

CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION OF
COMMUNISM IN HOLLYWOOD

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS

Audience Research, Inc.

December 17, 1947

This report summarizes the findings of a series of nationwide public opinion surveys designed to determine the reaction of the people to the recent investigation of Communism in the motion picture industry.

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We hope this report will prove helpful in judging the effect of the investigation on the public and as a guide to industry policies when the investigation is taken up again.

WHAT ARE THE ATTITUDES OF THE AMERICAN
PUBLIC TOWARDS THE INVESTIGATION?

MOST OF THE PUBLIC WAS AWARE OF THE INVESTIGATION

Eight out of ten (80%) of the American public said they had read or heard something in the newspapers or on the radio about the investigation. But only about one in two (50%) had followed the investigation carefully enough to have a *reasonably accurate idea* of what it was all about.

APPROXIMATELY AS MANY PEOPLE DISAPPROVED OF THE WAY THE INVESTIGATION WAS HANDLED AS APPROVED

MANY OF THOSE WHO DISAPPROVED REGARDED IT AS A
POLITICAL PUBLICITY STUNT

The findings were:*

	PER CENT
Approve of the way it was handled	37
Disapprove of the way it was handled	36
No opinion	<u>27</u>
	100

* These questions were put only to those who said they had heard or read about the investigation.

THE ELEMENT OF EDUCATION PLAYS A VERY IMPORTANT
PART IN THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE TOWARD
TREATMENT OF THE HOSTILE WITNESSES

When *all* persons who said they had paid any attention at all to the investigation were asked whether or not the hostile witnesses should be punished, 47% said they should be punished, 39% said they should not, and 14% had no opinion. Among those who never attended college, the opinion was even more pronounced. They voted 53% to 30% that the witnesses should be punished.

*But--*those persons with a *college education* held a *contrary view*. Fifty-four per cent (54%) of the college graduates thought that the witnesses should *not* be punished, while 34% thought that they should.

TEN PER CENT NOW THINK THERE ARE
MANY COMMUNISTS IN HOLLYWOOD

Surveys made during the hearings showed a little more than half of the people holding the opinion that there are at least *some* Communists in Hollywood. Ten per cent thought that there are "many." This figure is small compared with findings in previous studies on the people's ideas of the number of Communists in the labor movement, or in the United States itself. Nevertheless, 10% represents a substantial segment of the public and warrants serious consideration.

Surveys made since the hearings terminated disclose that no increase occurred in the proportion thinking there are *many* Communists in Hollywood. It remains at 10%.

However, the proportion thinking there are at least *some* Communists in Hollywood has risen from 55 to 61%.

THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS DO NOT FEEL THAT THE MOTION
PICTURE INDUSTRY IS TRYING TO SHIELD THE COMMUNISTS

Before the industry's action against the ten witnesses, thirteen per cent (13%) of all the people questioned said, "Yes, the motion picture industry wants to shield the Communists." But only three per cent (3%) or approximately one-fourth of this small group thought it was because the leaders in the industry, themselves, favored Communism. The other ten per cent thought the industry wanted to shield the Communists because of fear of bad publicity or for some other reason.

THE PUBLIC THINKS OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA ALMOST
ENTIRELY IN TERMS OF FILMS ABOUT RUSSIA

When the people who say the Communists do get their ideas into movies are asked to cite specific pictures, they name chiefly pictures about Russia such as *MISSION TO MOSCOW*, *NINOTCHKA*, *SONG OF RUSSIA*, etc.

They do not identify those pictures which supposedly lampoon certain American groups or institutions. In short, unless a picture carries a large Russian label it is not likely to be thought of as containing Communistic propaganda.

THE PUBLIC IS NOT WELL INFORMED AS TO THE
IDENTITY OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE INDUSTRY WHO ARE
REPORTED TO BE COMMUNISTS OR SYMPATHIZERS

Seventy-six per cent had heard about the witnesses who refused to testify.

When asked to *name* the ten "unfriendly witnesses," results were as follows:

	PER CENT
Could name one or more correctly	13
Gave incorrect names	10
Unable to name anyone	53

Note that real confusion existed in the minds of the 10 per cent who gave incorrect names. A few mentioned, for example, Adolph Menjou, Robert Taylor, Robert Montgomery, Gary Cooper, and Humphrey Bogart.

A more general question asked people if they could name anyone in the industry who was a Communist sympathizer. No one individual was named by more than 8 per cent of those interviewed.

WHAT CAN THESE FINDINGS MEAN
TO THE INDUSTRY?

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. While it is obvious that the congressional investigation has had some adverse effect on Hollywood, it would be easy to overestimate the extent of the harm done to date.

2. The danger of political censorship does not appear to be very real at this time. All the evidence points to the fact that the public views on this matter are not crystallized. Few have strong opinions--most are confused over just what political censorship means. Of course, the danger to the industry may arise out of this confusion. A substantial segment of the public believes in moral censorship of the movies, and there is no well-defined line between moral censorship and political censorship in the public's mind.

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF BOX OFFICE

1. Findings from these studies indicate that the congressional investigation--at least that part of it which is now completed--will have little immediate effect on the boxoffice.

The percentage of the public who thinks there are many Communists in Hollywood is not large. Only three per cent think the leaders in the industry favor Communism. The evidence points to the fact that the public has little awareness of possible Communistic influences, if any, in pictures being produced today. Also, few could name any particular player whom they thought of as a Communist or Communist sympathizer.

2. The principal adverse effect of the congressional investigation so far has been to give a segment of the American public one more reason for staying away from the movies. While this effect can by no means be considered great at this time, it does come at a time when the foreign situation makes it more imperative than ever to exploit more fully the domestic market.

From the long-term point of view, the congressional investigation probably will have its most harmful effect upon those citizens over thirty years of age who today hold the most strongly anti-Communistic attitudes. This group includes the greatest number of non-moviegoers and infrequent moviegoers. It is the group which offers the greatest opportunity for increasing domestic revenue.*

Perhaps the most serious harm done to date by the investigation has been to give this group, at this time, one more reason for staying away from the movies.

George Gallup

* There are 40,000,000 persons in the United States between the ages of 30 and 50 who, as a group, attend motion pictures infrequently. Suppose the industry could induce persons in this age group to go to the movies *once a week, on the average*. The increased revenue which would be paid into theater box-offices would, at present box-office prices, amount to nearly \$500,000,000 annually.

Audience Research, Inc., "What the Public Thinks," December 17, 1947.
Courtesy Dore Schary Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society