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I am proud of America and its institutions. My deepest loyalty is to this land. I would oppose with all my strength any attempt to destroy its democratic way of life, dishonor its heritage, or break its laws.

As a man and as a writer my life has been woven out of the meaning of my country. I grew up in an old New Jersey town with a brave tradition. My first serious work was a hymn to Abraham Lincoln. My first book was written in line of duty as a sergeant in the United States Army Air Force.

Recently I found myself summoned to appear before a Congressional Committee to be queried about my political beliefs and associations.

I must confess that my first reaction was simply to answer all questions. I have always been open in my beliefs, even to the extent of speaking them from public platforms. I knew that upon my behavior before the Committee might depend my career, my livelihood, the future of my children. In the first moment there was only the impulse of self-preservation.

But no man is an island. I love my family, I work with my fellow writers, I owe allegiance to my country. In determining what stand I would take before the Committee, I considered all of these.

As a member of the Radio Writers Guild and the Authors Guild, I could not help but be aware of the emphatic position taken by both

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unions' parent body, the Authors League. In a resolution adopted January 7, 1952, the League Council stated:

"From the earliest days of this nation's life, our tradition has been that writers and writing should be free of political control. Today this tradition is being eroded by fear. Today any American writer may be subjected to dismissal, disgrace and disaster through the organized activities of self-appointed monitors eager to defend the nation on their own terms.

"The Authors League of America, a purely professional organization for writers in all fields, has never had and will never have a political test for its members. The League neither judges nor defends the individual views of its members. But the League, as always, will combat every concerted effort, whether hidden or overt, to determine the employment of any writer or the presentation or publication of his work on any basis other than the merit of his writing."

This resolution of the Authors League was one of the documents I examined in trying to decide upon my stand before the McCarran Committee. And there were other documents. I found myself searching back through American history, and coming upon words I had not read since my school days. Words like these, of Thomas Jefferson's:

"It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others; or their case may, by exchange of circumstances, become his own. It behooves him, too, in his own case, to give no example of concession, betraying the common right of independent opinion, by answering questions of faith, which the laws have left between God and himself."

But most of all, the document I found myself reading was the Bill of Rights. I went through the amendments one by one, and tried to understand just what it was made the Founding Fathers put them there.

When it came to the Fifth Amendment, I discovered that it dated back to England in the 17th Century, back to the early persecutions of the Puritans. The privilege against self-incrimination was transplanted with the first colonists in Virginia and Massachusetts Bay. It was written in American law a hundred years before the Revolution. More than a privilege for the guilty, it was a shield for the innocent against any passing hour of harassment. It stood against the winds of time for three centuries. In 1940, the late Supreme Court Justice Rutledge saluted it with this opinion:

"With world events running as they have been, there is special reason at this time for not relaxing the old personal freedoms won, as this one was, through centuries of struggle. Men now in concentration camps could speak of the value of such a privilege if it had been theirs. There is in it the wisdom of centuries, if not of decades."

I came to the conclusion that one of the precise reasons for the Fifth Amendment was to insure that the consciences of the country's citizens should remain their private affair. And it seemed to me that to invoke this privilege was more than a right - it was a moral obligation.

It takes only the briefest study of the McCarran Committee to become conscious of its shabby tactics and sinister objectives. The Committee Chairman is the same McCarran whose name appears on an

immigration bill that is the first piece of anti-Semitic legislation passed in over twenty years; the same McCarran who is the author of a bill to set up concentration camps in America, a bill of which President Truman said in his veto: "It would put the Government of the United States in the thought control business."

I would be a cheap American if I accepted the standards of Senator McCarran as a test of loyalty to my country.

Throughout its hearings, the McCarran Committee has accepted as testimony hearsay, vague personal opinion, and outright falsehood. It has solicited evidence of men who are in business peddling accusations and clearances. It has presented as flat conclusions statements which were never made by any witness.

The Committee has clearly demonstrated its intention of attempting to break a union, my union, the Radio Writers Guild. It has offered its cloak of immunity to a disruptive minority faction, and has publicized their slanders.

It was in the light of all this - the position of the Authors League, the tradition of my country, and the character of the Committee - that I determined to invoke the privilege of the Fifth Amendment. I took the stand which appeared to me most profoundly American.

Now that the hearings have recessed, it has been proposed in some quarters that I take steps to "clear" myself in some public forum. I feel a great temptation to do this. Certainly it would make life easier for me. It would insure me much lucrative work. But it would also contribute to setting up a political standard which other

writers would have to meet if they wished to continue their careers. It would make me a party to providing the conditions for a blacklist. It would be a repudiation of the position of the Authors League against determining a writer's employment on any basis other than the merit of his work.

This I cannot do. I cannot seek to take out a personal insurance policy, leaving it to be paid for by my fellow men.