

The House Committee on unAmerican Activities has "liberated" some 200 men and women from the motion picture industry of Hollywood and almost an equal number from the various communications industries in New York. Many of these men and women have participated in these industries for a quarter of a century and some have been rewarded to the extent of earnings of two hundred thousand dollars ( \$200,000.) a year, so valuable have they been to their employers.

That they are unable to work in the mass media of communications is not necessarily tragic for them - some can still create against a smaller backdrop, none will perish of starvation. But for the American people the forcible excision of almost 400 democratically-minded artists may well be tragic, for it is meant that this large area be filled by an opposite quality of content and intent.

The extraordinary historic phenomenon which is ushered into our contemporary scene by this situation, unique in the world of this moment, is that these artists, far from being embittered or defeated by this action, have instead formed themselves into various independent producing units for independent communication. One of these is INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS CORPORATION.

This company, under the Presidency of Simon Lazarus, an exhibitor, who owns and operates four motion picture theatres in Los Angeles, and with the active participation of Herbert Biberman, Adrian Scott and Paul Jarrico, blacklisted artists of Hollywood, and Mr. Charles Katz attorney of the city of Los Angeles and long-time participant in the legal aspects of motion picture production, has undertaken to produce motion pictures of an independent character and produced by the blacklisted artists.

This company has access to a body of artists no motion picture company could afford to employ - and because of the world standing of these artists and the honest, realistic, entertainment they mean to produce, has access to a world audience perhaps not even available to the motion picture monopoly.

This company will produce feature length, entertainment films, written by such writers as Dalton Trumbo, produced by such producers as Adrian Scott, directed by such directors as Herbert Biberman and acted in by such artists as Howard DeSilva, Gale Sondergaard ( Academy Award Winner ) for under \$100,000. which is only little more than the salary of Dalton Trumbo under his Metro Goldwyn Mayer contract.

Pictures can be made by this company at this unheard of minimal cost because, with the exception of \$2000. (which may be paid to the writers if it is deemed necessary because of the uninterrupted long periods necessary for the completion of a screenplay in final form) none of the artists will receive a single penny of compensation for their work until the entire sum of money borrowed for the production of the film has been repaid plus interest at the rate of 10% per annum, for a period of not to exceed two (2) years.

Once the cost of the picture has been repaid with interest, then the artists, whose confidence in these pictures has caused them to forego

any remuneration will receive 50% of the ensuing earnings of the company.

Even this extremely low cost is protected by the great interest many European countries have expressed in these films - single countries exclusive of western Europe capable of paying \$20,000. for the right to exhibit such films in their individual country. This means that it might be possible for this company to retrieve the negative cost of its films from the world exclusive of western Europe and the english-speaking world, which exhibition area might be their's at no cost whatsoever.

The tremendous success of Dalton Trumbo's play " The Biggest Thief in Town " in London during this past summer and fall, the elevating of his name to an above-the-title position because his name was an attraction in England, the sale of his play for production in Denmark, Italy and Africa south of the equator, only emphasizes the drawing power of such men as he - who - to quote one of the reviews of his play - was not merely a defender of American liberty but the author of the funniest play in London.

But beyond the matter of personal " charm " and " box office " there is the more fundamental matter of the kind of material this company will produce. To quote an important english film exhibitor who was asked if he would exhibit the work of blacklisted men who intended to produce honest, realistic,.... what is often called controversial .... film : " Oh, you are blacklisted in the United States but not in Great Britain, you know, .... and we would welcome good hard-hitting American pictures from America which kind of picture we don't get from America these days, you know. "

This company intends to put a new kind of American hero and heroine upon the screen - people involved in pursuit of good, satisfying democratic living, capable of fighting to get it, and of resisting evil forces, believing in and making decency appetizing and contagious, not only for themselves but for people like them all over the entire globe. That is why these pictures, coming from the America of today, of all places, will, must, have tremendous attractiveness to the people of the entire world.

And especially to the people of America, so long starved for presentation of appetizing decency .... so fed up with the violence and brutality and sated lurid sex stuff which has become for them an almost exclusive diet.

Nor will this company entrust its product to the normal distributing companies. They would not handle this product, but it will also not be entrusted to any counterpart in the distribution world. This company will merchandize its own product in the United States, at least in the early stages. It will, in all probability, rent and operate theatres off the-big-city-Broadways, where rents are cheap and theatres are available because so many of them are closed, and from which it will receive not 50% of the revenue ( the other 50% going to the distributing companies ) but 100% of the revenue from the box-office.

But before the picture product of this company opens in any community, it will be preceded by weeks of the most intensive exploitation work and promotion among the inhabitants of that town - using the techniques and organizations available to this company and to its kind of product.

Little is known today of the comparative earning power of the small Art theatres and independent theatres playing international product, films from England, France, Italy and the occasional superior American films, as contrasted with the earnings of the big chain theatres. An article in the current issue of Nation's Business states that the Art theatres alone are making money on a week to week basis. Illustrations of this are easy to find :

"Kontiki," the documentary film, which was refused by every major motion picture company, and bought by Sol Lesser for \$25,000. to which he added another \$15,000. for music and narration etc. had, by September 1st 1951, grossed over a million dollars (\$1,000,000.) without having left the Art and independent theatres. Now it is displacing many major A pictures, and outgrossing them.

Mr. Charles Katz, of this company, purchased the Los Angeles rights to "The Miracle" picture banned by the Catholic Church - and exhibited it with little advertising in a small theatre miles off the main thoroughfares of Hollywood and Los Angeles and did so well there that Fox bought it from him for its regular run.

The fact of the matter is that our American audiences are turning away from the sodden, repetitious, unappetizing and brutalizing product of the monopoly and are turning toward more decent and honest and honorable product. And they are rewarding such product with larger patronage than the former.

With a world to play to, and a vast America turning toward just the sort of communication this company means to manufacture for its pleasure and edification, an expenditure of less than \$100,000. is a small investment indeed. It is to the interest of the artists to make the cost of each picture as small as possible for it means that their own participation will begin all the sooner. But they also know that the low expenditure must not sacrifice quality of entertainment and their skills are being engaged to achieve a combination of both for they have nothing to gain from a loss of either.

Obviously, these artists and this company, are not interested in making only a single picture. There are hundreds of artists who must be provided with an opportunity to work in their media - this company cannot rest content until it is making ten pictures per year. This is not possible unless their pictures make money. This project cannot survive except on the basis of profitableness. None of the individuals who at the beginning are devoting as much as two years without any possible compensation ( some have already been working on this project for eight months ) can prosper unless these pictures make money. It is this that

explains the hard, practical basis upon which this company is founded and the hard, realistic approach it takes to producing films with only the bare essentials of expenditure paid for in cash.

This company means to demonstrate that the "happy accident" of "liberating" hundreds of artists in the film industry, can be turned by the American people to their own great advantage ..... for these artists skilled in mass communication are going to crack open the channels of the greatest medium of mass communication, the motion picture, and make it available as content to promote the best traditions of racial, social, economic and political equality in our country. Films can give people new mental vision, new conversation, new emotional drives, good and sober and honest and happy ones. **IT CAN ALSO EXPOSE CORRUPTION AND EVIL AND INVEIGH AGAINST IT ENTERTAININGLY AND WITH GREAT IMPACT.** This our films will also do - but always in the most basically proven techniques of story films which are based in their ability to entertain and move audiences devoted to this medium.

These films can accomplish very great objectives in an international relations sense .... they can become an authentic voice of America .... presenting a truthful picture of America .... and fostering a most realistic relation to our country by the people of the world. This will benefit America much more than the films of decadence and opulence which the audiences of the world are having forced down their throats by our monopoly seizure of their theatres ... and which misrepresent our country .... by making it seem both better and worse than it is.

The artists in this company feel they have spent 25 years in the monopoly industry perfecting their craft - and that they are now facing the greatest challenge of their lives - the challenge to put their talent and experience at the service of a new, sound, democratic culture which will make its way because it is devoted to people and not because it is devoted to making money out of people - at no matter what cost to the people themselves.

The first picture is now ready - and should be before the camera within six weeks to two months. It will be made in Mexico - for reasons of economy. It is a story of how a mother had her two children torn from her by a husband who deserted them when they were infants, because he discovered ten years later that she had brought up her children to play with Negro children. A story of the manner in which prejudice - in this era of fear and hysteria - punishes a mother for her devotion to brotherhood, and rewards a racist father by giving him children he deserted and now intends to convert to racism.

This picture is not a picture of mournful numbers .... it is a dynamic picture for it revolves around a woman who cannot be bribed into denying brotherhood .... who cannot be dissuaded by any show of power into ceasing to fight intolerance .... and who in her moment of greatest loss is strongest .... and most powerful because of the allies who gather to correct the brutal injustice rising out of this disjointed time.

This picture will be developed in crisp, uneditorialized, simple emotional terms. It will make a new star..... an American mother who will not surrender her children to unAmericanism ..... for any reason whatsoever. In a certain way, this picture is a kind of modern Uncle Tom's Cabin.



this picture will be followed by a warm, gay, amusing love story told of Mexican-Americans. A people's love story which rises out of a great struggle of simple women - who have lived in almost feudal relations with their husbands - and who, in a strike situation, in which they are catapulted into leadership, rise to sexual and social equality in a matter of weeks. This is humor based on growth .... this is powerful, grim, background made gay and heart-warming by discovering the upsurge of women as they begin to feel their oats .... and find themselves growing attractive to their men as they rise to full personal dignity and contribution..... given new strength to face the hard battles ahead, equally.

This production will be followed by a third picture - the most ambitious - made in closest association with trade unionists - on the peril which faces honest trade unionists today when they raise their voices and their unions against the mounting sell-out of labor in America today. This will be made as a powerful, shocking expose of the direction our country is taking - not only in respect to our own workers, but in relation to the working people of a large part of the world. This will be a picture with an audience of truly tremendous proportion in the entire world, for it will be an incisive picture of America today - told by American blacklisted artists - working for authenticity and historic exactness with the most informed American democratic trade unionists.

When these three pictures have been made and are circulating in our world --- they will have more influence upon the product of our American mass communications industries than ever did the 400 blacklisted people have when they were in those industries. Such influence is a most necessary part of the emergence of any honest cultural product from our land today .... without which the people will not know each other .... will not know their own heroes .... will not know the dangers which beset them .... will not know their strength .... will not be able to solve their problems for they will still not know them.

This company means to turn misfortune into glad tidings. This company faces toward practical, business-like, modest but powerful achievement in entertaining millions of Americans and their friends around the world. The people of the entire world will not, it seems reasonable to believe, allow such self-sacrificing and self-interested undertakings to fail.

Typescript outline of plans for Independent Productions Corporation, c. May 1952.  
Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.