

THE CHAIRMAN. Just a minute—

MR. LAWSON. And you refuse to allow me to make a statement on my rights as an American citizen.

THE CHAIRMAN. I refuse you to make the statement, because of the first sentence in your statement. That statement is not pertinent to the inquiry. Now, this is a congressional committee a—congressional committee set up by law. We must have orderly procedure, and we are going to have orderly procedure.

MR. Strippling, identify the witness.

MR. LAWSON. The rights of American citizens are important in this room here, and I intend to stand up for those rights, Congressman Thomas.

MR. STRIPPLING. Mr. Lawson, will you state your full name, please?

MR. LAWSON. I wish to protest against the unwillingness of this committee to read a statement, when you permitted Mr. Warner, Mr. Mayer, and others to read statements in this room.

My name is John Howard Lawson.

MR. STRIPPLING. What is your present address?

MR. LAWSON. 9354 Burnet Avenue, San Fernando, Calif.

MR. STRIPPLING. When and where were you born?

MR. LAWSON. New York City.

MR. STRIPPLING. What year?

MR. LAWSON. 1894.

MR. STRIPPLING. Give us the exact date.

MR. LAWSON. September 25.

MR. STRIPPLING. Mr. Lawson, you are here in response to a subpoena which was served upon you on September 19, 1947; is that true?

MR. LAWSON. That is correct.

MR. STRIPPLING. That subpoena called for your appearance before the committee on October 23, at 10:30 a. m.; is that correct?

MR. LAWSON. That is correct.

MR. STRIPPLING. Did you receive the following telegram on October 19, addressed to you, Mr. John Howard Lawson, 9354 Burnet Avenue, San Fernando, Calif.?

MR. LAWSON. I did.

MR. STRIPPLING. I haven't read the telegram yet.

In response to the subpoena served upon you summoning you to appear before the Committee on Un-American Activities, United States House of Representatives, in Washington, D. C., on October 23, you are hereby directed to appear on October 27 instead of October 23, at the hour of 10:30 a. m., room 226, Old House Office Building.

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HEARINGS REGARDING THE COMMUNIST INFILTRATION OF THE MOTION-PICTURE-INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES (SECOND WEEK) (1947), U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities

Over the weekend recess, Chairman Thomas made a surprising change in his lineup for the next week's "unfriendly witnesses." Rather than beginning, as announced, with the judicious Eric Johnston (who was to make an impassioned plea for freedom of speech and tolerance of political differences) and Roy Brewer (an anti-Communist union leader who had cleaned up much of the Hollywood union mess), Chairman Thomas began with the belligerent John Howard Lawson, a screenwriter who had been president of the Screen Writers' Guild and who had already been identified as a Communist by several of the "friendly witnesses." Lawson's angry denunciation of the committee not only alienated the sympathies of the general public but also undercut the power and effect of Johnston's appeal, which immediately followed Lawson's turbulent ejection from the committee room.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

MR. LAWSON. Mr. Chairman, I have a statement here which I wish to make—

THE CHAIRMAN. Well, all right; let me see your statement. (Statement handed to the chairman.)

MR. STRIPPLING. Do you have a copy of that?

MR. CRUM. We can get you copies.

THE CHAIRMAN. I don't care to read any more of the statement. The statement will not be read. I read the first line.

MR. LAWSON. You have spent 1 week vilifying me before the American public—

Signed: "J. Parnell Thomas, chairman."

Did you receive that telegram?

MR. LAWSON. I did.

MR. STRIPLING. You are here before the committee in response to this subpoena and in response to this summons in the form of a telegram from the chairman?

MR. LAWSON. I am.

MR. STRIPLING. What is your occupation, Mr. Lawson?

MR. LAWSON. I am a writer.

MR. STRIPLING. How long have you been a writer?

MR. LAWSON. All my life—at least 35 years—my adult life.

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

MR. LAWSON. The raising of any question here in regard to membership, political beliefs, or affiliation—

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman—

MR. LAWSON. Is absolutely beyond the powers of this committee.

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman—

MR. LAWSON. But—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. It is a matter of public record that I am a member of the Screen Writers Guild.

MR. STRIPLING. I ask—

[Applause.]

THE CHAIRMAN. I want to caution the people in the audience: You are the guests of this committee and you will have to maintain order at all times. I do not care for any applause or any demonstrations of one kind or another.

MR. STRIPLING. Now, Mr. Chairman, I am also going to request that you instruct the witness to be responsive to the questions.

THE CHAIRMAN. I think the witness will be more responsive to the questions.

MR. LAWSON. Mr. Chairman, you permitted—

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Never mind—

MR. LAWSON. (continuing). Witnesses in this room to make answers of three or four or five hundred words to questions here.

THE CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lawson, you will please be responsive to these questions and not continue to try to disrupt these hearings.

MR. LAWSON. I am not on trial here, Mr. Chairman. This committee is on trial here before the American people. Let us get that straight.

THE CHAIRMAN. We don't want you to be on trial.

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, how long have you been a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

MR. LAWSON. Since it was founded in its present form, in 1933.

MR. STRIPLING. Have you ever held any office in the guild?

MR. LAWSON. The question of whether I have held office is also a question which is beyond the purview of this committee.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. It is an invasion of the right of association under the Bill of Rights of this country.

THE CHAIRMAN. Please be responsive to the question.

MR. LAWSON. It is also a matter—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. Of public record—

THE CHAIRMAN. You asked to be heard. Through your attorney, you asked to be heard, and we want you to be heard. And if you don't care to be heard, then we will excuse you and we will put the record in without your answers.

MR. LAWSON. I wish to frame my own answers to your questions, Mr. Chairman, and I intend to do so.

THE CHAIRMAN. And you will be responsive to the questions or you will be excused from the witness stand.

MR. LAWSON. I will frame my own answers, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN. Go ahead, Mr. Stripling.

MR. STRIPLING. I repeat the question, Mr. Lawson:

Have you ever held any position in the Screen Writers Guild?

MR. LAWSON. I stated that it is outside the purview of the rights of this committee to inquire into any form of association—

THE CHAIRMAN. The Chair will determine what is in the purview of this committee.

MR. LAWSON. My rights as an American citizen are no less than the responsibilities of this committee of Congress.

THE CHAIRMAN. Now, you are just making a big scene for yourself and getting all "het up". [Laughter.]

Be responsive to the questioning, just the same as all the witnesses have. You are no different from the rest.

Go ahead, Mr. Stripling.

MR. LAWSON. I am being treated differently from the rest.

THE CHAIRMAN. You are not being treated differently.

MR. LAWSON. Other witnesses have made statements, which included quotations from books, references to material which had no connection whatsoever with the interest of this committee.

THE CHAIRMAN. We will determine whether it has connection.

Now, you go ahead—

MR. LAWSON. It is absolutely beyond the power of this committee to inquire into my association in any organization.

THE CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lawson, you will have to stop or you will leave

the witness stand. And you will leave the witness stand because you are in contempt. That is why you will leave the witness stand. And if you are just trying to force me to put you in contempt, you won't have to try much harder. You know what has happened to a lot of people that have been in contempt of this committee this year, don't you?

MR. LAWSON. I am glad you have made it perfectly clear that you are going to threaten and intimidate the witnesses, Mr. Chairman.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. I am an American and I am not at all easy to intimidate, and don't think I am.

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, I repeat the question. Have you ever held any position in the Screen Writers Guild?

MR. LAWSON. I have stated that the question is illegal. But it is a matter of public record that I have held many offices in the Screen Writers Guild. I was its first president, in 1933, and I have held office on the board of directors of the Screen Writers Guild at other times.

MR. STRIPLING. You have been employed in the motion-picture industry; have you not?

MR. LAWSON. I have.

MR. STRIPLING. Would you state some of the studios where you have been employed?

MR. LAWSON. Practically all of the studios, all the major studios.

MR. STRIPLING. As a screen writer?

MR. LAWSON. That is correct.

MR. STRIPLING. Would you list some of the pictures which you have written the script for?

MR. LAWSON. I must state again that you are now inquiring into the freedom of press and communications, over which you have no control whatsoever. You don't have to bring me here 3,000 miles to find out what pictures I have written. The pictures that I have written are very well known. They are such pictures as Action in the North Atlantic, Sahara—

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson—

MR. LAWSON. Such pictures as Blockade, of which I am very proud and in which I introduced the danger that this democracy faced from the attempt to destroy democracy in Spain in 1937. These matters are all matters of public record.

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, would you object if I read a list of the pictures, and then you can either state whether or not you did write the scripts?

MR. LAWSON. I have no objection at all.

MR. STRIPLING. Did you write Dynamite, by M-G-M?

MR. LAWSON. I preface my answer, again, by saying that it is outside the province of this committee, but it is well known that I did.

MR. STRIPLING. The Sea Bat, by M-G-M?

MR. LAWSON. It is well known that I did.

MR. STRIPLING. Success at Any Price, RKO?

MR. LAWSON. Yes; that is from a play of mine, Success Story.

MR. STRIPLING. Party Wire, Columbia?

MR. LAWSON. Yes; I did.

MR. STRIPLING. Blockade, United Artists, Wanger?

MR. LAWSON. That is correct.

MR. STRIPLING. Algiers, United Artists, Wanger?

MR. LAWSON. Correct.

MR. STRIPLING. Earth Bound, Twentieth Century Fox.

MR. LAWSON. Correct.

MR. STRIPLING. Counterattack, Columbia.

MR. LAWSON. Correct.

MR. STRIPLING. You have probably written others; have you not, Mr. Lawson?

MR. LAWSON. Many others. You have missed a lot of them.

MR. STRIPLING. You don't care to furnish them to the committee, do you?

MR. LAWSON. Not in the least interested.

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Lawson, are you now, or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party of the United States?

MR. LAWSON. In framing my answer to that question I must emphasize the points that I have raised before. The question of communism is in no way related to this inquiry, which is an attempt to get control of the screen and to invade the basic rights of American citizens in all fields.

MR. McDOWELL. Now, I must object—

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. The question here relates not only to the question of my membership in any political organization, but this committee is attempting to establish the right—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON (continuing). Which has been historically denied to any committee of this sort, to invade the rights and privileges and immunity of American citizens, whether they be Protestant, Methodist, Jewish, or Catholic, whether they be Republicans or Democrats or anything else.

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Mr. Lawson, just quiet down again.

MR. LAWSON, the most pertinent question that we can ask is whether or not you have ever been a member of the Communist Party. Now, do you care to answer that question?

MR. LAWSON. You are using the old technique, which was used in Hitler Germany in order to create a scare here—

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Oh—

MR. LAWSON. In order to create an entirely false atmosphere in which this hearing is conducted—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. In order that you can then smear the motion-picture industry, and you can proceed to the press, to any form of communication in this country.

THE CHAIRMAN. You have learned—

MR. LAWSON. The Bill of Rights was established precisely to prevent the operation of any committee which could invade the basic rights of Americans.

Now, if you want to know—

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman, the witness is not answering the question.

MR. LAWSON. If you want to know—

(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. LAWSON. About the perjury that has been committed here and the perjury that is planned.

THE CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lawson—

MR. LAWSON. You permit me and my attorneys to bring in here the witnesses that testified last week and you permit us to cross-examine these witnesses, and we will show up the whole tissue of lie—

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). We are going to get the answer to that question if we have to stay here for a week.

Are you a member of the Communist Party, or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

MR. LAWSON. It is unfortunate and tragic that I have to reach this committee the basic principles of American—

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). That is not the question. That is not the question. The question is: Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

MR. LAWSON. I am framing my answer in the only way in which any American citizen can frame his answer to a question which absolutely invades his rights.

THE CHAIRMAN. Then you refuse to answer that question; is that correct?

MR. LAWSON. I have told you that I will offer my beliefs, affiliations, and everything else to the American public, and they will know where I stand.

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Excuse the witness—

MR. LAWSON. As they do from what I have written.

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). Stand away from the stand—

MR. LAWSON. I have written Americanism for many years, and I shall continue to fight for the Bill of Rights, which you are trying to destroy.

THE CHAIRMAN. Officers, take this man away from the stand—

[Applause and boos.]

THE CHAIRMAN (pounding gavel). There will be no demonstrations. No demonstrations, for or against. Everyone will please be seated.

All right, go ahead, Mr. Stripling. Proceed.

MR. STRIPLING. Mr. Chairman, the committee has made exhaustive investigation and research into the Communist affiliations of Mr. John Howard Lawson. Numerous witnesses under oath have identified Mr. Lawson as a member of the Communist Party.

I have here a nine-page memorandum which details at length his affiliations with the Communist Party and its various front organizations.

I now ask that Mr. Louis J. Russell, an investigator for the committee, take the stand.

THE CHAIRMAN. Mr. Russell, raise your right hand, please.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. RUSSELL. I do.

THE CHAIRMAN. Sit down.

MR. STRIPLING. In order to give the committee the type of affiliations that Mr. Lawson has had with the Communist Party, I should like to refer, Mr. Chairman, to an article which appeared in the *Daily Worker*, the official organ of the Communist Party. This article is dated September 6, 1935, and appears on page 5 of the *Daily Worker*. Under the headline "Artists, writers," it says:

We cannot let the *Daily Worker* go under—

referring to the *Daily Worker*. It says:

Need for *Daily Worker* has grown a thousand times since 1934.

By John Howard Lawson. The article bears a picture of Mr. Lawson, and it appears on the front page of the *Daily Worker*.

Under the *Daily Worker* heading, the following language appears:

The *Daily Worker*—central organ of the Communist Party of the United States, section of the Communist International.

I have here, Mr. Chairman, another article from the *Daily Worker* by John Howard Lawson, dated February 26, 1935, page 5:

The Story of William Z. Foster, a tribute on the occasion of his fifty-fourth birthday, by John Howard Lawson.

I have here, Mr. Chairman, over 100 exhibits showing Mr. Lawson's affiliations with the party.

I see no point in taking the committee's time in reading each exhibit. If the Chair desires, I will read the nine-page memorandum, after Mr. Russell has testified. I will submit copies of this—

THE CHAIRMAN. Without objection, they will be made a part of the record.

MR. STRUPLING. Mr. Russell, you have been sworn in this hearing; have you not?

MR. RUSSELL. I have.

TESTIMONY OF LOUIS J. RUSSELL

MR. STRUPLING. Your name is Louis J. Russell?

MR. RUSSELL. That is right.

MR. STRUPLING. You are a member of the investigative staff of the Committee on Un-American Activities?

MR. RUSSELL. I am.

MR. STRUPLING. You were formerly with the FBI for 10 years?

MR. RUSSELL. I was.

MR. STRUPLING. Were you detailed to make an investigation as to the Communist Party affiliations of John Howard Lawson?

MR. RUSSELL. I was.

MR. STRUPLING. What did your investigation disclose?

MR. RUSSELL. During the course of my investigation and the investigation concluded by the committee, we were furnished—or I was—with copies of Communist Party registration cards pertaining to certain individuals for the year 1941.

THE CHAIRMAN. Speak louder, please.

MR. RUSSELL. One of those cards bears the number "47275" and is made out in the name of John Howard Lawson, 4542 Coldwater Canyon; city, Los Angeles; county, Los Angeles, State, California. There is a notation contained on this registration card: "New card issued on December 10, 1944." Other information contained on this card, which referred to the personal description of the John Howard Lawson mentioned, on Communist Party registration No. 47275—the description is as follows:

Male, white, Occupation, writer. Industry, motion pictures. Member of CIO-A. F. of L. "Independent union or no union," "Independent union" is checked. There is a question asked on this registration card: "Is member club subscriber for Daily Worker?" The answer, "Yes," is checked.

MR. STRUPLING. That is all, Mr. Russell.

Now, Mr. Chairman, what is the committee's pleasure with regard to the nine-page memorandum? Do you want it read into the record or do you want it made a part of the record?

THE CHAIRMAN. The committee wants you to read it.
MR. STRUPLING (reading):

INFORMATION FROM THE FILES OF THE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE COMMUNIST AFFILIATIONS OF JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

John Howard Lawson is a screen writer and one of the most active Communists in the Hollywood movie industry. He has written the following scripts: Dynamite (M-G-M); The Sea Bar (M-G-M); Blushing Brides (M-G-M); Ship From Shanghai (M-G-M); Bachelor Apartment (Radio Films); Success at Any Price (RKO-Radio), 1934; Goodbye Love (RKO-Radio), 1934; Treasure Island (M-G-M), 1934; Party Wire (Columbia), 1935; Blockade (United Artists-Wanger), 1938; Algiers (United Artists-Wanger), 1938; They Shall Have Music (United Artists-Goldwyn), 1939; Four Sons (20th Century-Fox), 1940; Earthbound (20th Century-Fox), 1940; Sahara (Columbia), 1943; Counterrack (Columbia), 1945.

The files of the House Committee on Un-American Activities show that—

1. Rena M. Vale, a former member of the Communist Party and a screen writer, testified before the Special Committee on Un-American Activities on July 22, 1940, that Mr. Lawson had been identified to her as a Communist Party member when she met him at a Communist Party fraction meeting. She further testified that Mr. Lawson during the meeting gave advice on inserting the Communist Party line into drama. The State legislative committee investigating un-American activities in California cited Mr. Lawson as "one of the most important Marxist strategists in southern California," in its 1945 report, page 118. The California report notes on the same page that Rena M. Vale also testified before the State legislative committee and that the witness identified Lawson as a member of the Communist Party fraction of the Screen Writers Guild who had given advice on the Communist Party program in the writing of the play, *Sun Rises in the West*. The State legislative committee states further, in its 1947 report, page 260, that Mr. Lawson directed a Communist bloc of about 65 members in local 47, the Hollywood local of the American Federation of Musicians, AFL, between the years 1937 and 1940. . . .¹