



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Reagan, Hollywood & The Red Scare



EDUCATION

**GRADES
8-12**



EDUCATION

From the Archives brings primary source documents and exploration into the classroom. These educational resources, carefully curated by our Education team, are meant to enhance historical discussions around relevant topics of today in history, civics, geography, and economics.

Overview: President Ronald Reagan was known as a staunch anti-communist. Many students are unaware that this reputation began years prior to President Reagan's time in the White House. President Reagan began his anti-communist crusade as president, but not of the United States, instead it was the Screen Actors Guild of America. The attached documents highlight some of the members of the motion picture industry that were asked to testify before the committee, the perception of President Reagan that was held by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and two selections from the testimony that President Reagan gave before the Committee in 1947.

Suggested Classroom Activities: Have students look over the list of people that were subpoenaed to appear before the HUAC and see if there are any other names that they recognize (Primary Source A). Students should also read what the Committee was expecting from these witnesses. Next, have students read the internal Committee memo (Primary Source B) to see what the Committee thought about President Reagan prior to his testimony. Finally, have students read through one or both of the selections from the testimony of President Reagan before the HUAC. In the first selection (Primary Source C), students can read the testimony of both President Reagan as well as that of Walt Disney. In the second selection (Primary Source D), students can read the testimonies of both a friendly witness (Reagan) as well as a hostile witness (Maltz). If there is time, you can also show a clip of President Reagan's testimony before the Committee. Video of Ronald Reagan testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee on 23 October 1947. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saVnq3snkel>

Notes on Items:

Primary Source A: Press Release from the HUAC on the people subpoenaed to testify before the committee.

Primary Source B: An internal memo from the House Un-American Activities Committee on President Reagan.

Primary Source C: Testimony from two friendly witnesses, Ronald Reagan, and Walt Disney.

Primary Source D: Testimony from one friendly witness (Ronald Reagan) and one hostile witness (Albert Maltz).

Note: All sources are from the collection of the National Archives.

Previous Page: Ronald Reagan testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee, 23 October 1947.

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

September 19, 1947

Honorable J. Parnell Thomas, Chairman of the Committee on Un-American Activities issued the following statement for release Sunday morning newspapers, September 21, 1947:

"Subpoenaes have been issued and are now in the process of being served upon the following witnesses to appear in Washington beginning October 20 in connection with the Committee on Un-American Activities' forthcoming hearing on communist influences in the motion picture industry:

Alva H. Bessie	James McGuinness
Roy E. Brewer	Lewis Milestone
Herbert Biberman	Adolph Menjou
Berthold Brecht	Sam Moore
Lester Cole	John Charles Moffitt
Gary Cooper	Robert Montgomery
Charles Chaplin	George Murphy
Joseph E. Davies	Clifford Odets
Walt Disney	Larry Parks
Edward Dmytryk	William Pomerance
Cedric Gibbons	Ronald Reagan
Samuel Goldwyn	Lela E. Rogers
Rupert Hughes	Howard Rushmore
Eric Johnston	Morrie Ryskind
Howard Koch	Adrian Scott
Ring Lardner, Jr.	Dore Schary
John Howard Lawson	Donald Ogden Stewart
Louis B. Mayer	Robert Taylor
Albert Maltz	Waldo Salt
Thomas Leo McCarey	Dalton Trumbo
Lowell Mellett	Jack L. Warner
	Sam Wood

The order of appearance of the witnesses will be announced at a later date.

In making public the names of the witnesses, however, I want to emphasize that the mere fact they are being called to testify before the Committee should not be considered a reflection in any way upon their character or patriotism. These persons are being brought with the sole objective of obtaining the facts regarding the inroads the communists have made in Hollywood. Some of the witnesses are friendly to the Committee's purposes. Others are undoubtedly hostile. The Committee wants to hear both sides.

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- 2 -

The Committee had originally hoped to begin this hearing on September 29. However, a number of unforeseen circumstances have arisen regarding the membership of the Committee which necessitates a delay until October 20, in order that all members may be present for this important hearing. Mr. Mundt and Mr. Nixon are now in Europe as members of Congressional committees studying conditions there. Mr. Vail is convalescing from a recent operation, and Mr. Peterson has informed me that he cannot possibly attend the hearings this month. I feel quite certain, however, that all of the members will be available by October 20.

Hearings will begin as scheduled September 24 on the Hanns Eisler phase of this hearing. This cannot be delayed until the October date for the reason that all of the witnesses have been subpoenaed and are in Washington at this time, some having been brought from foreign countries. The announced witnesses in the Hanns Eisler case are as follows:

Sumner Welles

P. C. Hutton, Second Secretary and Consul,
Guatemala City, Guatemala

George S. Messersmith, former Ambassador to Argentina

Joseph Savoretti, Asst. Commissioner for Adjudication
U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Clarence R. Porter, Chief Inspector
U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Hearings will begin in the Caucus Room of the Old House Office Building, at 10:30 A.M., September 24.

I should also like to announce at this time that I intend to make a nation-wide radio address early in October relative to the Hollywood hearing."

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
WASHINGTON, D. C.

MEMO

RONALD REAGAN

RONALD REAGAN:

This individual is presently President of the Screen Actors Guild. He has no fear of any one, is a nice talker, well informed on the subject, and will make a splendid witness. He is of course reticent to testify, because he states that he is a New Deal Liberal, and does not agree with a number of individuals in the Motion Picture Alliance. I believe we straightened out a number of his differences, in that he felt Menjou and some of the others referred to him, Reagan, as a man who had been a Leftist and then reformed. Reagan resents this very much, as he states he never was a Leftist, that actually he got tangled up with a few committees that he thought were all right,

but it took him some time to learn that they were not. As soon as he discovered that fact, he got out of them.

I think that that is absolutely correct. I happen to have been raised in the same town with Reagan, and know him very well, and because of that fact he opened up and talked to me very freely, and he will go to Washington if we request him to do so. I think we should have him there.

We will have to be very careful about instances like this, however, as when we talked to Reagan, he felt that Jim McGuinness is a professional Red-baiter. However, when we explained McGuinness' position to him, he admitted he was probably wrong, that he did not personally know Mr. McGuinness, and had just drawn erroneous conclusions from promiscuous statements made by other individuals.

SMITH
FROM / REPORT OF
SEPT 2, 1947

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

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

During the 1930s, the dominant labor union in Hollywood, the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees Union (IATSE), was led by men with ties to organized crime. Studio heads also supported union leaders financially in order to inhibit strikes and keep labor cost increases low. After IATSE leaders were sentenced to prison terms for extortion, organizing drives by opposition labor groups began to surge. The Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), a craft union coalition headed by Herbert K. Sorrell, was founded in 1941 following a divisive, but successful strike against Walt Disney Productions by cartoonists aligned with Sorrell. During an eight-month CSU-led industry-wide strike in 1945, IATSE, aided by the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Values (MPA), a right-wing anticommunist industry group, launched a campaign to brand their rival as communistic. A further strike marked by police violence occurred the following year, and in 1947, with the cooperation of Screen Actors’ Guild president Ronald Reagan, the studio heads, MPA, and IATSE emerged victorious in the jurisdictional battle. In the following testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)—which the MPA had repeatedly urged to investigate subversives in the industry—Reagan and Disney portrayed the labor struggles solely in terms of a battle between forces for and against Communism.

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?

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 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.

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?

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?

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.

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. . . .

SOURCE: Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, 80th Congress, 1st Session, October 23–24, 1947 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947).

Ronald Reagan and Albert Maltz, Testimony before HUAC, 1947

The House Un-American Activities Committee began to investigate charges of alleged Communist influence in the movie industry in the fall of 1947. The hearings attracted an enormous amount of press attention due to the glamour associated with Hollywood celebrities. HUAC began with a group of so-called “friendly” witnesses. They cooperated with the investigation for a variety of reasons, including a desire to settle old political scores. The Committee then moved to the “unfriendly” witnesses. These included some who were or had been members of the Communist Party, but all of whom rejected HUAC’s intrusion into their political beliefs. Ronald Reagan, a friendly witness, was President of the Screen Actors Guild. Albert Maltz, an unfriendly witness, was active in the Screen Writers Guild.

TESTIMONY OF RONALD REAGAN

Mr. STRIPLING: Are you the president of the guild at the present time?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir....

Mr. STRIPLING: Have you ever held any other position in the Screen Actors Guild?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir. Just prior to the war I was a member of the board of directors, and just after the war, prior to my being elected president, I was a member of the board of directors.

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 associated 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 have 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 over their own particular views on various issues, I guess 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, 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 ninety 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: Mr. Reagan, what is your feeling about what steps should be taken to rid the motion-picture industry of any Communist influences?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir, ninety-nine 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 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. In opposing those people, the best thing to do is 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, that is a matter for the Government to decide. As a citizen, I would hesitate to see any political party outlawed on the basis of its political ideology. We have spent a hundred and seventy 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 foreign power, or in any way not a legitimate political party - and I think the Government is capable of proving that - 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.

TESTIMONY OF ALBERT MALTZ

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maltz, the committee is unanimous in permitting you to read the statement.

MR. MALTZ: Thank you.

I am an American and I believe there is no more proud word in the vocabulary of man. I am a novelist and screen writer and I have produced a certain body of work in the past 15 years. As with any other writer, what I have written has come from the total fabric of my life—my birth in this land, our schools and games, our atmosphere of freedom, our tradition of inquiry, criticism, discussion, tolerance. Whatever I am, America has made me. And I, in turn, possess no loyalty as great as the one I have to this land, to the economic and social welfare of its people, to the perpetuation and development of its democratic way of life.

Now at the age of 39, I am commanded to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. For a full week this committee has encouraged an assortment of well-rehearsed witnesses to testify that I and others are subversive and un-American. It has refused us the opportunity that any pickpocket receives in a magistrate's court—the right to cross-examine these witnesses, to refute their testimony, to reveal their motives, their history, and who, exactly, they are. Furthermore it grants these witnesses congressional immunity so that we may not sue them for libel for their slanders.

I maintain that this is an evil and vicious procedure; that it is legally unjust and morally indecent—and that it places in danger every other American, since if the right of any one citizen can be invaded, then the constitutional guaranties of every other American have been subverted and no one is any longer protected from official tyranny.

What is it about me that this committee wishes to destroy? My writings? Very well, let us refer to them.

My novel, *The Cross and the Arrow*, was issued in a special edition of 140,000 copies by a wartime Government agency, the armed services edition, for American servicemen abroad.

My short stories have been reprinted in over 30 anthologies, by as many American publishers—all subversive, no doubt.

My film, *The Pride of the Marines*, was premiered in 28 cities at Guadalcanal Day banquets under the auspices of the United States Marine Corps.

Another film, *Destination Tokyo*, was premiered aboard a United States submarine and was adopted by the Navy as an official training film.

My short film, *The House I Live In*, was given a special award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for its contribution to racial tolerance.

My short story, *The Happiest Man on Earth*, won the 1938 O. Henry Memorial Award for the best American short story.

This, then, is the body of work for which this committee urges I be blacklisted in the film industry - and tomorrow, if it has its way in the publishing and magazine fields also.

By cold censorship, if not legislation, I must not be allowed to write. Will this censorship stop with me? Or with the others now singled out for attack? If it requires acceptance of the ideas of this committee to remain immune from the brand of un-Americanism, then who is ultimately safe from this committee except members of the Ku Klux Klan?

Why else does this committee now seek to destroy me and others? Because of our ideas, unquestionably. In 1801, when he was President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "Opinion, and the just maintenance of it, shall never be a crime in my view; nor bring injury to the individual."

But a few years ago, in the course of one of the hearings of this committee, Congressman J. Parnell Thomas said, and I quote from the official transcript: "I just want to say this now, that it seems that the New Deal is working along hand in glove with the Communist Party. The New Deal is either for the Communist Party or it is playing into the hands of the Communist Party."

Very well, then, here is the other reason why I and others have been commanded to appear before this committee - our ideas. In common with many Americans, I supported the New Deal. In common with many Americans I supported, against Mr. Thomas and Mr. Rankin, the anti-lynching bill. I opposed them in my support of OPA controls and emergency veteran housing and a fair employment practices law. I signed petitions for these measures, joined organizations that advocated them, contributed money, sometimes spoke from public platforms, and I will continue to do so. I will take my philosophy from Thomas Payne, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and I will not be dictated to or intimidated by men to whom the Ku Klux Klan, as a matter of committee record, is an acceptable American institution.

I state further that on many questions of public interest my opinions as a citizen have not always been in accord with the opinions of the majority. They are not now nor have my opinions ever been fixed and unchanging, nor are they now fixed and unchangeable; but, right or wrong, I claim and I insist upon my right to think freely and to speak freely; to join the Republican Party or the Communist Party, the Democratic or the Prohibition Party; to publish whatever I please; to fix my mind or change my mind, without dictation from anyone; to offer any criticism I think fitting of any public official or policy; to join whatever organizations I please, no matter what certain legislators may think of them. Above all, I challenge the right of this committee to inquire into my political or religious beliefs, in any manner or degree, and I assent that not the conduct of this committee but its very existence are a subversion of the Bill of Rights.

If I were a spokesman for General Franco, I would not be here today. I would rather be here. I would rather die than be a shabby American, groveling before men whose names are Thomas and Rankin, but who now carry out activities in America like those carried out in Germany by Goebbels and Himmler.

The American people are going to have to choose between the Bill of Rights and the Thomas committee. They cannot have both. One or the other must be abolished in the immediate future.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stripling (pounding gavel). Mr. Stripling.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Maltz, what is your occupation?

Mr. MALTZ: I am a writer.

Mr. STRIPLING: Are you employed in the motion-picture industry?

Mr. MALTZ: I work in various fields of writing and I have sometimes accepted employment in the motion-picture industry.

Mr. STRIPLING: Have you written the scripts for a number of pictures?

Mr. MALTZ: It is a matter of public record that I have written scripts for certain motion pictures.

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

The CHAIRMAN: Louder, Mr. Stripling.

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

Mr. MALTZ: Next you are going to ask me what religious group I belong to.

The CHAIRMAN: No, no; we are not.

Mr. MALTZ: And any such question as that -

The CHAIRMAN: I know.

Mr. MALTZ: Is an obvious attempt to invade my rights under the Constitution.

Mr. STRIPLING: Do you object to answering whether or not you are a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

Mr. MALTZ: I have not objected to answering that question. On the contrary, I point out that next you are going to ask me whether or not I am a member of a certain religious group and suggest that I be blacklisted from an industry because I am a member of a group you don't like.

(The CHAIRMAN pounds gavel.)

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Maltz, do you decline to answer the question?

Mr. MALTZ: I certainly do not decline to answer the question. I have answered the question.

Mr. STRIPLING: I repeat, Are you a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

Mr. MALTZ: And I repeat my answer, sir, that any such question is an obvious attempt to invade my list of organizations as an American citizen and I would be a shabby American if I didn't answer as I have.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Maltz, are you a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. MALTZ: Next you are going to ask what my religious beliefs are.

Mr. MCDOWELL: That is not answering the question.

Mr. MALTZ: And you are going to insist before various members of the industry that since you do not like my religious beliefs I should not work in such industry. Any such question is quite irrelevant.

Mr. STRIPLING: I repeat the question. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. MALTZ: I have answered the question, Mr. Stripling. I am sorry. I want you to know—

Mr. MCDOWELL: I object to that statement.

The CHAIRMAN: Excuse the witness. No more questions. Typical Communist line....

SOURCE: U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities Hearings (1947).



EDUCATION



About Us

The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Presidential Learning Center (APLC) at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation is committed to engaging the future leaders of America in the study of our nation's democratic process with the aim of developing proactive informed, educated, and conscientious citizens and leaders.

Programs

- **Speaker Series for Students:** The Speaker Series for Students is designed to bring students into contact with leading thinkers, practitioners, and heroes in the field of civic engagement. Past events have included a Veteran's Day panel, Buzz Aldrin, Medal of Honor recipients and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.
- **Educator Programming:** The APLC develops project based, backwards designed curriculum, and distributes this to educators at no cost. By creating and distributing free curriculum resources, the APLC shares information about both its programming and the current state of civics education. This classroom curriculum is available for free on our website: www.reaganfoundation.org/lesson-plans-overview.aspx
- **Professional Development:** Over the years we've collaborated with some of the finest professional development organizations in the country to offer high quality training and resources to teachers. We've worked with the National Constitution Center, Gilder-Lehrman, Constitutional Rights Foundation, the National Writing Project, and the California History-Social Science Project. We offer free professional development sessions for educators from Elementary through High School. With the goal of embedding civic learning in the classroom, our Educator Professional Development sessions tackle important skills such as developing student writing and communication skills. Professional Development is offered both onsite and on-line.
- **Leadership and the American Presidency:** The *Leadership and the American Presidency* is a program designed to facilitate leadership development among undergraduate students through the unique lens of the American presidency. The accredited course is grounded in real history as students critically examine the leadership journeys of presidents in relation to their own lives. Students hear from real leaders in the fields of business, government, and the nonprofit sectors learning lessons on leadership, while simultaneously applying all of these skills in the real world in an internship setting and in an authentic culminating course assessment. Utilizing Washington DC as a classroom, presidential sites will be leveraged to capitalize upon power of place and result in a meaningful and transformative leadership experience for students.

Scholarships and Awards

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation has awarded more than \$1,000,000 in scholarships to students across the nation. We aim to recognize students whose leadership, communication, drive, and citizenship reminds us of our 40th President.

- GE-Reagan Scholarship Program
- Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Scholar Program
- Great Communicator Debate Series
- Ronald Reagan Student Leader Award Program

Learn about these opportunities to recognizing outstanding students on our website: www.reaganfoundation.org/scholarships

Class visits to the Discovery Center

The Discovery Center allows students to face the responsibilities and challenges faced by the Executive Branch, military, and media. Students have the opportunity to role play in a realistic, interactive environment. Learn more about the Discovery Center and how to visit here: www.reaganfoundation.org/DISCOVERY-CENTER.aspx