'Autorité*; they attacked the libertarian educationist. His support for Ferrer became all the more ardent because, even then, he was developing a taste for libertarian education to which he was to commit himself whole-heartedly a few years later through the cinema and his future career as a teacher. A member of the Social Defence Committee, Cauvin organised a rally in Marseilles on behalf of the founder of the Modern School. Particularly determined and not afraid of the police, he marched to the prefecture during that demonstration before climbing on to a windowsill to direct an impassioned speech at the assembled crowd.

From 1909 onwards his activism became more focused. He made it his business to set up an inter-union revolutionary anti-militarist committee in his home town. The activist had anti-militarist propaganda pamphlets distributed to the homes of conscripts.

Suspected by the police of being, like his brother Henri Cauvin, an individualist anarchist, he also took on the role of saboteur about the town. But his activities did not stop there. In the legislative elections of April-May 1910, he stood as a candidate for the Anti-parliamentary Committee. Then in 1912, at which point he had become a correspondent for *La Guerre sociale*, his attention focused particularly upon Eugene Humbert's birth control propaganda. From then on this erstwhile hair-dresser organised talks in front of roomfuls of workers and explained how and why contraception constituted an essential factor in liberation. The police targeted him again, this time for trespass against decency after he handed out a pamphlet entitled *How To Avoid Pregnancy*, as well as selling certain "health goods".

After that Cauvin was off giving talks from town to town, turning up in Lyon, in Brittany or in the Loire, his every movement recorded in the files of the local police. Wherever he went his speeches were scathing about those who ruled and the incumbent ministers. He made a particular target of the army and the three years of compulsory military service. A memorandum from the police inspector in Mohon on 18 June 1913 records:

The speaker boasted that he was currently facing three indictments, one from the Dunkirk prosecutor's office, and his verbal offences were as follows: he referred to M. Etienne, the minister of War, as a «shark from Morocco», a «huckster from Morocco» and a «shady dealer». He said that the War minister has shares in several large industrial firms supplying war

materials to the army and that he places orders with himself [...]. «We have a minister of War who is a thief», he shouted. «Yes, a thief, and I am not afraid to shout it out loud. I defy the authorities to deny it»¹⁰.

«Let us educate the masses of the people by means of cinematography»¹¹

As a delegate from the Seine Workers' Teetotal Federation, Cauvin and the anarchist Jean Marestan promoted meetings that recruited more and more support. He would punctuate his speeches with film screenings. This was a practice he had borrowed from other lecturers back in 1910, but he gave it a boost with the establishment in 1911 of his "Cinéma social" association¹², in which he served as director, administrator, lecturer and operator. In his book *Résister* (1930) he explained his first encounter with cinema as a propaganda medium.

It was during a teetotalism talk at the Bourse du Travail in the Rue du Château d'eau in Paris. The matter under discussion was not very engaging. The speaker had managed to put two thirds of the audience to sleep. But all of a sudden the sound of a crank handle woke up the assemblage. The screen was lit up and began to stir. Eyes opened. The film literally grabbed the audience. No talk had ever succeeded that well¹³.

Convinced of the advantages offered by cinema, he travelled around with a projector and some reels, regaling the audience with strong images backing up his speeches. The strategy proved effective and the screenings were a roaring success, drawing huge numbers of people. And then, on a grand revolutionary propaganda tour, on 17 June 1913, Gustave Cauvin faced a packed house. The prefect of the Ardennes noted in a report to the Minister of the Interior that the lecture had attracted upwards of 120 female workers and 300 working men. The films were described thus:

Scenes depicting "social hell" were reproductions of workshop scenes from the big steel foundries and by contrast "the bourgeois paradise" was views of Nice and its surroundings (promenades, casinos...) where, the speaker added, the bourgeois and capitalists fritter away the money so hard earned by the proletariat. After that preamble, Cauvin launched into his talk. He pointed to the dangers of alcohol abuse and the devastating impact upon the working class [...]. Putting the case for birth control, the speaker announced that the workers who do not have the means to raise a large family ought, in order to avoid deprivation and poverty, make do with one or two children, the better to feed them and provide them with the education they need. [...] The evening closed with a further series of movie screenings. Les Horreurs de la guerre showed the Balkan War ("The artillery barrage and its results", "Convoys of wounded", "The fleeing inhabitants"). Les Victimes de l'alcool showed a once happy home now, under the impact of drink, with the father driven mad and locked up in a padded cell, the mother driven to suicide and taking her daughter with her, the son joining a gang of house-breakers, getting arrested and being thrown in prison. The final screenings dealt with the demonstration in the Pré-Saint Gervais and the German socialists' demonstration in Leipzig¹⁴.

Other films showed up in the schedules of the "Grand cinéma social", such as the commercial productions *Little Moritz fait du sport*, *Saida bouleverse la force armée* or even *L'Assommoir*.

Thus did cinema become, for Cauvin, an essential tool for educating the people. Up until 1914, the films screened during talks were mostly movies shot by the big production companies. The movies, which also were leading up to propaganda lectures also and primarily served to instruct workers in a follow-up to what the People's Universities were doing.

Despite the paucity of films at the time and the meagerness of our means, we managed, through these screenings, to offer "silent" movies about geography, natural history, health, sport, morality, adding our own commentary. Among the leading moral films we had one two-partner made by Pathé Frères in 1910, Les Victimes de l'alcool. Those who followed our screenings remembered them and it was so much our custom to screen this film (on our many tours of France, Switzerland and indeed Canada) that due to our commentary it looked as if the characters were speaking for themselves¹⁵.

The Cinéma du Peuple

In 1913, Gustave Cauvin joined the Cinéma du Peuple, the very first cinema cooperative in France to produce the first militant films in the history of French cinema to target a worker audience¹⁶. Initially helping out the association that had been launched by – among others – Yves-Marie Bidamant, Sébastien Faure, Charles-Ange Laisant and Jean Grave, by renting out his projection gear, Cauvin went on to become its assistant administrator¹⁷. The project was launched at the Revolutionary Communist-Anarchist Federation congress held in the Maison des Syndiqués at 18, Rue Cambronne in Paris on 15, 16 and 17 August 1913. Advertised and subsidised by the anarchist newspapers of the day, this organisation advocated a socially educational cinema accessible to all, as witnessed by this piece from *Le Libertaire* on 13 September 1913:

What a wonderful propaganda tool cinema is! Our adversaries have caught on that the current situation is the product of relentless propaganda churned out by the cinemas. The militaristic spirit, the silly, poisonous nationalism come from that! It is high time to fight back! The poison cleverly distilled in the minds of the people must be countered immediately by an antidote! [...] The Bourses du Travail, the cooperatives, the study groups, the trade unions and still other groups must become our customers. Instead of turning to the film-making companies who offer them crude militaristic pap, the workers' organisations will turn to us for their film rentals. In the certainty that our thoughts are theirs¹⁸.

The aim was to offer workers quality, morale-boosting, educational films. Tired of the Pathé, Gaumont or Eclair productions offering a contemptuous portrait of the world of work, members of the cooperative fought against these degrading images¹⁹. To that end they followed the example of the Bussang Théâtre du Peuple launched by Maurice Pottecher in 1895 and the Paris Théâtre du Peuple²⁰ set up in 1912 by the anarchists Emile Guichard and Henri Antoine²¹. Like those experiments, the cooperative undertook to «raise the intellectual level [...] by offering views against war, against alcohol and against all social evils»²². This venture was then taken up by many of the People's Universities. Seven films were to be produced between 1913 and 1914, mostly by the Spanish anarchist movie-maker Armand Guerra. Invoking the anarchists' historical "memory" and that of the workers thanks to film images, the cooperative offered an "educational" form of cinema.

Memory and pedagogy as weapons of struggle

“Memory” and “pedagogy” became the two principal ideas in libertarian cinema. Thus *Les Misères de l’aiguille* (released 18 January 1914), the only production shot by Raphaël Clamour, with Musidora²³ cast in the leading role, was the first militant movie to deal with and denounce the exploitation of working women, especially those working for the fashion houses. It was part of a couple of productions by the organisation on this subject, alongside *Victime des exploiteurs* shot by Armand Guerra (released on 28 March 1914), dealing with women working from home. Here, in both cases, the viewer follows the tragic story of heroines who are going to slide into social decline, exploited by their boss before being unfairly dismissed, and the plight of the women depicted is hard, being bound up with extreme poverty, the prostitution that awaits them or suicide. We are not dealing here with straightforward melodrama. The producers are bent on showing a very concrete reality which, in the mind of the cooperative, should not set the spectator to weeping but rather provoke a violent backlash against this state of affairs. The films could have stopped at registering the tragedy and offering, as was the wont in the usual melodramas of the day, a miraculous solution in the shape of marriage to some handsome, rich, decent man who rescues the penniless, lonely women from their social surroundings. Instead, the Cinéma du Peuple develops another more pugnacious and educational solution. Both in *Les Misères de l’aiguille* and in *Victime des exploiteurs*, the heroines seek comfort in trade unionism or in libertarian organisation which introduces them to a life of equality, solidarity, autonomy and shows them how to assert themselves as independent women and how to fight effectively alongside other workers against capitalist exploitation.

Other Cinéma du Peuple films adopted the same approach, eg. *Le Vieux Docker* (released 28 March 1914), a re-enactment of the story of Jules Durand; or *La Commune I: Du 18 mars au 28 mars 1871* (released 28 March 1914), the first film made about the Paris Commune. In these two instances the object was to recall recent history, highlighting their tragic side and exposing the disastrous effects of an unfair and anti-social government policy. The simple description of an episode from the history of the Paris Commune, viz. the mutiny by the 88th regiment of the line, the execution of Generals Thomas and Lecomte as well as Adolphe Thiers’s flight to Versailles and the proclamation of the Paris Commune showed the viewer how powerful the organised people might be. This “reconstitution-demonstration” offered a number of advantages, primarily that of reminding or teaching the working class audience about a fragment of its history and then explaining, thanks to certain descriptive sequences from the film how to organise for a fight against the established government. In this militant libertarian movie-making the duty to remember went hand in hand with the need to understand and to explain, eventually inspiring the viewer to find a practical application for the fight depicted on the screen²⁴.

Other Cinéma du Peuple films were geared towards more recent social struggles, like *Une visite à l’Orphelinat national des chemins de fer à Avesnes*, or indeed *L’Hiver, plaisir des riches, souffrance des pauvres* (released 31 January 1914) a visual pamphlet on the living conditions of the most privileged and of the indigent. It could be regarded as a fore-runner of Jean Vigo’s *A propos de Nice* as it articulates the need to start in the here and now to build an anarchist society by doing away with the social inequalities depicted in the film²⁵.

The Cinéma du Peuple survived for one year before it abruptly broke off on account of the First World War, which put paid to it once and for all. It would subsequently provide the inspiration for other experiments such as the Groupe Octobre during the 1930s and, according to Laurent Mannoni²⁶, all the “future initiatives of the Popular Front” as well as lots of collectives during the

1970s (such as the Groupe Medvedkine, the Sochaux Collectif de cinéastes et travailleurs, the Unité Production Cinéma Bretagne, Sion/Iskra, etc.).

Cinéma Educateur

When the Cinéma du Peuple project ended and the First World War came along, Cauvin was declared unfit for service. This was his chance to press on with propaganda by means of the moving image by returning to one of his favourite themes, one that the cooperative had not tackled – the fight against alcohol that was the subject of his first book in 1913, *Antialcoolisme et Néo-Malthusianisme*. Touring France again and brandishing a 35 mm projector, he would regularly screen Gérard Bourgeois's *Les Dangers de l'alcool*²⁷. His engagement with social issues, especially certain diseases such as TB, opened up other avenues to him. In 1916 he drafted a second work entitled *La Guerre et la lutte contre le fléau*. Cauvin gradually pulled out of adult education and turned to the education of children. After his first experience in 1917 – when, during a session of the chamber of deputies, he paraded a colony of poor children right through the Palais Bourbon – he was increasingly of the view that the education of the young was crucial to everybody's progress. Since the war the workers had only rarely mobilised, the general trend being towards depression. Cauvin redoubled his efforts but audiences continued to shrink and screenings often ended in fisticuffs. Not one to lose heart, the activist carried on with his fight against drink and in 1919 published *Vers la délivrance*. It was on the occasion of his various talks that he bumped into the radical Edouard Herriot. Herriot seemed to show an interest in the anarchist and his new scheme for secular educational instruction of children through the cinema.

The Offices of Cinéma Educateur

Four years later, in 1921, Cauvin the agitator, now in cahoots with Herriot, decided to settle in Herriot's home town of Lyon. Espousing the same "rationalist" outlook as Cauvin and eager to erect a barrier against Catholic sponsorship, the radical politician was attracted to the idea and helped the libertarian get his project for Cinéma Educateur off the ground. Every Thursday, recreational sessions were laid on in every district of the city. Leaving "memory" to one side in order to focus on the "pedagogy" of libertarian struggle, Cauvin forged ahead with his propaganda. But as the 1920s proceeded he calmed down and allied himself with local city leaders. Cauvin was not yet turning his back on anarchism, but as time went on, he turned to an increasingly moderate socialism²⁸. Slowly Cinéma Educateur took shape and it appears to have enjoyed the support of the freemasons, as had Cinéma du Peuple before it.

To begin with, cinéma éducateur had only 15,000 francs awarded by Lyon city council to work with, plus the something in the order of ten thousand francs that I raised myself from a variety of contributors with whom I had been in touch ever since my anti-drink activities. Whilst our budget in 1921 stood at only 15,000 francs, by 1929 this had risen to over 600,000 francs. We had almost 900 correspondents, upwards of 300 programmes (each made up of 10 to 12 reels) that were being sent out in all directions each week. At that time, we had up to 18 employees charged with making repairs, reissuing, transporting and delivering programmes and mounting propaganda sessions²⁹.

In 1924, thanks to the senator from Isère and president of the “Ligue d’enseignement” Joseph Brenier, the “Cinéma Educateur Office” was set up. Cauvin clung to his original militant ideas and was eager to take on the Church and promote secularism. He was also ready to push the idea of cooperatives and pacifism and emancipation of the labouring classes. As his earlier programmes for workers, his programmes were made up of a variety of sorts of film, six to be precise: «Teaching films to illustrate teachers’ lessons, films to supplement adult courses, films for agricultural lectures, training guidance films, technical education films and films on social hygiene»³⁰. So-called “open air” films (documentaries) were used in geography lessons. In most cases full-length movies were bought and the “stock footage” was available from commercial sources. Not until 1929 were cartoons especially destined for children introduced by the Musée pédagogique. The latter came up with footage such as *The Rhine*, *Tunis*, *France’s Coast* and *The Art Foundry* or indeed *The Lathe-Operator*. Cauvin’s Cinéma Educateur offices supplied films to secular schools which ordered them, delving into the stocks held by the Musée and by the Paris City Filmothèque. The propagandist bemoaned the exorbitant costs of shooting short educational movies, but stuck it out.

*Organising the Thursday shows was the Office’s most important concern. It was also one of the most difficult for we had to find quite a large number of films and they had to be suitable for children. Now, let’s remember that films for children could not include love stories, gun-fire or violence*³¹.

Regional activity expanded quite quickly, thanks to funding received from the departments. Up until 1931 Cinéma Educateur thrived. There were teaching staging educational sessions in their classes and recreational shows for the general population. Profits from the latter helped defray the costs of movie-making. After the advent of “talkies”, the expansion of the project slowed down. The new sound recording cinema gear was too expensive: «The earliest “talkie” equipment was very pricy. The first westerns cost something like 500,000 francs [...]. The main obstacle to the growth of “talkie” cinéma éducateur was the fierce cost of “talkie” equipment»³².

The Office did manage gradually to replace the “silents” with “talkies” as far as the Thursday schedules were concerned. In 1938-1939, Cauvin recorded a total of 2,400 “silent” showings and 1,260 “talkies”. Right from the outset, the venture was not content just to supply programmes to school and post-school ventures. It also organised propaganda tours. Gustave Cauvin’s militant activity was alive and well. Every year, two or three outfits would tour the towns with successful films, organising screenings. Since the smaller towns did not have the wherewithal to buy their own projector, this system still allowed them to have film screenings anyway. Any profits were returned in their entirety to the coffers of the local schools. In addition, Cauvin offered films to Spanish refugees at no cost.

Whilst the Office was awash with initiatives, the Church had targeted Cinéma Educateur. Despite the best efforts of rightwing mayors and integrist clerics, the Office weathered the storm and in fact the secular structures grew to a considerable extent. Technical innovations boosted this – developments such as the introduction of the “Pathé Baby”. Teachers strapped for money could use this mini-apparatus to illustrate their lessons. However, the 9.5 mm format was not entirely up to meeting the needs of post-school shows and in country towns the populace preferred to go and watch the superior projections or show in the parochial halls with their 35 mm films. Cauvin then switched to Pathé’s proposed new 17.5 mm format (also known as “Pathé Rural”). Far superior to the 9.5 mm format, this equipment had the advantage of being cheaper and less bulky than the 35 mm gear. Cauvin settled on the 16 mm form, which, as he saw it, was more suited to the 35 mm:

Lots of companies printed films in 16 mm. There was quite a large number of these on the market, but rental charges were all too often still higher than we were paying for 35 mm. footage, the latter format being stand on the commercial market and there was plenty of footage available [...]. In my view, the State should have made a considerable injection of funding into educational filming to ensure the success of the 16 mm format. But experience has shown us that the State's sacrifices on behalf of education have been negligible [...]. We should not despair of 16 mm, which is the standard for classwork³³.

In 1927 a 600 metre documentary about their educational project was produced by the Cinéma Educateur Office in Lyon. Then in 1931, three documentaries appeared³⁴, one of them dealing with the Fourvière disaster with the other two on *Les Enfants de la montagne* and *La Fête du sou des écoles*. Gustave Cauvin worked with collaborators like Louis Colin in Nancy, Jacques Soleil in Clermont-Ferrand, René Pestre in Algiers and Eugène Reboul in Saint-Etienne, who also worked on the idea of Cinéma Educateur. Reboul, one of Cauvin's closest colleagues, published an instruction manual for all teachers – *Le Cinéma scolaire et éducateur* – in 1926. In partnership with the Office he shot a number of shorts such as *Le 42ème Congrès national de la ligue* (1926), *Les Fêtes fédérales de gymnastiques du sud-est de la Loire* (1927), *Une Colonie de vacances au château de Montbimir* (1928) or *Une Capitale industrielle, Saint-Etienne* (1928).

Experiment rooted in anarchism

Cauvin, having come to be acknowledged by everybody (even by the leading politicians of the day) as the leader managed to marry his anarchist militant vigour and the cause of cinéma éducateur. He wrote around twenty works, most of them destined for use in education³⁵. The only thing was that the Vichy regime, during the war, dismantled the Offices, but they were to bounce back at the end of those dark times. The one-time anarchist was as energetic as he had ever been and was still fighting on behalf of the weakest and poorest. Charles Perrin tells us that:

Even in the wake of the last war, when I met him in 1949 as a broken and ailing man, he was still carrying on the struggle. Sickened by the tolerance shown towards abusive parents, he had organised a neighbourhood commando made up of 3 or 4 burly types whom he would send out on [...] illegal [...] punitive expeditions from time to time. The guilty parties would be given a sound thrashing and warned that they would be finished off if there was any repetition. I had the honour of taking part in one such session one day³⁶.

After having been drawn to socialism during the 1920s, the libertarian Cauvin finished up as a communist.

Cinéma Educateur was to prove a considerable influence on the educationist Célestin Freinet who was to take up Cauvin's ideas by producing his own films such as Yves Allégret's film *Prix et Profits* or *La Pomme de Terre* in 1931-1932 (Prices and Profits or The Potato) with his Coopérative de l'Enseignement Laïc (Secular Education Cooperative)³⁷. Gustave Cauvin died on 1 November 1951, leaving behind a project which, to use his own words, could never have existed but for its libertarian roots.

- 1 Jean Maitron, *Paul Delesalle, un anarchiste de la Belle époque*, Fayard, Paris 1985.
- 2 Fernand Pelloutier, *L'Art et la révolte* (1896), Place d'armes, Paris 2002, p. 19 (my translation).
- 3 Emile Guichard, "Au cinéma", in *Le Libéraire*, 27 May 1911, p. 2 (my translation).
- 4 Slava Liszek, *Champagne, un siècle d'histoire sociale*, Editions de La Vie ouvrière, Paris 1995, p. 37.
- 5 A. Dauthuille, "En Champagne, Cinéma-Police", in *Le Libéraire*, 29 April 1911, p. 3 (my translation).
- 6 M. Guinaud, "L'Association pour l'instruction par l'image et la cinématographie", in *Ciné-journal*, 28 January 1911, p. 7.
- 7 Rapport de Police, *Dossier Gustave Cauvin*, in Dossier "Anarchistes Allemands", Archives rapatriées de Russie, Surveillance des Anarchistes, 19940498 art. 8 (Centre des Archives Contemporaines), p. 25 (my translation).
- 8 *Ibidem*, p. 30.
- 9 *Ibidem*.
- 10 *Ibidem*, p. 7.
- 11 Gustave Cauvin in Raymond Borde, Charles Perrin, *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du muet 1925-1940*, Presses universitaires de Lyon, Lyon 1992, p. 12 (my translation).
- 12 Gustave Cauvin, *Le Cinéma éducateur à l'école et dans nos œuvres*, Office régional du cinéma éducateur, Lyon 1939, p. 7.
- 13 Raymond Borde, Charles Perrin, *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du muet 1925-1940*, cit., p. 11.
- 14 Rapport de Police, *Dossier Gustave Cauvin*, cit., pp. 9-10 (my translation).
- 15 Gustave Cauvin, *Le Cinéma éducateur à l'école et dans nos œuvres*, cit., p. 6.
- 16 Laurent Mannoni, "28 octobre 1913: création de la société *Le Cinéma du Peuple*", in *1895*, no. hors série, 1993, p. 100.
- 17 Tanguy Perron, "Le Cinéma du Peuple", in *Le Mouvement social*, no. 172, July-September 1995, p. 29.
- 18 Anonyme, "Le Cinéma du Peuple, société coopérative anonyme à personnel et capital variables", in *Le Libéraire*, 13 September 1913, p. 4 (my translation).
- 19 Yves-Marie Bidamant, "Pourquoi un Cinéma du Peuple?", in *Le Libéraire*, 20 September 1913, pp. 2-3.
- 20 Denis Gontard, *La Décentralisation théâtrale en France, 1895-1952*, Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, Paris 1973.
- 21 Isabelle Marinone, *Anarchisme et cinéma: Panoramique sur une histoire du 7^{ème} art français virée au noir*, Thèse de Doctorat (Ph.D.), December 2004, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, direction Jean A. Gili et Nicole Brenez.
- 22 Yves-Marie Bidamant, "Pourquoi un Cinéma du Peuple ?", cit.
- 23 Patrick Cazals, *Musidora la dixième muse*, H. Veyrier, Paris 1978.
- 24 Isabelle Marinone, *Cinéma et Anarchisme en France, une identité politique à travers le 7^{ème} art*, in Pierre Arbus, Franck Bousquet (eds.), *Cinéma et identités collectives*, Actes du 3^{ème} colloque de Sorèze, Manuscrit Université, Paris 2006, pp. 237-260.
- 25 Isabelle Marinone, "Jean Vigo: un cineasta impregnado de anarquismo", in *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no. 52, February 2006, pp. 23-41.
- 26 Laurent Mannoni, "28 octobre 1913: création de la société *Le Cinéma du Peuple*", cit., p. 107.
- 27 Jean-Jacques Meusy, *La Bellevilloise (1877-1939)*, Créapluis, Paris 2001, p. 187.
- 28 Jean Maitron, *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*, Editions ouvrières, Paris 1964-1992.
- 29 Gustave Cauvin, *Le Cinéma éducateur à l'école et dans nos œuvres*, cit., p. 8.
- 30 *Ibidem*.
- 31 *Ibidem*, p. 16.
- 32 *Ibidem*, p. 24.
- 33 *Ibidem*, p. 29.
- 34 Raymond Borde, Charles Perrin, *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du muet 1925-1940*, cit., p. 61.
- 35 Works by Cauvin, in chronological order. *Antialcoolisme et Néo-Malthusianisme: la moralité du Néo-Malthusianisme* (Déclarations devant les Tribunaux de 1912 et 1913), Le travail, Lyon 1913. *La Guerre et la lutte contre le fléau*, Le travail, Lyon 1916. *Le Péril alcoolique*, 1916. *Une campagne à travers la France*, 1917. *Une campagne contre le poison national*, 1918. *Vers la délivrance*, Le travail, Lyon 1920. *L'Office Régional du Cinéma Educateur de Lyon*, Office régional du cinéma éducateur, Lyon 1925. *Le Cinéma Educateur*, Office régional du cinéma éducateur, Lyon 1927. *Vouloir*, Office régional du ciné-

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- 36 Raymond Borde, Charles Perrin, *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du muet 1925-1940*, cit., p. 13.
- 37 Henri Portier, *Cinématographe et mouvement Freinet 1927-1940*, Institut coopératif de l'école moderne, Paris 1990.