

Dalton Trumbo

TEXT
RADIO SPEECH DELIVERED BY
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No one, I think, and least of all those who have been summoned to Washington by Mr. ~~W.~~ Parnell Thomas, would deny the existence of Un-American organizations and activities in our country. Those which first come to mind are the Ku Klux Klan, the Christian Front, the Silver Shirts and other (and more respectable) groups which unceasingly poison the stream of our democratic life by their appeals to those dark prejudices which incite to racial, religious and political pogroms. Equally Un-American are those forces which conspire---for their own gain---to deprive the American people of decent wages, fair prices, adequate housing, effective union organization, and a peaceful future.

But the House Committee on Un-American Activities has no interest in such truly subversive conspirators. It never has been interested in them. Even during the rise of world fascism and the inevitable war which was its final fruit, this committee and its predecessors has been more concerned with those who opposed Hitler than with those who supported him. Its own record is clearly and consistently hostile to the Constitution of the United States. The Committee has, in fact, degenerated into a conspiracy against the American people and their government.

Whom does it now seek to investigate in the hearings which begin tomorrow morning? Men who advocate racial and religious bigotry? No. Men who conspire against the rights of organized labor? No. Men who attempt, by propaganda and falsehood, to incite us to war? No. Men who oppose public housing and public health? No. Men who, by their speculative avarice have driven prices to the highest point in our history? No.

The men to be investigated are those writers, actors, directors and producers of motion pictures who have been most actively concerned with the making of films which reflect decent American traditions and which, in many instances, defend the rights of the American people. Almost two hundred and fifty films have been made by the so-called unfriendly witnesses. Over two dozen books have been written by them, as well as scores of short stories published in magazines ranging from the Atlantic Monthly to the Saturday Evening Post. Four of them have been cited with

Academy Awards for their work. Others have won such honors as the O'Henry Memorial Award for the short story, and the American Booksellers Association award for the novel.

We would, however, be tragically in error were we to place all the emphasis of tonight's discussion on motion pictures. Already representative American art has been declared Un-American and its export for exhibition has been banned. Already one of our foremost novelists, Mr. Howard Fast, lives under prison sentence for contempt of the Un-American Committee. Already Mr. Eugene Dennis, leader of a minority political party, has been sentenced to jail because he challenged this committee. Already Mr. Carl Marzani, after a distinguished and highly responsible record in the O. S. S. has received a three-year sentence to a Federal penitentiary primarily because he produced a fine documentary film for the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America. Already Mr. Hanns Eisler, a distinguished musician and composer, proscribed by Hitler, faces deportation by action of this same committee.

I cannot, and would not if I could, disassociate myself from these men and their cases. For they are but different characters in the same play; they face the same common enemy and they bear the brunt of the same attack; the penalty exacted from them is but a pale reflection of the penalty which will be exacted from us. For if they fall, the failure of constitutional processes will expose us to an enemy stronger and more confident by reason of their destruction.

Beyond their work in motion pictures, the Hollywood people who are to appear before the committee have consistently asserted their right to political activity as citizens. They have been consistently pro-labor and pro-Roosevelt. They have played a leading part on the west coast in four presidential elections. That they will be attacked by the committee for these activities goes without saying; for the committee is in open opposition to labor and has been a leading enemy of the Roosevelt tradition. It is the position of all of us that an American has the right to belong to and to work for any political party he wishes, whether it be the Democratic Party, the Republican, the Communist, the Socialist, the American Labor, the Socialist Labor, the Progressive, the Prohibition or any other legally con-

stituted political organization. We believe that party labels traditionally do not mean much to the American people; that men and women must be judged by their political acts---by the things they actually do---rather than by the political label which is attached to such acts.

The Thomas Committee challenges not only our right to make motion pictures with which the committee disagrees, but also your right to see them. It challenges not only our right to assert political opinions as citizens, but also your right to speak freely upon any controversial issue.

I wish to make it very clear that we do not come to Washington as the abject subjects of a police state. We come as citizens of a democratic republic. We--and you--are clothed in all the dignity and power and freedom which is still implied in the word 'American'. We will not submit to intimidation. We will not be compliant to unconstitutional procedures. We will not surrender even the smallest portion of those immunities guaranteed us by the Bill of Rights. For if we should weakly surrender them today, you will be called upon tomorrow to perform a similar capitulation for yourselves and your children.