

What Caused McCarthyism?: Common Assignment 1

HUAC Primary Source Activity Rubric

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Use of Evidence (Question 2) | Student cites multiple examples of specific textual evidence (information or quotes) to identify points of view. (Applies to both 2a and 2b.) | Student cites one or two examples of specific textual evidence to identify one point of view. | Student either misunderstood point of view or did not cite supporting evidence. |
| Content (Chart) | Student demonstrates understanding of HUAC and its actions during the Cold War by accurately and completely filling out chart. | Student demonstrates some understanding of HUAC and its actions during the Cold War by mostly filling out the chart. | Student shows limited understanding of HUAC and its actions during the Cold War by not accurately completing the chart. |



Learning Guide: Testimonies before HUAC, October 1947

Directions: Complete the chart including evidence from the testimony.

| Name <i>Role in industry</i> | Views on HUAC (Include evidence from testimony.) | Views on communism in the entertainment industry (Include evidence from testimony.) |
|--|--|---|
| Walt Disney | | |
| Eric Johnston | | |
| John Howard Lawson | | |
| Jack Warner | | |
| Ayn Rand | | |
| Ronald Reagan | | |
| Louis B. Mayer | | |



Learning Guide: HUAC Testimony Activity

Directions: Complete questions 1–3 fully to prepare to teach others about your person.

1. **Name of your person** _____
 - a. What did they do for a living?

 - b. Why were they called to testify?

 - c. What power did they hold within the entertainment industry to shape public opinion?

2. **Views**
 - a. How did this person view communism? Include quotes and information that evidence this.

 - b. How did this person view HUAC? Include quotes and information that evidence this.

3. **Un-American**
 - a. What was called “un-American” during this time period?

 - b. Why do you think people used the term “un-American”?

 - c. What was happening at the time that prompted public and congressional support of HUAC?



Group 1: Walt Disney

“We Must Keep the Labor Unions Clean”: “Friendly” HUAC Witnesses Ronald Reagan and Walt Disney Blame Hollywood Labor Conflicts on Communist Infiltration

Perhaps the most famous animator of all time, Walt Disney (1901-1966) in 1947 was already a celebrity thanks to his creation of the popular cartoon character Mickey Mouse in the 1920s. In the late 1930s and early 1940s his fame—and wealth—had grown with the production of full-length animated films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Bambi* (1942). During World War II he produced a series of short training and instructional films for the military. Disney became suspicious of communist influence in Hollywood after a strike temporarily halted work at his studios in 1941; he therefore readily agreed to serve as a friendly witness before HUAC.

TESTIMONY OF WALTER E. DISNEY

Mr. SMITH: Have you ever made any pictures in your studio that contained propaganda and that were propaganda films?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, during the war we did. We made quite a few—working with different Government agencies. We did one for the Treasury on taxes and I did four anti-Hitler films. And I did one on my own for Air Power.

Mr. SMITH: From those pictures that you made have you any opinion as to whether or not the films can be used effectively to disseminate propaganda?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, I think they proved that.

Mr. SMITH: How do you arrive at that conclusion?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, on the one for the Treasury on taxes, it was to let the people know that taxes were important in the war effort. As they explained to me, they had 13,000,000 new taxpayers, people who had never paid taxes, and they explained that it would be impossible to prosecute all those that were delinquent and they wanted to put this story before those people so they would get their taxes in early. I made the film and after the film had its run the Gallup poll organization polled the public and the findings were that 29 percent of the people admitted that it had influenced them in getting their taxes in early and giving them a picture of what taxes will do.

Mr. SMITH: Aside from those pictures you made during the war, have you made any other pictures, or do you permit pictures to be made at your studio containing propaganda?

Mr. DISNEY: No; we never have. During the war we thought it was a different thing. It was the first time we ever allowed anything like that to go in the films. We watch so that nothing gets into the films that would be harmful in any way to any group or any country. We have large audiences of children and different groups, and we try to keep them as free from anything that would offend anybody as possible. We work hard to see that nothing of that sort creeps in.

Mr. SMITH: Do you have any people in your studio at the present time that you believe are Communist or Fascist employed there?

Mr. DISNEY: No; at the present time I feel that everybody in my studio is 100 percent American.

Mr. SMITH: Have you had at any time, in your opinion, in the past, have you at any time in the past had any Communists employed at your studio?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes; in the past I had some people that I definitely feel were Communists.

Mr. SMITH: As a matter of fact, Mr. Disney, you experienced a strike at your studio, did you not?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes.

Mr. SMITH: And is it your opinion that that strike was instituted by members of the Communist Party to serve their purposes?

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Mr. DISNEY: Well, it proved itself so with time, and I definitely feel it was a Communist group trying to take over my artists and they did take them over.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you say they did take them over?

Mr. DISNEY: They did take them over.

Mr. SMITH: Will you explain that to the committee, please?

Mr. DISNEY: It came to my attention when a delegation of my boys, my artists, came to me and told me that Mr. Herbert Sorrell—

Mr. SMITH: Is that Herbert K. Sorrell?

Mr. DISNEY: Herbert K. Sorrell, was trying to take them over. I explained to them that it was none of my concern, that I had been cautioned to not even talk with any of my boys on labor. They said it was not a matter of labor, it was just a matter of them not wanting to go with Sorrell, and they had heard that I was going to sign with Sorrell, and they said that they wanted an election to prove that Sorrell didn't have the majority, and I said that I had a right to demand an election. So when Sorrell came I demanded an election.

Sorrell wanted me to sign on a bunch of cards that he had there that he claimed were the majority, but the other side had claimed the same thing. I told Mr. Sorrell that there is only one way for me to go and that was an election and that is what the law had set up, the National Labor Relations Board was for that purpose. He laughed at me and he said that he would use the Labor Board as it suited his purposes and that he had been sucker enough to go for that Labor Board ballot and he had lost some election—I can't remember the name of the place—by one vote. He said it took him 2 years to get it back. He said he would strike, that that was his weapon. He said, "I have all of the tools of the trade sharpened," that I couldn't stand the ridicule or the smear of a strike. I told him that it was a matter of principle with me, that I couldn't go on working with my boys feeling that I had sold them down the river to him on his say-so, and he laughed at me and told me I was naive and foolish. He said, you can't stand this strike, I will smear you, and I will make a dust bowl out of your plant.

The CHAIRMAN: What was that?

Mr. DISNEY: He said he would make a dust bowl out of my plant if he chose to. I told him I would have to go that way, sorry, that he might be able to do all that, but I would have to stand on that. The result was that he struck.

I believed at that time that Mr. Sorrell was a Communist because of all the things that I had heard and having seen his name appearing on a number of Commie front things. When he pulled the strike the first people to smear me and put me on the unfair list were all of the Commie front organizations. I can't remember them all, they change so often, but one that is clear in my mind is the League of Women Shoppers, The People's World, The Daily Worker, and the PM magazine in New York. They smeared me. Nobody came near to find out what the true facts of the thing were. And I even went through the same smear in South America, through some Commie periodicals in South America, and generally throughout the world all of the Commie groups began smear campaigns against me and my pictures.

Mr. MCDOWELL: In what fashion was that smear, Mr. Disney, what type of smear?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, they distorted everything, they lied; there was no way you could ever counteract anything that they did; they formed picket lines in front of the theaters, and, well, they called my plant a sweat-shop, and that is not true, and anybody in Hollywood would prove it otherwise. They claimed things that were not true at all and there was no way you could fight it back. It was not a labor problem at all because—I mean, I have never had labor trouble, and I think that would be backed up by anybody in Hollywood.

Mr. SMITH: As a matter of fact, you have how many unions operating in your plant?

The CHAIRMAN: Excuse me just a minute. I would like to ask a question.

Mr. SMITH: Pardon me.

The CHAIRMAN: In other words, Mr. Disney, Communists out there smeared you because you wouldn't knuckle under?

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Mr. DISNEY: I wouldn't go along with their way of operating. I insisted on it going through the National Labor Relations Board. And he told me outright that he used them as it suited his purposes.

The CHAIRMAN: Supposing you had given in to him, then what would have been the outcome?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I would never have given in to him, because it was a matter of principle with me, and I fight for principles. My boys have been there, have grown up in the business with me, and I didn't feel like I could sign them over to anybody. They were vulnerable at that time. They were not organized. It is a new industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH: How many labor unions, approximately, do you have operating in your studios at the present time?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, we operate with around 35—I think we have contacts with 30.

Mr. SMITH: At the time of this strike you didn't have any grievances or labor troubles whatsoever in your plant?

Mr. DISNEY: No. The only real grievance was between Sorrell and the boys within my plant, they demanding an election, and they never got it.

Mr. SMITH: Do you recall having had any conversations with Mr. Sorrell relative to communism?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, I do.

Mr. SMITH: Will you relate that conversation?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I didn't pull my punches on how I felt. He evidently heard that I had called them all a bunch of Communists—and I believe they are. At the meeting he leaned over and he said, "You think I am a Communist, don't you," and I told him that all I knew was what I heard and what I had seen, and he laughed and said, "Well, I used their money to finance my strike of 1937," and he said that he had gotten the money through the personal check of some actor, but he didn't name the actor. I didn't go into it any further. I just listened.

Mr. SMITH: Can you name any other individuals that were active at the time of the strike that you believe in your opinion are Communists?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I feel that there is one artist in my plant, that came in there, he came in about 1938, and he sort of stayed in the background, he wasn't too active, but he was the real brains of this, and I believe he is a Communist. His name is David Hilberman.

Mr. SMITH: How is it spelled?

Mr. DISNEY: H-i-l-b-e-r-m-a-n, I believe. I looked into his record and I found that, No. 1, that he had no religion and, No. 2, that he had considerable time at the Moscow Art Theater studying art direction, or something.

Mr. SMITH: Any others, Mr. Disney?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I think Sorrell is sure tied up with them. If he isn't a Communist, he sure should be one.

Mr. SMITH: Do you remember the name of William Pomerance, did he have anything to do with it?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, sir. He came in later. Sorrell put him in charge as business manager of cartoonists and later he went to the Screen Actors as their business agent and in turn he put in another man by the name of Maurice Howard, the present business agent. And they are all tied up with the same outfit.

Mr. SMITH: What is your opinion of Mr. Pomerance and Mr. Howard as to whether or not they are or are not Communists?

Mr. DISNEY: In my opinion they are Communists. No one has any way of proving those things.

Mr. SMITH: Were you able to produce during the strike?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, I did, because there was a very few, very small majority that was on the outside, and all the other unions ignored all the lines because of the set-up of the thing.

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Mr. SMITH: What is your personal opinion of the Communist Party, Mr. Disney, as to whether or not it is a political party?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I don't believe it is a political party. I believe it is an un-American thing. The thing that I resent the most is that they are able to get into these unions, take them over, and represent to the world that a group of people that are in my plant, that I know are good, 100 percent Americans, are trapped by this group, and they are represented to the world as supporting all of those ideologies, and it is not so, and I feel that they really ought to be smoked out and shown up for what they are, so that all of the good, free causes in this country, all the liberalisms that really are American, can go out without the taint of Communism. That is my sincere feeling on it.

Mr. SMITH: Do you feel that there is a threat of communism in the motion-picture industry?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, there is, and there are many reasons why they would like to take it over or get in and control it, or disrupt it, but I don't think they have gotten very far, and I think the industry is made up of good Americans, just like in my plant, good, solid Americans.

My boys have been fighting it longer than I have. They are trying to get out from under it and they will in time if we can just show them up.

Mr. SMITH: There are presently pending before this committee two bills relative to outlawing the Communist Party. What thoughts have you as to whether or not those bills should be passed?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I don't know as I qualify to speak on that. I feel if the thing can be proven un-American that it ought to be outlawed. I think in some way it should be done without interfering with the rights of the people. I think that will be done. I have that faith. Without interfering, I mean, with the good, American rights that we all have now, and we want to preserve.

Mr. SMITH: Have you any suggestions to offer as to how the industry can be helped in fighting this menace?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I think there is a good start toward it. I know that I have been handicapped out there in fighting it, because they have been hiding behind this labor set-up, they get themselves closely tied up in the labor thing, so that if you try to get rid of them they make a labor case out of it. We must keep the American labor unions clean. We have got to fight for them. . . .

Headnotes for all testimonies from

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/McCarthy02.pdf>

Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu



Group 2: Eric Johnston

“A Damaging Impression of Hollywood Has Spread”: Movie “Czar” Eric Johnston Testifies before HUAC

A successful businessman from Spokane, Washington, Eric Johnston (1895-1961) became at the age of 46 the youngest person ever elected president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In this position he advocated close cooperation between management and labor, and traveled internationally as a goodwill ambassador on behalf of the Roosevelt administration. In 1945 he became president of the Motion Picture Association of America, where his chief responsibility was the marketing of American films abroad. In late November 1947—just weeks after his appearance before HUAC—Johnston held a meeting with forty-seven of the industry’s leading executives in which they agreed not to hire any of the so-called “Hollywood Ten” until they were willing to swear that they were not communists.

TESTIMONY OF ERIC ALLEN JOHNSTON . . .

I’m not here to try to whitewash [cover up] Hollywood, and I’m not here to help sling a tar brush at it, either.

I want to stick to the facts as I see them.

There are several points I’d like to make to this committee.

The first one is this: A damaging impression of Hollywood has spread all over the country as a result of last week’s hearings. You have a lot of sensational testimony about Hollywood. From some of it the public will get the idea that Hollywood is running over with Communists and communism.

I believe the impression which has gone out is the sort of scare-head stuff which is grossly unfair to a great American industry. It must be a great satisfaction to the Communist leadership in this country to have people believe that Hollywood Communists are astronomical in number and almost irresistible in power.

Now, what are the facts? Not everybody in Hollywood is a Communist. I have said before that undoubtedly there are Communists in Hollywood, but in my opinion the percentage is extremely small.

I have had a number of close looks at Hollywood in the last 2 years, and I have looked at it through the eyes of an average businessman. I recognize that as the world’s capital of show business, there is bound to be a lot of show business in Hollywood. There is no business, Mr. Chairman, like show business. But underneath there is the solid foundation of patriotic, hardworking, decent citizens. Making motion pictures is hard work. You just don’t dash off a motion picture between social engagements. . . .

I wind up my first point with a request of this committee. The damaging impression about Hollywood should be corrected. I urge your committee to do so in these public hearings.

There is another damaging impression which should be corrected. The report of the subcommittee said that some of the most flagrant [obviously offensive] Communist propaganda films were produced as the result of White House pressure. This charge has been completely refuted by the testimony before you.

My second point includes another request of the committee.

The report of your subcommittee stated that you had a list of all pictures produced in Hollywood in the last 8 years which contained Communist propaganda. Your committee has not made this list public. Until the list is made public the industry stands condemned by unsupported generalizations, and we are denied the opportunity to refute these charges publicly.

Again, I remind the committee that we have offered to put on a special showing of any or all of the pictures which stand accused so that you can see for yourselves what’s in them. The contents of the pictures constitute the only proof.

Unless this evidence is presented and we are given the chance to refute it in these public hearings, it is the obligation of the committee to absolve the industry from the charges against it.

Now, I come to my third point—a vitally important one to every American and to the system under which we live.

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It is free speech. . . .

When I talk about freedom of speech in connection with this hearing, I mean just this: You don't need to pass a law to choke off free speech or seriously curtail it. Intimidation or coercion will do it just as well. You can't make good and honest motion pictures in an atmosphere of fear.

I intend to use every influence at my command to keep the screen free. I don't propose that Government shall tell the motion-picture industry, directly or by coercion, what kind of pictures it ought to make. I am as whole-souledly against that as I would be against dictating to the press or the radio, to the book publishers or to the magazines. . . .

To sum up this point: We insist on our rights to decide what will or will not go in our pictures. We are deeply conscious of the responsibility this freedom involves, but we have no intention to violate this trust by permitting subversive propaganda in our films.

Now, my next point is this:

When I was before this committee last March, I said that I wanted to see Communists exposed. I still do. I'm heart and soul for it. An exposed Communist is an unarmed Communist. Expose them, but expose them in the traditional American manner.

But I believe that when this committee or any other agency undertakes to expose communism it must be scrupulous to avoid tying a red tag on innocent people by indiscriminate [random] labeling.

It seems to me it is getting dangerously easy to call a man a Communist without proof or even reasonable suspicion. When a distinguished leader of the Republican Party in the United States Senate is accused of following the Communist Party line for introducing a housing bill, it is time, gentlemen, to give a little serious thought to the dangers of thoughtless smearing [false accusations] by gossip and hearsay.

Senator Robert Taft isn't going to worry about being called a Communist. But not every American is a Senator Taft who can properly ignore such an accusation. Most of us in America are just little people, and loose charges can hurt little people. They take away everything a man has—his livelihood, his reputation, and his personal dignity.

When just one man is falsely damned as a Communist in an hour like this when the Red issue is at white heat, no one of us is safe.

Gentlemen, I maintain that preservation of the rights of the individual is a proper duty for this Committee on Un-American Activities. This country's entire tradition is based on the principle that the individual is a higher power than the state; that the state owes its authority to the individual, and must treat him accordingly.

Expose communism, but don't put any American who isn't a Communist in a concentration camp of suspicion. We are not willing to give up our freedoms to save our freedoms.

I now come to my final point:

What are we going to do positively and constructively about combating communism? It isn't enough to be anti-Communist any more than it is to be anti-smallpox. You can still die from smallpox if you haven't used a serum against it. A positive program is the best antitoxin of the plague of communism.

Communism must have breeding grounds. Men and women who have a reasonable measure of opportunity aren't taken in by the prattle of Communists. Revolutions plotted by frustrated intellectuals at cocktail parties won't get anywhere if we wipe out the potential causes of communism. The most effective way is to make democracy work for greater opportunity, for greater participation, for greater security for all our people.

The real breeding ground of communism is in the slums. It is everywhere where people haven't enough to eat or enough to wear through no fault of their own. Communism hunts misery, feeds on misery, and profits by it.

Freedoms walk hand-in-hand with abundance. That has been the history of America. It has been the American story. It turned the eyes of the world to America, because America gave reality to freedom, plus abundance when it was still an idle daydream in the rest of the world.

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We have been the greatest exporter of freedom, and the world is hungry for it. Today it needs our wheat and our fuel to stave off hunger and fight off cold, but hungry and cold as they may be, men always hunger for freedom.

We want to continue to practice and to export freedom.

If we fortify our democracy to lick [defeat] want, we will lick [defeat] communism—here and abroad. Communists can hang all the iron curtains they like, but they'll never be able to shut out the story of a land where freemen walk without fear and live with abundance.

[Applause.] (The chairman pounding gavel.) . . .

Headnotes for all testimonies from

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/McCarthy02.pdf> 

Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu 



Group 3: John Howard Lawson

“They Want to Muzzle Public Opinion”: John Howard Lawson’s Warning to the American Public

John Howard Lawson (1894-1977) was a playwright and screenwriter who in 1938 was nominated for an Academy Award for his script for the movie *Blockade*. A member of the Communist Party since 1934, Lawson was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and although he appeared before the committee on October 27, he—like nine other writers and directors also suspected of being communists—refused to answer questions. All the members of this group, which was soon dubbed the “Hollywood Ten,” were found guilty of contempt of Congress. Lawson was fined \$1,000 and served a year in prison. He also found that no Hollywood studio would hire him, as he had been blacklisted by the motion picture industry.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Mr. LAWSON. Mr. Chairman, I have a statement here which I wish to make—

The CHAIRMAN. Well, all right, let me see your statement.

(Statement handed to the chairman.)

The First Sentence of the Statement: For a week, this Committee has conducted an illegal and indecent trial of American citizens, whom the Committee has selected to be publicly [ridiculed] and smeared...

The CHAIRMAN. I don’t care to read any more of the statement. The statement will not be read. I read the first line.

Mr. LAWSON. You have spent 1 week vilifying me before the American public—

The CHAIRMAN. Just a minute—

Mr. LAWSON. And you refuse to allow me to make a statement on my rights as an American citizen.

The CHAIRMAN. I refuse you to make the statement, because of the first sentence in your statement. That statement is not pertinent to the inquiry.

Now, this is a congressional committee— a congressional committee set up by law. We must have orderly procedure, and we are going to have orderly procedure.

Mr. Stripling, identify the witness.

Mr. LAWSON. The rights of American citizens are important in this room here, and I intend to stand up for those rights, Congressman Thomas.

Mr. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, will you state your full name, please?

Mr. LAWSON. I wish to protest against the unwillingness of this committee to read a statement, when you permitted Mr. Warner, Mr. Mayer, and others to read statements in this room.

My name is John Howard Lawson. . . .

Mr. STRIPLING. What is your occupation, Mr. Lawson?

Mr. LAWSON. I am a writer.

Mr. STRIPLING. How long have you been a writer?

Mr. LAWSON. All my life—at least 35 years—my adult life.

Mr. STRIPLING. Are you a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

Mr. LAWSON. The raising of any question here in regard to membership, political beliefs, or affiliation—

Mr. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman—

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Mr. LAWSON. Is absolutely beyond the powers of this committee.

Mr. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. LAWSON. But—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

Mr. LAWSON. It is a matter of public record that I am a member of the Screen Writers Guild.

Mr. STRIPLING. I ask—

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. I want to caution the people in the audience: You are the guests of this committee and you will have to maintain order at all times. I do not care for any applause or any demonstrations of one kind or another.

Mr. STRIPLING. Now, Mr. Chairman, I am also going to request that you instruct the witness to be responsive to the questions.

The CHAIRMAN. I think the witness will be more responsive to the questions.

Mr. LAWSON. Mr. Chairman, you permitted—

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Never mind—

Mr. LAWSON (continuing). Witnesses in this room to make answers of three or four or five hundred words to questions here.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lawson, you will please be responsive to these questions and not continue to try to disrupt these hearings.

Mr. LAWSON. I am not on trial here, Mr. Chairman. This committee is on trial here before the American people. Let us get that straight.

The CHAIRMAN. We don't want you to be on trial.

Mr. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, how long have you been a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

Mr. LAWSON. Since it was founded in its present form, in 1933.

Mr. STRIPLING. Have you ever held any office in the guild?

Mr. LAWSON. The question of whether I have held office is also a question which is beyond the purview of this Committee.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

Mr. LAWSON. It is an invasion of the right of association under the Bill of Rights of this country.

The CHAIRMAN. Please be responsive to the question.

Mr. LAWSON. It is also a matter—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

Mr. LAWSON. Of public record—

The CHAIRMAN. You asked to be heard. Through your attorney, you asked to be heard, and we want you to be heard. And if you don't care to be heard, then we will excuse you and we will put the record in without your answers.

Mr. LAWSON. I wish to frame my own answers to your questions, Mr. Chairman, and I intend to do so.

. . . .

Mr. LAWSON. It is absolutely beyond the power of this committee to inquire into my association in any organization.

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The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lawson, you will have to stop or you will leave the witness stand. And you will leave the witness stand because you are in contempt. That is why you will leave the witness stand. And if you are just trying to force me to put you in contempt, you won't have to try much harder. You know what has happened to a lot of people that have been in contempt of this committee this year, don't you?

Mr. LAWSON. I am glad you have made it perfectly clear that you are going to threaten and intimidate the witnesses, Mr. Chairman.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

Mr. LAWSON. I am an American and I am not at all easy to intimidate, and don't think I am.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

. . . .

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Mr. Lawson, just quiet down again.

Mr. Lawson, the most pertinent question that we can ask is whether or not you have ever been a member of the Communist Party. Now, do you care to answer that question?

Mr. LAWSON. You are using the old technique, which was used in Hitler Germany in order to create a scare here—

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Oh—

Mr. LAWSON. In order to create an entirely false atmosphere in which this hearing is conducted—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

. . .

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Excuse the witness—

Mr. LAWSON. As they do from what I have written.

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Stand away from the stand—

Mr. LAWSON. I have written Americanism for many years, and I shall continue to fight for the Bill of Rights, which you are trying to destroy.

The CHAIRMAN. Officers, take this man away from the stand—

[Applause and boos.]

The CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). There will be no demonstrations. No demonstrations, for or against. Everyone will please be seated. . . .

A Statement by John Howard Lawson

[note: This statement was never put into the public record by HUAC.]

For a week, this Committee has conducted an illegal and indecent trial of American citizens, whom the Committee has selected to be publicly [ridiculed] and smeared. I am not here to defend myself, or to answer the agglomeration of falsehoods that has been heaped upon me, I believe lawyers describe this material, rather mildly, as "hearsay evidence." To the American public, it has a shorter name: dirt. Rational people don't argue with dirt. I feel like a man who has had truckloads of filth heaped upon him; I am now asked to struggle to my feet and talk while more truckloads pour more filth around my head.

No, you don't argue with dirt. But you try to find out where it comes from. And to stop the evil deluge before it buries you—and others. The immediate source is obvious. The so-called "evidence" comes from a parade of stool-pigeons, neurotics, publicity-seeking clowns, Gestapo agents, paid informers, and a few ignorant and frightened Hollywood artists. I am not going to discuss this perjured testimony. Let these people live with their consciences, with the knowledge that they have violated their country's most sacred principles.

These individuals are not important. As an individual, I am not important. The obvious fact that the Committee is trying to destroy me personally and professionally, to deprive me of my livelihood and what is

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far dearer to me—my honor as an American—gains significance only because it opens the way to similar destruction of any citizen whom the Committee selects for annihilation.

I am not going to touch on the gross violation of the Constitution of the United States, and especially of its First and Fifth Amendments, that is taking place here. The proof is so overwhelming that it needs no elaboration. The Un-American Activities Committee stands convicted in the court of public opinion.

I want to speak here as a writer and a citizen. . . .

My political and social views are well known. My deep faith in the motion picture as a popular art is also well known. I don't "sneak ideas" into pictures. I never make a contract to write a picture unless I am convinced that it serves democracy and the interests of the American people. I will never permit what I write and think to be subject to the orders of self-appointed dictators, ambitious politicians, thought-control gestapos, or any other form of censorship this Un-American Committee may attempt to devise. My freedom to speak and write is not for sale in return for a card signed by J. Parnell Thomas saying "O.K. for employment until further notice."

Pictures written by me have been seen and approved by millions of Americans. A subpoena for me is a subpoena for all those who have enjoyed these pictures and recognized them as an honest portrayal of our American life.

Thus, my integrity as a writer is obviously an integral part of my integrity as a citizen. As a citizen I am not alone here. I am not only one of nineteen men who have been subpoenaed. I am forced to appear here as a representative of one hundred and thirty million Americans because the illegal conduct of this Committee has linked me with every citizen. If I can be destroyed no American is safe. You can subpoena a farmer in a field, a lumberjack in the woods, a worker at a machine, a doctor in his office—you can deprive them of a livelihood, deprive them of their honor as Americans.

Let no one think that this is an idle or thoughtless statement. This is the course that the Un-American Activities Committee has charted. Millions of Americans who may as yet be unconscious of what may be in store for them will find that the warning I speak today is literally fulfilled. No American will be safe if the Committee is not stopped in its illegal enterprise.

I am like most Americans in resenting interference with my conscience and belief. I am like most Americans in insisting on my right to serve my country in the way that seems to me most helpful and effective. I am like most Americans in feeling that loyalty to the United States and pride in its traditions is the guiding principle of my life. I am like most Americans in believing that divided loyalty—which is another word for treason—is the most despicable crime of which any man or woman can be accused.

It is my profound conviction that it is precisely because I hold these beliefs that I have been hailed before this illegal court. These are the beliefs that the so-called Un-American Activities Committee is seeking to root out in order to subvert orderly government and establish an autocratic dictatorship.

I am not suggesting that J. Parnell Thomas aspires to be the man on horseback. He is a petty politician, serving more powerful forces. Those forces are trying to introduce fascism in this country. They know that the only way to trick the American people into abandoning their rights and liberties is to manufacture an imaginary danger, to frighten the people into accepting repressive laws which are supposedly for their protection.

. . . .

Today, we face a serious crisis in the determination of national policy. The only way to solve that crisis is by free discussion. Americans must know the facts. The only plot against American safety is the plot to conceal facts. I am plastered with mud because I happen to be an American who expresses opinions that the House Un-American Activities Committee does not like. But my opinions are not an issue in this case. The issue is my right to have opinions. The Committee's logic is obviously: Lawson's opinions are properly subject to censorship; he writes for the motion picture industry, so the industry is properly subject to censorship; the industry makes pictures for the American people, so the minds of the people must be censored and controlled.

Why? What are J. Parnell Thomas and the Un-American interests he serves, afraid of? They're afraid of the American people. They don't want to muzzle me. They want to muzzle public opinion. They want to muzzle the great Voice of democracy. Because they're conspiring against the American way of life. They want to cut

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living standards, introduce an economy of poverty, wipe out labor's rights, attack Negroes, Jews, and other minorities, drive us into a disastrous and unnecessary war.

The struggle between thought-control and freedom of expression is the struggle between the people and a greedy unpatriotic minority which hates and fears the people. I wish to present as an integral part of this statement, a paper which I read at a Conference on Thought Control in the United States held in Hollywood on July 9th to 13th. The paper presents the historical background of the threatening situation that we face today, and shows that the attack on freedom of communication is, and has always been, an attack on the American people.

The American people will know how to answer that attack. They will rally, as they have always rallied, to protect their birthright.

Headnotes for all testimonies from

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/McCarthy02.pdf> .

Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu .



Group 4: Jack Warner

“The World Was at Stake”: Three “Friendly” HUAC Hollywood Witnesses Assess Pro-Soviet Wartime Films

A native of Ontario, Canada, Jack Warner (1892-1978) entered the motion picture industry at the age of eleven, when he and his three older brothers opened a movie theater in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Fifteen years later the Warner Brothers opened a studio on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, and quickly produced a series of successful films, including *The Jazz Singer* (1926), the first movie to use sound. By the 1940s Jack Warner was one of the most powerful men in Hollywood, with his studios producing popular cartoons as well as blockbuster films.

TESTIMONY OF JACK L. WARNER . . .

Ideological termites have burrowed into many American industries, organizations, and societies. Wherever they may be, I say let us dig them out and get rid of them. My brothers and I will be happy to subscribe generously to a pest-removal fund. We are willing to establish such a fund to ship to Russia the people who don't like our American system of government and prefer the communistic system to ours.

That's how strongly we feel about the subversives who want to overthrow our free American system.

If there are Communists in our industry, or any other industry, organization, or society who seek to undermine our free institutions, let's find out about it and know who they are. Let the record be spread clear, for all to read and judge. The public is entitled to know the facts. And the motion-picture industry is entitled to have the public know the facts.

Our company is keenly aware of its responsibilities to keep its product free from subversive poisons. With all the vision at my command, I scrutinize the planning and production of our motion pictures. It is my firm belief that there is not a Warner Bros. picture that can fairly be judged to be hostile to our country, or communistic in tone or purpose.

Many charges, including the fantasy of “White House pressure” have been leveled at our wartime production *Mission to Moscow*. In my previous appearance before members of this committee, I explained the origin and purposes of *Mission to Moscow*.

That picture was made when our country was fighting for its existence, with Russia as one of our allies. It was made to fulfill the same wartime purpose for which we made such other pictures as *Air Force*, *This Is the Army*, *Objective Burma*, *Destination Tokyo*, *Action in the North Atlantic*, and a great many more.

If making *Mission to Moscow* in 1942 was a subversive activity, then the American Liberty ships which carried food and guns to Russian allies and the American naval vessels which convoyed them were likewise engaged in subversive activities. The picture was made only to help a desperate war effort and not for posterity. . . .

Mr. STRIPLING. Well, is it your opinion now, Mr. Warner, that *Mission to Moscow* was a factually correct picture, and you made it as such?

Mr. WARNER. I can't remember.

Mr. STRIPLING. Would you consider it a propaganda picture?

Mr. WARNER. A propaganda picture—

Mr. STRIPLING. Yes.

Mr. WARNER. In what sense?

Mr. STRIPLING. In the sense that it portrayed Russia and communism in an entirely different light from what it actually was?

Mr. WARNER. I am on record about 40 times or more that I have never been in Russia. I don't know what Russia was like in 1937 or 1944 or 1947, so how can I tell you if it was right or wrong?

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Mr. STRIPLING. Don't you think you were on dangerous ground to produce as a factually correct picture one which portrayed Russia—

Mr. WARNER. No; we were not on dangerous ground in 1942, when we produced it. There was a war on. The world was at stake.

Mr. STRIPLING. In other words—

Mr. WARNER. We made the film to aid in the war effort, which I believe I have already stated.

Mr. STRIPLING. Whether it was true or not?

Mr. WARNER. As far as I was concerned, I considered it true to the extent as written in Mr. Davies' book.

Mr. STRIPLING. Well, do you suppose that your picture influenced the people who saw it in this country, the millions of people who saw it in this country?

Mr. WARNER. In my opinion, I can't see how it would influence anyone. We were in war and when you are in a fight you don't ask who the fellow is who is helping you.

Mr. STRIPLING. Well, due to the present conditions in the international situation, don't you think it was rather dangerous to write about such a disillusionment as was sought in that picture?

Mr. WARNER. I can't understand why you ask me that question, as to the present conditions. How did I, you, or anyone else know in 1942 what the conditions were going to be in 1947. I stated in my testimony our reason for making the picture, which was to aid the war effort—anticipating what would happen.

Mr. STRIPLING. I don't see that this is aiding the war effort, Mr. Warner—with the cooperation of Mr. Davies or with the approval of the Government—to make a picture which is a fraud in fact.

Mr. WARNER. I want to correct you, very vehemently [passionately]. There was no cooperation of the Government.

Mr. STRIPLING. You stated there was.

Mr. WARNER. I never stated the Government cooperated in the making of it. If I did, I stand corrected. And I know I didn't.

Mr. STRIPLING. Do you want me to read that part, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. No; I think we have gone into this *Mission to Moscow* at some length. . . .

Headnotes for all testimonies from

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/McCarthy02.pdf> 

Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu 



Group 5: Ayn Rand

“The World Was at Stake”: Three “Friendly” HUAC Hollywood Witnesses Assess Pro-Soviet Wartime Films

Born Alyssia Rosenbaum, the author later known as Ayn Rand (1905-1982) witnessed as a girl the Russian Revolution and the birth of the Soviet Union, and developed a passionate hatred for communism. In 1925, she came to the United States, and soon settled in Hollywood, where she hoped to become a screenwriter. Rand wrote several moderately successful scripts and novels in the 1930s, but her big break came in 1943 with the publication of *The Fountainhead*. Like most of her works, *The Fountainhead* focused on the struggles of a heroic individual at odds with the pressures of society. An outspoken defender of individualism and capitalism, Rand jumped at the opportunity to testify before HUAC against what she believed were communist influences in the motion picture industry.

TESTIMONY OF MISS AYN RAND . . .

Mr. STRIPLING: Now, Miss Rand, you have heard the testimony of Mr. Mayer?

Miss RAND: Yes.

Mr. STRIPLING: You have read the letter I read from Lowell Mellett?

Miss RAND: Yes.

Mr. STRIPLING: Which says that the picture “Song of Russia” has no political implications?

Miss RAND: Yes.

Mr. STRIPLING: Did you at the request of Mr. Smith, the investigator for this committee, view the picture “Song of Russia”?

Miss RAND: Yes.

Mr. STRIPLING: Within the past 2 weeks?

Miss RAND: Yes; on October 13, to be exact.

Mr. STRIPLING: In Hollywood?

Miss RAND: Yes.

Mr. STRIPLING: Would you give the committee a break-down of your summary of the picture relating to either propaganda or an untruthful account or distorted account of conditions in Russia?

Miss RAND: Yes.

First of all I would like to define what we mean by propaganda. We have all been talking about it, but nobody—

Mr. STRIPLING: Could you talk into the microphone?

Miss RAND: Can you hear me now?

Nobody has stated just what they mean by propaganda. Now, I use the term to mean that Communist propaganda is anything which gives a good impression of communism as a way of life. Anything that sells people the idea that life in Russia is good and that people are free and happy would be Communist propaganda. Am I not correct? I mean, would that be a fair statement to make—that that would be Communist propaganda?

Now, here is what the picture “Song of Russia” contains. It starts with an American conductor, played by Robert Taylor, giving a concert in America for Russian war relief. He starts playing the American national anthem and the national anthem dissolves into a Russian mob, with the sickle and hammer on a red flag very prominent above their heads. I am sorry, but that made me sick. That is something which I do not see how native Americans permit, and I am only a naturalized American. That was a terrible touch of propaganda. As a writer, I can tell you just exactly what it suggests to the people. It suggests literally and

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technically that it is quite all right for the American national anthem to dissolve into the Soviet. The term here is more than just technical. It really was symbolically intended, and it worked out that way. The anthem continues, played by a Soviet band. That is the beginning of the picture.

Now we go to the pleasant love story. Mr. Taylor is an American who came there apparently voluntarily to conduct concerts for the Soviets. He meets a little Russian girl from a village who comes to him and begs him to go to her village to direct concerts there. There are no GPU agents [State Political Administration, forerunner of the KGB] and nobody stops her. She just comes to Moscow and meets him. He falls for her and decides he will go, because he is falling in love. He asks her to show him Moscow. She says she has never seen it. He says, “I will show it to you.”

They see it together. The picture then goes into a scene of Moscow, supposedly. I don’t know where the studio got its shots, but I have never seen anything like it in Russia. First you see Moscow buildings—big, prosperous-looking, clean buildings, with something like swans or sailboats in the foreground. Then you see a Moscow restaurant that just never existed there. In my time, when I was in Russia, there was only one such restaurant, which was nowhere as luxurious as that and no one could enter it except commissars and profiteers. Certainly a girl from a village, who in the first place would never have been allowed to come voluntarily, without permission, to Moscow, could not afford to enter it, even if she worked 10 years. However, there is a Russian restaurant with a menu such as never existed in Russia at all and which I doubt even existed before the revolution. From this restaurant they go on to this tour of Moscow. The streets are clean and prosperous-looking. There are no food lines anywhere. You see shots of the marble subway—the famous Russian subway out of which they make such propaganda capital. There is a marble statue of Stalin thrown in. . . .

Incidentally, I must say at this point that I understand from correspondents who have left Russia and been there later than I was and from people who escaped from there later than I did that the time I saw it, which was in 1926, was the best time since the Russian revolution. At that time conditions were a little better than they have become since. In my time we were a bunch of ragged, starved, dirty, miserable people who had only two thoughts in our mind. That was our complete terror—afraid to look at one another, afraid to say anything for fear of who is listening and would report us—and where to get the next meal. You have no idea what it means to live in a country where nobody has any concern except food, where all the conversation is about food because everybody is so hungry that that is all they can think about and that is all they can afford to do. They have no idea of politics. They have no idea of any pleasant romances or love—nothing but food and fear.

That is what I saw up to 1926. That is not what the picture shows.

Now, after this tour of Moscow, the hero—the American conductor—goes to the Soviet village. The Russian villages are something—so miserable and so filthy. They were even before the revolution. They weren’t much even then. What they have become now I am afraid to think. You have all read about the program for the collectivization of the farms in 1933, at which time the Soviet government admits that 3,000,000 peasants died of starvation. Other people claim there were seven and a half million, but 3,000,000 is the figure admitted by the Soviet government as the figure of people who died of starvation, planned by the government in order to drive people into collective farms. That is a recorded historical fact.

Now, here is the life in the Soviet village as presented in “Song of Russia.” You see the happy peasants. You see they are meeting the hero at the station with bands, with beautiful blouses and shoes, such as they never wore anywhere. You see children with operetta costumes on them and with a brass band which they could never afford. You see the manicured starlets driving tractors and the happy women who come from work singing. You see a peasant at home with a close-up of food for which anyone there would have been murdered. If anybody had such food in Russia in that time he couldn’t remain alive, because he would have been torn apart by neighbors trying to get food. But here is a close-up of it and a line where Robert Taylor comments on the food and the peasant answers, “This is just a simple country table and the food we eat ourselves.” . . .

Now, here comes the crucial point of the picture. In the midst of this concert, when the heroine is playing, you see a scene on the border of the U.S.S.R. You have a very lovely modernistic sign saying “U.S.S.R.” I would just like to remind you that that is the border where probably thousands of people have died trying to escape out of this lovely paradise. It shows the U.S.S.R. sign, and there is a border guard standing. He is listening to the concert. Then there is a scene inside kind of a guardhouse where the guards are listening to

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the same concert, the beautiful Tchaikowsky music, and they are playing chess. Suddenly there is a Nazi attack on them. The poor, sweet Russians were unprepared. Now, realize—and that was a great shock to me—that the border that was being shown was the border of Poland. That was the border of an occupied, destroyed, enslaved country which Hitler and Stalin destroyed together. That was the border that was being shown to us—just a happy place with people listening to music.

Also realize that when all this sweetness and light was going on in the first part of the picture, with all these happy, free people, there was not a GPU agent among them, with no food lines, no persecution—complete freedom and happiness, with everybody smiling. . . .

Now, here is what I cannot understand at all: If the excuse that has been given here is that we had to produce the picture in wartime, just how can it help the war effort? If it is to deceive the American people, if it were to present to the American people a better picture of Russia than it really is, then that sort of an attitude is nothing but the theory of the Nazi elite, that a choice group of intellectual or other leaders will tell the people lies for their own good. That I don't think is the American way of giving people information. We do not have to deceive the people at any time, in war or peace.

If it was to please the Russians, I don't see how you can please the Russians by telling them that we are fools. To what extent we have done it, you can see right now. You can see the results right now. If we present a picture like that as our version of what goes on in Russia, what will they think of it? We don't win anybody's friendship. We will only win their contempt, and as you know the Russians have been behaving like this.

My whole point about the picture is this: I fully believe Mr. Mayer when he says that he did not make a Communist picture. To do him justice, I can tell you I noticed, by watching the picture, where there was an effort to cut propaganda out. I believe he tried to cut propaganda out of the picture, but the terrible thing is the carelessness with ideas, not realizing that the mere presentation of that kind of happy existence in a country of slavery and horror is terrible because it is propaganda. You are telling people that it is all right to live in a totalitarian state. . . .

Mr. WOOD: Let me see if I understand your position. I understand, from what you say, that because they were a dictatorship we shouldn't have accepted their help in undertaking to win a war against another dictatorship.

Miss RAND: That is not what I said. I was not in a position to make that decision. If I were, I would tell you what I would do. That is not what we are discussing. We are discussing the fact that our country was an ally of Russia, and the question is, What should we tell the American people about it—the truth or a lie? If we had good reason, if that is what you believe, all right, then why not tell the truth? Say it is a dictatorship, but we want to be associated with it. Say it is worth while being associated with the devil, as Churchill said, in order to defeat another evil which is Hitler. There might be some good argument made for that. But why pretend that Russia was not what it was?

Mr. WOOD: Well—

Miss RAND: What do you achieve by that?

Mr. WOOD: Do you think it would have had as good an effect upon the morale of the American people to preach a doctrine to them that Russia was on the verge of collapse?

Miss RAND: I don't believe that the morale of anybody can be built up by a lie. If there was nothing good that we could truthfully say about Russia, then it would have been better not to say anything at all.

Mr. WOOD: Well—

Miss RAND: You don't have to come out and denounce Russia during the war; no. You can keep quiet. There is no moral guilt in not saying something if you can't say it, but there is in saying the opposite of what is true. . . .

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Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu



Group 6: Ronald Reagan

“We Must Keep the Labor Unions Clean”: “Friendly” HUAC Witnesses Ronald Reagan and Walt Disney Blame Hollywood Labor Conflicts on Communist Infiltration

Best known today as President of the United States from 1981 to 1989, Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) was a popular movie actor in the 1940s, having signed on with Warner Brothers in 1937. He starred in a number of popular films such as *Santa Fe Trail* (1940), *Knute Rockne*, *All-American* (1940), and *This is the Army* (1943). Although a Democrat and a staunch supporter of Harry Truman, Reagan was concerned about what he saw as the growing strength of communism in Hollywood. In 1947 Reagan was elected president of the Screen Actors’ Guild, and in that capacity was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

TESTIMONY OF RONALD REAGAN . . .

Mr. STRIPLING: As a member of the board of directors, as president of the Screen Actors Guild, and as an active member, have you at any time observed or noted within the organization a clique of either Communists or Fascists who were attempting to exert influence or pressure on the guild?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir, my testimony must be very similar to that of Mr. (George) Murphy and Mr. (Robert) Montgomery. There has been a small group within the Screen Actors Guild which has consistently opposed the policy of the guild board and officers of the guild, as evidenced by the vote on various issues. That small clique referred to has been suspected of more or less following the tactics that we associate with the Communist Party.

Mr. STRIPLING: Would you refer to them as a disruptive influence within the guild?

Mr. REAGAN: I would say that at times they have attempted to be a disruptive influence.

Mr. STRIPLING: You have no knowledge yourself as to whether or not any of them are members of the Communist Party?

Mr. REAGAN: No, sir; I have no investigative force, or anything, and I do not know.

Mr. STRIPLING: Has it ever been reported to you that certain members of the guild were Communists?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir; I have heard different discussions and some of them tagged as Communists. . . .

Mr. STRIPLING: Would you say that this clique has attempted to dominate the guild?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir, by attempting to put their own particular views on various issues, I guess in regard to that you would have to say that our side was attempting to dominate, too, because we were fighting just as hard to put over our views, in which we sincerely believed, and I think, we were proven correct by the figures—Mr. Murphy gave the figures—and those figures were always approximately the same, an average of 90 percent or better of the Screen Actors Guild voted in favor of those matters now guild policy.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, there has been testimony to the effect here that numerous Communist-front organizations have been set up in Hollywood. Have you ever been solicited to join any of those organizations or any organization which you considered to be a Communist-front organization?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir, I have received literature from an organization called the Committee for a Far-Eastern Democratic Policy. I don’t know whether it is Communist or not. I only know that I didn’t like their views and as a result I didn’t want to have anything to do with them.

Mr. STRIPLING: Were you ever solicited to sponsor the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee?

Mr. REAGAN: No, sir; I was never solicited to do that, but I found myself misled into being a sponsor on another occasion for a function that was held under the auspices of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.

Mr. STRIPLING: Did you knowingly give your name as a sponsor?

Mr. REAGAN: Not knowingly. Could I explain what that occasion was?

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Mr. STRIPLING: Yes sir.

Mr. REAGAN: I was called several weeks ago. There happened at the time in Hollywood to be a financial drive on to raise money to build a badly needed hospital in a certain section of town, called the All Nations Hospital. I think the purpose of the building is so obvious by the title that it has the support of most of the people of Hollywood—or, of Los Angeles, I should say. Certainly of most of the doctors, because it is very badly needed.

Some time ago I was called to the telephone. A woman introduced herself by name. Knowing that I didn't know her I didn't make any particular note of her name and I couldn't give it now. She told me that there would be a recital held at which Paul Robeson would sing and she said that all the money for the tickets would go to the hospital and asked if she could use my name as one of the sponsors. I hesitated for a moment because I don't think that Mr. Robeson's and my political views coincide at all and then I thought I was being a little stupid because, I thought, here is an occasion where Mr. Robeson is perhaps appearing as an artist and certainly the object, raising money, is above any political consideration, it is a hospital supported by everyone. I have contributed money myself. So I felt a little bit as if I had been stuffy for a minute and I said, certainly, you can use my name.

I left town for a couple of weeks and when I returned I was handed a newspaper story that said that this recital was held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles under the auspices of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. The principal speaker was Emil Lustig, Robert Burman took up a collection, and the remnants of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were paraded to the platform. I did not in the newspaper story see one word about the hospital. I called the newspaper and said I am not accustomed to writing to editors, but would like to explain my position, and he laughed and said, "You needn't bother, you are about the fiftieth person that has called with the same idea, including most of the legitimate doctors who had also been listed as sponsors of that affair."

Mr. STRIPLING: Would you say from your observation that that is typical of the tactics or strategy of the Communists, to solicit and use the names of prominent people to either raise money or gain support?

Mr. REAGAN: I think it is in keeping with their tactics; yes, sir.

Mr. STRIPLING: Do you think there is anything democratic about those tactics?

Mr. REAGAN: I do not, sir.

Mr. STRIPLING: As president of the Screen Actors Guild you are familiar with the jurisdictional strike which has been going on in Hollywood for some time?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir.

Mr. STRIPLING: Have you ever had any conferences with any of the labor officials regarding this strike?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir. . . .

Mr. STRIPLING: Do you know whether the Communists have participated in any way in this strike?

Mr. REAGAN: Sir, the first time that this word "Communist" was ever injected into any of the meetings concerning the strike was at a meeting in Chicago with Mr. William Hutchinson, president of the carpenters union, who were on strike at the time. He asked the Screen Actors Guild to submit terms to Mr. (Richard) Walsh, for Walsh to give in in the settling of this strike, and he told us to tell Mr. Walsh that if he would give in on these terms he in turn would break run this Sorrell and the other commies out—I am quoting him—and break it up. I might add that Mr. Walsh and Mr. Sorrell were running the strike for Mr. Hutchinson in Hollywood.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, what is your feeling about what steps should be taken to rid the motion-picture industry of any Communist influences, if they are there?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir . . . 99 percent of us are pretty well aware of what is going on, and I think within the bounds of our democratic rights, and never once stepping over the rights given us by democracy, we have done a pretty good job in our business of keeping those people's activities curtailed. After all, we must recognize them at present as a political party. On that basis we have exposed their lies when we came across them, we have opposed their propaganda, and I can certainly testify that in the case of the Screen

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Actors Guild we have been eminently successful in preventing them from, with their usual tactics, trying to run a majority of an organization with a well organized minority.

So that fundamentally I would say in opposing those people that the best thing to do is to make democracy work. In the Screen Actors Guild we make it work by insuring everyone a vote and by keeping everyone informed. I believe that, as Thomas Jefferson put it, if all the American people know all of the facts they will never make a mistake.

Whether the party should be outlawed, I agree with the gentlemen that preceded me that that is a matter for the Government to decide. As a citizen I would hesitate, or not like, to see any political party outlawed on the basis of its political ideology. We have spent 170 years in this country on the basis that democracy is strong enough to stand up and fight against the inroads of any ideology. However, if it is proven that an organization is an agent of a power, a foreign power, or in any way not a legitimate political party, and I think the Government is capable of proving that, if the proof is there, then that is another matter. . . .

I happen to be very proud of the industry in which I work; I happen to be very proud of the way in which we conducted the fight. I do not believe the Communists have ever at any time been able to use the motion-picture screen as a sounding board for their philosophy or ideology. . . .

The CHAIRMAN: There is one thing that you said that interested me very much. That was the quotation from Jefferson. That is just why this committee was created by the House of Representatives, to acquaint the American people with the facts. Once the American people are acquainted with the facts there is no question but what the American people will do a job, the kind of a job that they want done; that is, to make America just as pure as we can possibly make it.

We want to thank you very much for coming here today.

Mr. REAGAN: Sir, if I might, in regard to that, say that what I was trying to express, and didn't do very well, was also this other fear. I detest, I abhor their philosophy, but I detest more than that their tactics, which are those of the fifth column, and are dishonest, but at the same time I never as a citizen want to see our country become urged, by either fear or resentment of this group, that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles through that fear or resentment. I still think that democracy can do it.

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Testimony text from historymatters.gmu.edu 



Group 7: Louis B. Mayer

“The World Was at Stake”: Three “Friendly” HUAC Hollywood Witnesses Assess Pro-Soviet Wartime Films

Born into a Jewish family in Russia, Louis B. Mayer (1882-1957) fled with his family to the United States when he was a child. In 1907 he opened his first movie theater, and opened a motion picture studio in Hollywood in 1918. Six years later he formed a partnership to create Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, better known today as MGM. In the 1930s Mayer’s company was the most successful in the industry, employing such stars as Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Joan Crawford, and Judy Garland. His success was such that he is believed to have been the first executive in America to earn a million-dollar salary.

TESTIMONY OF LOUIS B. MAYER . . .

During my 25 years in the motion-picture industry I have always sought to maintain the screen as a force for public good.

The motion-picture industry employs many thousands of people. As is the case with the newspaper, radio, publishing, and theater businesses, we cannot be responsible for the political views of each individual employee. It is, however, our complete responsibility to determine what appears on the motion-picture screen.

It is my earnest hope that this committee will perform a public service by recommending to the Congress legislation establishing a national policy regulating employment of Communists in private industry. It is my belief they should be denied the sanctuary of the freedom they seek to destroy. . . .

There were a number of representatives of the Government who made periodical visits to the studios during the war. They discussed with us from time to time the types of pictures which they felt might assist the war effort. They were coordinators and at no time did they attempt to tell us what we should or should not do. We made our own decisions on production. We are proud of our war efforts and the results speak for themselves.

Mention has been made of the picture *Song of Russia*, as being friendly to Russia at the time it was made. Of course it was. It was made to be friendly...

It was in April of 1942 that the story for *Song of Russia* came to our attention. It seemed a good medium of entertainment and at the same time offered an opportunity for a pat on the back for our then ally, Russia. It also offered an opportunity to use the music of Tschaikevsky. We mentioned this to the Government coordinators and they agreed with us that it would be a good idea to make the picture.

According to research I have made, our newspapers were headlining the desperate situation of the Russians at Stalingrad at that time. Admiral Standley, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, made a vigorous plea for all-out aid. He pleaded for assistance second only to the supplies being provided the United States Fleet, and emphasized that the best way to win the war was to keep the Russians killing the Germans, and that the most effective way was to give them all the help they needed.

The United States Army Signal Corps made *The Battle of Stalingrad*, released in 1943, with a prolog expressing high tribute from President Roosevelt, our Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, and from Generals Marshall and MacArthur.

Headnotes for all testimonies from

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/McCarthy02.pdf>

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Discussion Self Evaluation

Directions: Use this form to evaluate your participation during the class discussion.

| Positive [+2 for each] | | Negative [-2 for each] | |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. Taking a position on a question (“I think, I believe”) | | 1. Not paying attention or distracting others | |
| 2. Making a relevant comment | | 2. Interrupting | |
| 3. Using evidence to support a position or presenting facts | | 3. Irrelevant comment | |
| 4. Drawing another person into the discussion | | 4. Monopolizing | |
| 5. Asking clarifying questions (moving the discussion along) | | 5. Personal attack | |
| TOTAL POINTS: | | | |