

The Producers response to the Blacklist

On November 24&25, 1947, a meeting of Hollywood motion picture producers was held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. The following, The Waldorf Statement is the first public response to the activities of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) by the Association of Motion Picture Producers, the Motion Picture Association of America, and the Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers.

THE WALDORF DECLARATION/ STATEMENT

"Members of the Association of Motion Picture Producers deplore the action of the 10 Hollywood men who have been cited for contempt by the House of Representatives. We do not desire to prejudice their legal rights, but their actions have been a disservice to their employers and have impaired their usefulness to the industry.

"We will forthwith discharge or suspend without compensation those in our employ, and we will not re-employ any of the 10 until such time as he is acquitted or has purged himself of contempt and declares under oath that he is not a Communist.

"On the broader issue of alleged subversive and disloyal elements in Hollywood, our members are likewise prepared to take positive action.

"We will not knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods.

"In pursuing this policy, we are not going to be swayed by hysteria or intimidation from any source. We are frank to recognize that such a policy involves danger and risks. There is the danger of hurting innocent people. There is the risk of creating an atmosphere of fear. Creative work at its best cannot be carried on in an atmosphere of fear. We will guard against this danger, this risk, this fear.

"To this end we will invite the Hollywood talent guilds to work with us to eliminate any subversives: to protect the innocent; and to safeguard free speech and a free screen wherever threatened.

"The absence of a national policy, established by Congress, with respect to the employment of Communists in private industry makes our task difficult. Ours is a nation of laws. We request Congress to enact legislation to assist American industry to rid itself of subversive, disloyal elements.

"Nothing subversive or un-American has appeared on the screen, nor can any number of Hollywood investigations obscure the patriotic services of the 30,000 loyal Americans employed in Hollywood who have given our government invaluable aid to war and peace."

The following is a letter by Donald M. Nelson, President of SIMPP (the society of independent motion picture producers) to its members.

December 1, 1947

TO ALL MEMBERS :

At the invitation of Mr. Eric Johnston and the Motion Picture Association, I attended in New York last week a series of meetings on public relations problems of the industry which arose from the recent hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Important executives of the major studios were present, together with their attorneys. The independents were also represented by Mr. Samuel Goldwyn, Mr. James Mulvey and Mr. Walter Wanger.

After full discussion of the facts, a policy was unanimously adopted to guide the industry and the following statement authorized for release:

"Members of the Association of Motion Picture Producers deplore the action of the 10 Hollywood men who have been cited for contempt by the House of Representatives. We do not desire to prejudge their legal rights, but their actions have been a disservice to their employers and have impaired their usefulness to the industry.

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As President of your Society, I concurred in the decision of the executives the Majors. Mr. Goldwyn, Mr. Mulvey and Mr. Wanger did likewise on behalf of their respective organizations.

A Committee of five was appointed, including Mr. Wanger as representative the independents, to meet with the heads of the Actors, Directors and Writers Guilds, advise them of our decision and invite their cooperation.

The policy of the industry as outlined in the foregoing statement means that the ten men who refused to answer the questions of the sub-committee of Congress are automatically suspended until such a time as they make adequate answers. The matter of determination of who is a Communist in respect to present and future employment is left entirely in the hands of each individual producer and studio. The obligation which each studio assumed at the meetings is not to employ a Communist knowingly.

Sincerely yours,

DONALD M. NELSON
