

**“Someday We’ll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas”:
Adrian Scott and the HUAC Hearings**

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Contents

Abstract	iii
List of Figures	iv
Introduction	1
Life Before the Hearings: Adrian Scott, Pre-HUAC	4
The Red Scare of the Silver Screen: The Hearings of 1947	11
The Blacklist: Adrian Scott and Hollywood after the Hearings	18
Conclusion	24
Works Cited	27

Abstract

In 1946 the 79th congress passed, public law 601 which mandated that the House un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) would be able to investigate that of which threatens “the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our own constitution.” In 1947 HUAC turned its attention to flushing out communism in Hollywood, and with it ushered in the “blacklist era”. In this essay I will explore HUAC’s investigation of blacklisted artist Adrian Scott in specific focusing on how his ideas should be considered American.

List of Figure

Figure 1: Political Cartoon published in “Who’s un-American” pamphlet.	1
Figure 2: Bio of Robert Adrian Lawry Scott taken from the Amherst College Yearbook.	4
Figure 3: Photo of Adrian Scott as a young man.	15
Figure 4: Photo of Adrian Scott from “Someday We’ll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas”.	25

Introduction

In October of 1947, the House un-American Activities Committee was established to investigate domestic communism in the U.S. heard from subpoenaed witnesses of the motion-picture industry. Throughout the two weeks of hearings, witnesses were split into two different groups being either friendly or unfriendly. Friendlies were those witnesses who agreed to participate in the answering of the committee's questions. The unfriendlies consisted of 19 people who were vocal in their opposition to the committee's investigation. Out of the 19

unfriendly witnesses subpoenaed to appear in Washington D.C., ten were called upon to speak at the hearings. These ten refused to answer the committee's central question,

"Are you know, or have you ever been a member of the communist party?". These men believed that the committee's inquiry into their political views was in violation of the First Amendment's protection of free speech.¹ These ten witnesses (Alvah Bessie, Herbert

Biberman, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner Jr, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz,

Robert Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo) became known as the Hollywood Ten. Following the hearings these men all found themselves in legal battles in which they were all found in contempt of Congress and eventually sent to federal prison.²



Figure 1: Political Cartoon published in "Who's un-American" pamphlet. Source: "Who's un-American", issued by Food, Tobacco, Agriculture, and Allied Workers Union, Box #2, Folder #19, Adrian and Joan Scott Papers, Collection Number 3238, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

¹ Bernard Dick, *Radical Innocence: A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 1-3.

² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

These men were targeted by HUAC due to their affiliation with the Communist Party of America. Although the committee was created with the legal protection to investigate “subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution”³. Adrian Scott still believed that the committee was targeting people who disseminated messages which were in opposition to committee members beliefs.

Through my correspondence with workers at the University of Wyoming American Heritage Center, I received an interesting piece of anti-HUAC propaganda from the Adrian and Joan Scott papers entitled “Who is Unamerican”. Although it should be noted this document is inherently biased due to the fact that it has been produced by the Food, Tobacco, Agriculture and Allied Workers Union of America, I still found it to contain relevant facts about the members of HUAC. Possibly the most alarming thing in this document comes in the section entitled “What They Say”. Within the text lies a quote that has been taken from an investigator of the committee which was directed towards Professor Clyde Miller of Columbia University. “You should tell your Jewish friends that the Jews in Germany stuck their necks out too far and Hitler took good care of them and that same thing will happen here unless they watch their step.”⁴ Although this quote is taken from a single member of the committee Anti-Semitism was a belief common amongst HUAC’s members.⁵ Even so, this association of Anti-Semitism did not make HUACS

³ House of Representatives, 79th Congress, Public Law 601. 1946.
http://nyx.uky.edu/dips/xt7zcr5n9g1t/data/82m1/82m1_5/82m1_5_5/126246/126246.pdf (accessed Oct 5, 2018).

⁴ “Who’s un-American”, issued by Food, Tobacco, Agriculture, and Allied Workers Union, Box #2, Folder #19, Adrian and Joan Scott Papers, Collection Number 3238, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁵ Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood’s Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 14.

investigation invalid. With that said I will still explore the idea of how HUAC members prejudices could have had influence on the 1947 investigation.

One possible example of prejudices can be seen in the demographics of the Unfriendly Witnesses subpoenaed in the motion-picture industry. In an earlier draft of the subpoena list HUAC's Chairman J. Parnell Thomas had compiled eleven names he believed to be connected to subversive activities. Out of these eleven names, nine were non-native mostly Jewish émigrés to the US. The only two native US citizens were director Edward Dmytryk and producer Adrian Scott. It can be assumed that these two men were put on Thomas's list because they had just released *Crossfire*, a film which was in opposition to fascism and anti-Semitism in the US.⁶

In this essay I will be exploring the life of *Crossfire* producer Adrian Scott in order to better understand the type of men HUAC viewed as being subversive. I will first look at Scott's early life from growing up in New Jersey through college and eventually up to his career in Hollywood. I will then move on to his life in 1947 in the mist of the HUAC hearings. Finally, I will look at what Scott's life was like after his refusal to cooperate with HUAC, from being imprisoned up until his eventual death on December 25th, 1972. In the end I hope to provide the reader with an understanding that these men who were blacklisted as a result of the HUAC hearings were not in their nature un-American. On the contrary, I believe them to be more American in their actions than those members of the committee who sought to protect the American "ideals" of fascism, anti-Semitism, and racism. The Hollywood Ten risked their freedom and careers to stand up for those individuals who have repeatedly faced discrimination and injustice.

⁶ Jennifer E. Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire: Adrian Scott and the Politics of Americanism in 1940's Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), ch9 par17. (accessed November 16th, 2018.)

Life before the Hearings: Adrian Scott, Pre-HUAC

Robert Adrian Scott was born on February 6, 1911. Scott came from an Irish Catholic family, living in Arlington, New Jersey. Being in close proximity to New York City his father worked in middle management for the New York Telephone Company. Arlington was also in close proximity to Manhattan, the home of Broadway.⁷ Being so close to the powerhouse of stage production, it is no wonder that Adrian took an interest into theater from a young age, an interest he would carry for his entire life.

Adrian attended Amherst College in Massachusetts where he majored in History and English. Before his graduation in 1934, he was also active in his school's theatre productions.⁸ Adrian was a charismatic young man as illustrated by the piece from his Amherst yearbook:

Hat cocked back at a rakish angle, cigar in the corner of his mouth, his fingers playing nimbly over the typewriter keys, the inimitable R.A.L. Scott is again displaying his versatility pounding out a thesis for his Genetics course. Among his other weaknesses are: an uncontrollable passion for high pressure music (Black Jazz, Tiger Rag and Maniac's Ball being among the most offensive), a luscious moustache, an incurable habit of snoring in his sleep, and a bitter distaste for the nickname "Bobby". Despite the above-mentioned peccadillos, he is an accomplished and individualistic character. An irresistible personality, tolerant and understanding, he is one whose friendship is well worth acquiring. A mild Epicurean, he lends conviviality to any party, and a student whose originality and constructive thought are assets to any discussion. Smooth, always the gentleman, this curly haired young man merrily and unconcernedly



Robert Adrian Lawry Scott
Arlington, N. J.
Delta Tau Delta

HAT cocked back at a rakish angle, cigar in the corner of his mouth, his fingers playing nimbly over the typewriter keys, the inimitable R. A. L. Scott is again displaying his versatility by creating a Lee Tracy atmosphere while pounding out a thesis for his Genetics course. Among his other weaknesses are: an uncontrollable passion for high pressure music (Black Jazz, Tiger Rag and Maniac's Ball being among the most offensive), a luscious moustache, an incurable habit of snoring in his sleep, and a bitter distaste for the nickname "Bobby". Despite the above mentioned peccadillos he is an accomplished and individualistic character. An irresistible personality, tolerant and understanding, he is one whose friendship is well worth acquiring. A mild Epicurean, he lends conviviality to any party, and a student whose originality and constructive thought are assets to any discussion. Smooth, always the gentleman, this curly haired young man merrily and unconcernedly goes his way, unenvious of fame or fortune, but content.

To predict his future is an impossibility. Nevertheless it seems certain, despite his dislike of publicity, that he will be heard from. His talents are too many to go unnoticed.

Figure 2: Bio of Robert Adrian Lawry Scott taken from the Amherst College Yearbook. Source: Yearbook Blurb on Adrian Scott, the *Olio*, Amherst College, 1934. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/detail/c1-2photo.html>

⁷ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch1 par5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch1 par6.

goes his way, unenvious of fame or fortune, but content.

To predict his future is an impossibility. Nevertheless, it seems certain, despite his dislike of publicity, that he will be heard from. His talents are too many to go unnoticed.⁹

The last paragraph of this biography rung truer than I believe anyone could have predicted. It was as if the writer of the piece were crafting the novel of Adrian's life the sentence foreshadows the events about to unfold. His colleagues expected to hear of him they just didn't think it be due to a witch-hunt.

Following his graduation from Amherst College, Adrian decided to head west and try his luck in Hollywood for the first time. Through his brother Allan, Adrian was hired at RKO in 1934. He worked as a technical consultant on the low-budget B-unit, *Gridiron Flash*, for \$25-a-week. Scott worked at RKO to no prevail in moving up in the ranks. He didn't receive any screen credits for his work on *Gridiron Flash*.¹⁰

Frustrated with his work in Hollywood, Adrian Scott decided to head back east to New York. In 1937, he was hired by *Stage Magazine* as an assistant editor for film.¹¹ “*Stage*, the chic precursor of *Theatre arts*, was the “The Magazine of After-Dark Entertainment,” as its cover proclaimed.”¹² It was while working at *Stage* that Adrian Scott and John Paxton first met. Paxton and Scott sharing an interest in theater and production quickly became friends. “Horried at the idea of going into business and sitting at a desk all day, Paxton studied journalism at the University of Missouri. However, he was equally drawn to the theater, which he felt was more

⁹ Yearbook Blurb on Adrian Scott, *the Olio*, Amherst College, 1934. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/detail/c1-2photo.html> (accessed November 15, 2018).

¹⁰ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 122.

¹¹ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch1 par8.

¹² Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 121.

social than writing and had the added attraction of ‘pretty girls and excitement.’”¹³ Given the fact that both Scott and Paxton shared similar interest in combination of working side by side at *Stage* it is easy to understand how the two could foster a connection that would be prevalent for years to come.

As part of the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration, the Federal Theater Project was created on May 6th, 1935. The FTP “created a new model of socially conscious *and* federally subsidized theater.”¹⁴ This idea of socially conscious entertainment was something that Scott himself would get behind.

Through their work on *Stage*, Scott and Paxton were immersed in a heady world of ideas and culture, as they interviewed or corresponded with such intellectuals as John Strachey and Max Eastman; theater luminaries from Kurt Weill and Max Reinhardt to Eve La Gallienne and Robert Sherwood; Literary figures from John Steinbeck to James Thurber; and Hollywood heavyweights from Alfred Hitchcock to Frank Capra and Charles Laughton.¹⁵

Working for *Stage* must have been a profoundly influential period in both Scott and Paxton’s early lives. Being exposed to such influential people in the world of the arts, they acquired new tools to use in their own crafts on top of the being exposed to new ways of thought about the world and the responsibilities as an artist.

As influential of a time it was working at *Stage*, the magazine wasn’t unaffected by financial issues prevalent during the Great Depression. Due to these issues, Scott was let go in 1938.¹⁶ Following his time in New York, Scott decided to return to screenwriting in Hollywood. Having lived through the Great Depression and being a witness to the rise of fascism with the

¹³ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch1 par8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ch1 par9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ch1 par9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ch1 par10.

Nazi party coming into control in 1933, Scott was now determined to make documentaries which served a purpose. Scott came to be further intertwined with leftist ideology in opposition to the growing fascism he was seeing. For Scott, this meant sharing ideology with members of the Communist Party.¹⁷ Although he was unsuccessful in bringing his dreams of making documentary films to fruition between the years of 1939 to 1941, he received his first three screen credits bouncing around various studios.¹⁸

Scott's first real break came in 1942 when he was hired by RKO to write a script for the novel *Bundles for Freedom*, which would eventually become the film *Mr. Lucky*.¹⁹ This would be the first A picture credit Scott had the potential of earning. The term A picture here refers to a film produced during the Golden Age of Hollywood (late 1920's to early 1960's) where block booking was a common practice for theaters. It was often the case that for a movie theater to receive a studio's more sought-after film (A picture) they also had to purchase a cheaper made film (B picture). These films would then often be played together as a part of a double feature. Before this opportunity to make an A picture came, Scott had applied to join the Army Signal Corps, which is a division of the Army in charge of making military training films. Shortly after being hired by RKO, his application to join the Army Signal Corps had been accepted. Not wanting to miss his opportunity in breaking into writing for A-unit pictures, he wrote to the draft board asking for an extension of one month to write the picture. RKO, not wanting to lose Scott, also wrote to the draft board in support of the importance of his work for the studio. As it would turn out, Scott was granted his deferment, and allowed to stay in Hollywood, due to the fact that

¹⁷ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 122.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

RKO was considered a war industry. He never ended up serving in the Military.²⁰ Scott wasn't the only writer hired to work on drafting a script for *Mr. Lucky*. As was common for studios at the time, there were multiple writers assigned to writing the same story. This led to a collaborative system, which resulted in a final project containing pieces from multiple writers. Through the parts that Scott contributed to *Mr. Lucky*, we can extract that he believed in the idea of universal brotherhood.²¹

Following the success of *Mr. Lucky*, in 1943, RKO negotiated a new contract with Scott for \$500 a week (which in today's value would come in just under \$300,000 a year).²² This new contract also promoted Scott to being a producer with the stipulation that he could be asked to write the scripts he produces.²³ For Scott, this was the ideal position. He believed that in order to truly have any chance of inserting a message into a film, you had to also produce it.²⁴ However, in 1943, as Scott seemed to be on the come-up, something more sinister was lurking around the corner.

In the 1930s, the FBI had begun to monitor Communist activity in Hollywood, originally focused on unionization and left-wing organization activity. However, by 1942, they had shifted focus on radical content in films. Under the request of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, the bureau compiled reports containing films which showed "subversive influence".²⁵ Hoover, unsatisfied

²⁰ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch1 par48-49.

²¹ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 125.

²² CPI Inflation Calculator. "<http://www.in2013dollars.com/1943-dollars-in-2017?amount=500>" (accessed December 16, 2018).

²³ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 126.

²⁴ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch3 par2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ch1 par53.

with only having subjective evidence of Communist infiltration in the film industry, decided to orchestrate a plan straight out of a heist film. In 1943, FBI agents broke into the offices of the Los Angeles Communist party and photocopied membership information from the Hollywood files. These break-ins continued to happen all the way through 1947. By that time, they had compiled a list of eight producers, fifteen directors, forty-five actresses, forty-seven actors, and 127 writers as being current or past Communist party members.²⁶ However, being linked to a political party in itself is not a crime. Los Angeles FBI offices found no evidence of Hollywood Communist activity being linked to espionage or any other activities breaking federal law.²⁷ This fact though didn't stop the bureau from going after the Communist party members. Looking at the FBI file for Robert Adrian Scott, we see that it was created on March 3rd, 1944.²⁸ Due to the fact that it was created within the timeline that these illegal break-ins were occurring, I think it's safe to assume that Scott was one of the people turned up by the search. Taking a deeper look into Scott's file, we see that his political affiliations have been meticulously tracked and pieced together. Possibly the most interesting item in these entries comes when referencing the obtaining of the delegates of the Los Angeles Communist party:

A typewritten list of delegates to the Los Angeles Communist Party Country Convention held in Los Angeles October 30-31, 1943, was furnished to this office (the next few words have been blacked out) Adrian Scott was listed as a delegate from Branch A, Writer's Branch of Northwest Section. Photostatic copies of the credential blanks filed by each delegate were obtained by agents of this office from Source B.²⁹

²⁶ Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists*, 79.

²⁷ Athan G. Theoharis, *A Lawless Agency: The FBI and the Hollywood Ten*. 418 from Rhetoric and Public Affairs.

²⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Report on Adrian Scott*, March 3, 1944. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/pdfs/c2-3-as-fbi-3-3-44.pdf> (accessed November 8, 2018).

²⁹ Ibid.

The cryptic reference to having received information from Source B leads the reader to ask who was this mysterious source, a mole in the organization or possibly an uncover informant? Although their identity is not known, as we will learn later in this essay this information obtained through illegal tactics and mysterious sources came to be used against Scott and others in the 1947 HUAC hearings.

Coming back to Hollywood, Adrian Scott in 1944 had just finished his first film as a producer for RKO, *My Pal Wolf*. Using his newly appointed position as producer, he hired his old friend from *Stage Magazine*, John Paxton, to write the film, earning him his first screen credit. Although the film was met with moderate success, it was still a part of RKO's B-unit. Scott, interested in making an A-unit film, set upon adapting Raymond Chandler's novel *Farewell, My Lovely*. After getting the green light from RKO, Scott sat down alongside Paxton to help write the screenplay that would become known as *Murder, My Sweet* (1944). The success of this film did a few different things. First, it proved that Scott wasn't a producer to be overlooked. Second, it launched Paxton into being the most valuable writer at RKO. Lastly, it introduced both Scott and Paxton to director Edward Dmytryk.³⁰ This trio would return again to create the antifascist film *Cornered* (1945).³¹

Following *Murder, My Sweet* and *Cornered*, Scott made the film *Deadline at Dawn* (1946) with director Harold Clurman. After this film, Scott would return to working with Paxton and Dmytryk on two more films: *So Well Remembered* (1947) and *Crossfire* (1947). Out of all the films Scott was a part of creating, *Crossfire* was arguable the one, based of his personal accounts, that he was most proud of.

³⁰ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 128.

³¹ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch3 par47.

The Red Scare of the Silver Screen: The Hearings of 1947

The House Committee on un-American Activities, also known as the House un-American Activities Committee (or HUAC for short), went through multiple iterations before becoming what it was by the time the 1947 hearings took place. Named after Republican politician Hamilton Fish Jr. III, the committee was originally founded as the Fish Committee in 1930. Following a few questionable inaugural years, the committee became known in 1934 as the McCormack Dickstein Committee. However, it wasn't until Texan politician Martin Dies Jr. took over that the committee hit its full stride in investigating communist activity of the US population.³² In 1946 Public Law 601 passed by the 79th congress established HUAC as a permanent standing committee. Public Law 601 authorized that:

(2) The Committee on Un-American Activities, as a whole or by subcommittee, is authorized to make from time to time investigations of (i) the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States, (ii) the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution, and (iii) all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation... For the purpose of any such investigation, the Committee on Un-American Activities, or any subcommittee thereof, is authorized to sit and act at such times and places within the United States, whether or not the House is sitting, has recessed, or has adjourned, to hold such hearings, to require that attendance of such witnesses and the production of such books, papers, and documents, and to take such testimony, as it deems necessary. Subpoenas may be issued under the signature of the chairman of the committee or any subcommittee, or by any member designated by any such chairman, and may be served by any person designated by any such chairman or member.³³

Now with the establishment of permanent legal backing they could begin to flush out the Communist influence in Hollywood. It should be noted that HUAC did behave differently from

³² *Encyclopedia of the American Left*. Edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, Dan Georgakas. (New York: Garland Publishing, INC., 1990), 334.

³³ House of Representatives, 79th Congress, Public Law 601, 1946.

other committees of the House in the way that they were more concerned with establishing a public feeling of anticommunism than the legislative purpose established by the constitution. For the committee, it didn't matter if you were an actual member of the Communist party or just a sympathizer. For this reason, many found themselves subpoenaed by the committee and forced to cooperate under threat of citation for contempt.³⁴

HUAC, convinced that communism had taken over in the film industry turned their attention to Hollywood. The committee now headed by chairman J. Parnell Thomas, had been interested in leading the charge against Hollywood Communism since 1945. However, it wasn't until 1947 that HUAC subpoenaed individuals working in Hollywood, following FBI director Hoover's decision to illegally and secretly leak information to chairman Thomas and Robert Stripling.³⁵ It wasn't just Hoover that wanted HUAC to come to Hollywood. There was also a good deal of support from within the film industry. HUAC was welcomed by the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. This alliance was founded in 1944 by right-wing Hollywood activists such as actor Robert Taylor, studio boss Walt Disney, labor leader Roy Brewer, and others sought to fight public perception of radical influence.³⁶

By September of 1947, HUAC had issued forty-three subpoenas to members of the film industry. Adrian Scott received his subpoena on September 18, 1947, not even two months after the July 22, 1947 release of his film *Crossfire*, which was in opposition to fascism and anti-Semitism in the US. It was Scott's belief that he and *Crossfire's* director Edward Dmytryk were being targeted because of the film.³⁷ However there is not concrete evidence to support the idea

³⁴ *Encyclopedia of the American Left*. Buhle, Buhle, Georgakas, 334-335.

³⁵ Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists*, 80.

³⁶ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch9 par34.

³⁷ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch9 par17.

that committee members personal biases played a role in how they conducted the investigations. Looking at the subpoena that Scott received, HUAC did not specify the reason for his request to appear before the committee. It simply stated that he was “to testify touching matters of inquiry committed to said Committee”.³⁸ Interestingly enough, Jennifer Langdon the leader scholar on Adrian Scott research seems to gravitate towards the idea that HUAC used communism influence as a pretense to silence members in Hollywood who were making films that opposed their personal ideals. In her book *Caught in the Crossfire: Adrian Scott and the Politics of Americanism in 1940's Hollywood* she brings up many examples of how the committees personal beliefs showed correlation between those people deemed as Unfriendly Witnesses. However, it should be noted that the main focus of this work is not to criticize the members of HUAC but, to rather explore the factors that go into creating a public consciousness and what effects Hollywood films, in specific *Crossfire* have on it.³⁹

Prior to the hearings occurring in October of 1947, the Progressive Citizens of America and the University of California Los Angeles sponsored a conference entitled “Thought Control in America”, held in July 1947.⁴⁰ Looking at a the document written for the event by Adrian Scott entitled “You Can’t Do That”, Scott chose to discuss the thoughts and conversations he had in the months leading up to the making of *Crossfire*. Simply put, Scott, Paxton, and Dmytryk knew that making a film like this was quite controversial. They would be putting their reputations on the line in the name of disseminating a message they believed in, an idea many people

³⁸ Adrian Scotts subpoena to appear before the House un-American Activities committee, September 18, 1947. “<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/detail/c9-2.html>” (accessed December 10, 2018).

³⁹ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ch9 par19.

discouraged for them so early in their careers. This would be the first film which openly dealt with the discrimination of anti-Semitism. Because of this, they weren't sure it could be done or, to that matter, should be done. Scott speaks of his concern that if he approached the head of RKO with the idea to turn the novel *The Brick Foxhole* a book about the murder of a Gay man, into a film, it would instantly be shot down.⁴¹

Watching the film in modern times, nothing about it seems to be out of the ordinary to today's standards. The plot is that a Jewish man murdered by an unknown assailant unfolds into a melodrama which follows the investigation leading to a group of soldier's home from the war. As the film progresses, we see one soldier being falsely detained for the murder due to his inability to recall the events of the night. The climax of the film comes when detective Finlay reveals that the motive previous unknown is in fact as simple as hate. Samuels, a Jewish man, was murdered solely for the fact that he was a Jew. Prompting detective Finlay to state:

The business of hating Jews comes in a lot of different sizes. There's the "you can't join our country club" kind... and "you can't live around here" kind. Yes, and the "you can't work here" kind. And because we stand for all of these, we get Monty's kind. He's just one guy. We don't get him very often, but he grows out of all the rest... you know we have a law about carrying a gun... We have that law because a gun is dangerous. Well, hate, Monty's kind of hate, is like a gun. If you carry it around with you, it can go off and kill somebody. It killed Samuels last night.⁴²

The message delivered seems to be pretty universally received in modern times, but for a film of 1947, it was quite a progressive idea.

As it should be obvious to the reader by this point, Scott, Paxton, and Dmytryk were able to make this film. To their joy, it was also well received by audiences of the time. They received

⁴¹ Adrian Scott, "You Can't Do That," Conference on Thought Control in the USA, 1947. 324-326. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/pdfs/c5-1-you-cant-do-that.pdf> (accessed November 15, 2018).

⁴² *Crossfire*, directed by Edward Dmytryk, screenplay by John Paxton, produced by Adrian Scott (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947), Amazon Video.

several messages in regard to *Crossfire* being a film which actual sentiment could be drawn from. This boils down to the fact that this film dealt with real world issues, something uncommon for the period. Scott states that the fear he felt in opposition to making the picture proves that, “My colleagues and I are guilty. We imposed a censorship on ourselves, in first considering a picture on anti-Semitism in its preparation. There is nothing in the code of the Producers Association which prevents the making of this picture.”⁴³ In the end, Scott concludes, “We’ve got to speak now – or we’ll be forced to “forever hold our peace.”⁴⁴ Scott maintained this same mentality after he had been subpoenaed by the committee. Scott and the other eighteen Unfriendly Witnesses didn’t see HUAC as being a legitimate arm of the national government but a device for eliminating the New Deal. Due to this, the



Figure 4: Photo of Adrian Scott as a young man.
Source:
<https://usefulstooges.com/tag/robert-adrian-scott/>

nineteen sat down to plan a way in which they could maintain their jobs, stay out of jail, and expose HUAC as a device for attacking the American left. Seeking legal representation, they enlisted the help of attorneys Robert Kenny and Barley Crum. In the planning of their strategy, the nineteen ultimately decided upon basing their defense on the first amendment, protection of free speech and free association. They also all worked together in crafting their personal statements that they would read to the Committee. Even with this strategy in place, the groups attorneys made it clear to them that their case would only be won in the Supreme Court. They

⁴³ Scott, “You Can’t Do That”, 328.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 330.

were advised that they should expect to be held in contempt of Congress and loose in the lower courts.⁴⁵ With that being stated, it should go to show just how strongly these members believed that what they were doing was just.

On October 20th, 1947 in Washington D.C., the House un-American Activities Committee began the hearing on alleged Communist infiltration of the motion-picture-industry. The trails were set to span over two weeks, concluding on October 30th, 1947.⁴⁶ HUAC wanted to open up the hearings in a positive way, so they decided in the week leading up to the hearings to divide into separate groups, hearing from the friendlies first. The initial week of hearing passed by without any resistance for the committee, concluding on October 24th with the hearing of Walter E. Disney.⁴⁷

The following week of hearings opened up on Monday, October 27th. Even though the committee had announced the order for the unfriendlies hearings beforehand, when the time came, they were called upon more or less at random. Although he was supposed to be third, John Howard Lawson was the first to be called upon that Monday morning. Upon requesting to read his prepared statement, he turned the sheet over to chairman Thomas for review. Lawson's request was quickly denied. Chairman Thomas stated that Lawson's statement was not pertinent to the inquiry. HUAC member Robert E. Stripling proceeded to ask general questions of Lawson, having him state his name, address, occupation, and place of employment before landing on the question which would become infamous in these hearings, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the communist party."⁴⁸ This question sent Lawson into a tirade,

⁴⁵ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch9 par21-23.

⁴⁶ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 1.

⁴⁷ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

proclaiming over the banging of chairman Thomas's gavel that the committee was "attempting to establish the right which has been historically denied to a committee of this sort..." In the end Lawson was held in contempt of Congress, effectively making him the first member of the Hollywood Ten.⁴⁹

Scott's hearing wasn't called until October 29th, by that time, Lawson, Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, Alvah Bessie, Samuel Ornitz, Herbert Biberman, and Edward Dmytryk had all been found in contempt of Congress. Watching the 1976 documentary *Hollywood on Trial* we can get a glimpse into the 1947 HUAC hearings thanks to the clips recorded at the hearings. Upon examining these clips, it can be seen that Mr. Scott responded to the committee's question in a very calm manor.⁵⁰ In response to the question, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?" Scott states:

Mr. Stripling, that question is designed to inquire into my personal and private life. I don't think it is pertinent to this – I don't think it is a proper question either... I believe that question also invades my right as a citizen. I believe it also invades the first amendment. I believe that I could not engage in any conspiracy with you to invade the first amendment.⁵¹

Unsurprisingly, Adrian Scott was also suggested by the committee to be held in contempt of Congress.

Although it can't be known how Scott hoped the trial would go, upon examination of the statement he had prepared for the hearing which stated by chairman Thomas, "may not be the worst statement we have received, but its close."⁵² we see that Scott set out to call out the racist

⁴⁹ "Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry", Hearings Before the Committee on un-American Activities House of Representatives. Public Law 601 (Section 121, Subsection Q(2)) (1947): 293-294, <https://archive.org/details/hearingsregardin1947aunit/page/n3> (accessed October 22, 2018).

⁵⁰ *Hollywood on Trial*, directed by David Helpern (Cinema Associates, 1976), Amazon Stream.

⁵¹ "Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry", 467-468.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 466.

and discriminatory nature of the committee and its members. In opposition to bigoted HUAC members, Scott discusses the nineteen unfriendlies as always being committed to films which challenge racism and all other prejudices. It is because of their commitment to establishing freedom for every religion and race they now face persecution by the committee.⁵³ In affect, Scott was ready to speak up against the committee but ultimately denied the chance to do so by chairman Thomas.

The Blacklist: Adrian Scott and Hollywood after the Hearings

You have a way of life and suddenly it's snatched away from you. You become something of a pariah and automatically it makes changes in you. You've achieved a certain level and it's smashed. Your whole world falls into a jumbled heap, like a construction of wooden blocks knocked down before your shocked eyes. It left me trembling and lonely.⁵⁴ – Adrian Scott

At the end of the October 1947 hearings, HUAC suggested that ten men, a mix of writers, actors, producers, and directors, be found in contempt of Congress. These ten men, (Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner Jr, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Robert Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo) became known as the Hollywood Ten. For the ten, life after the hearings was anything but certain. Unsure of what would happen next, most tried to resume life as normal, but normalcy was a hard thing to find in the wake of events. Following the hearings, Scott had a telephone conversation with RKO head Dore Schary, who insisted he forget about the hearings and return back to Hollywood to continue working. Although both Scott and Dmytryk returned to RKO to resume work, it was to

⁵³ Adrian Scott, Typescript of HUAC statement, October 1947. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/pdfs/c9-7-as-huac-statement.pdf> (accessed Nov 1, 2018.)

⁵⁴ Ralph Friedman, "Someday We'll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas, Says Adrian Scott," Labor's Daily, February 11, 1958. <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/pdfs/c10-17-as-interview-labors-daily.pdf> (accessed Nov 15, 2018).

an uncertain atmosphere. When Schary was called to the stand during hearings, he made the statement:

I can tell you personally what I feel. Up until the time it is proved that a Communist is a man dedicated to the overthrow of the government by force or violence, or by any illegal methods, I cannot make any determination of his employment on any other basis except whether he is qualified best to do the job I want him to do.”⁵⁵

As we can learn from this statement, Mr. Schary took a rather dangerous approach to answering the question. Instead of simply agreeing with the committee that Communists should not be employed, he made a point to say he would knowingly employ a Communist until they are found guilty of something. Simply put, Schary was defending the right of freedom of association. It is this ideology that led Schary to believe that the jobs of both Scott and Dmytryk were safe at RKO.

However, the other studio executives did not share the same beliefs as Schary. They believed that to continue the employment of the Hollywood Ten would be an unnecessary liability to the industry as a whole. Soon after the hearings, Scott had a meeting with RKO’s president Peter Rathvon, who insisted that a blacklist was inevitable.⁵⁶ Due to the fact that the film industries revenue is contingent on the public attending movies, the studio heads believed it was dangerous to risk their public relations by continuing to employ the Hollywood Ten. Keeping these men employed may have not looked so bad if it wasn’t for the fact that a former FBI agent summoned as a witness by HUAC revealed that the Ten were card-carrying Communists. Of course, the FBI agent failed to mention that this information had been obtained illegally, and therefore, would have brought its own public relations problem for the committee.

⁵⁵ “Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry”, 470.

⁵⁶ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch9 par62.

The revelation that these men were in fact registered communist either current or past drove the final nails into their coffins.⁵⁷

On November 24th, 1947, the House of Representatives met to consider the contempt charges that HUAC had brought against the Hollywood Ten. The overwhelming majority of the congressmen were in agreement with HUAC and voted to uphold their decision. The same day the House of Representatives met, there was also a meeting held by the studio executives and senior producers at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City. The Waldorf meeting was called to establish an industrywide policy on what to do about the Hollywood Ten. During the meeting, two options were presented: the first being to issue a statement of solidarity with the ten and issue a statement promising to keep films free of subversive material. The second option, and the one they would decide upon, was to fire the Ten on the basis that they had violated the moral clause in their contracts. During the meeting, there were a few executives who voiced their opinion that establishing a blacklist could be a dangerous precedent, however they were mainly overpowered.⁵⁸ In their official statement, which is referred to as the Waldorf Agreement, they state that the:

Members of the Association of Motion Picture Producers deplore the action of the 10 Hollywood men who have been cited for contempt by the House of Representatives. We do not desire to prejudge their legal rights, but their actions have been a disservice to their employers and have impaired their usefulness to the industry. We will forthwith discharge or suspend without compensation those in our employ, and we will not re-employ any of the 10 until such time as he is acquitted or has purged himself of contempt and declares under oath that he is not a Communist. On the broader issue of alleged subversive and disloyal elements in Hollywood, our members are likewise prepared to take positive action. We will not knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists*, 94.

⁵⁸ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch9 par67-68.

⁵⁹ "Statement of Policy Adopted at Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Meeting on November 26, 1947, by Motion Picture Producer," http://cobble.com/simpp_archive/huac_nelson1947.htm

With the Waldorf Agreement being read, the Hollywood blacklist was in effect.

Being blacklisted, as Adrian Scott would describe it was like having your whole life knocked over in front of your eyes as if it were something as simple as wooden blocks.⁶⁰ Now being fired from their jobs, the Ten still had to face the contempt charges in court. Originally the Ten were denied their request to be tried together, but after both Lawson and Trumbo had been convicted by May of 1948, the prosecution and defense agreed that the remainder of the Ten would accept the verdict of the appeals court.⁶¹ Following two years of briefs, petitions, and appeals, by 1950, the Supreme Court had refused to hear their case and all ten men were serving their sentences.⁶² In 1950, while these men were in prison the short film entitled *The Hollywood Ten* was released. In this film, each member of the Hollywood Ten makes a brief statement denouncing the committee.

Biberman: Whose words are these, no official high or petty may prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics nationalism or other matter of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith they're in. Supreme Court justice Jackson wrote this, this was the law of the land until April 10th, 1950. Lardner: On that day by its refusal to hear our case, the court washed its hands of the rights of the American people, our rights, your rights, and sitting in silence on the bench was the same Mr. justice Jackson.

Although the run time of this film is only fifteen minutes, it does a good job of establishing the significance behind these men's story. It also establishes a call to action of the viewer to do

⁶⁰ Friedman, "Someday We'll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas, Says Adrian Scott,".

⁶¹ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch10 par4.

⁶² Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 8.

something in opposition to the problem. At the end we are left with the chilling words of Biberman, assuring us that “It depends on you, truly it depends on you.”⁶³

Adrian Scott was the last one of the Hollywood Ten to begin his prison sentence on September 27th, 1950 due to health complications.⁶⁴ Scott was placed in the federal penitentiary in Ashland, Kentucky. Scott found the monotony of prison life to be the hardest thing to couple with, finding solace by working in the prison library during the day. During nights, Scott took up teaching illiterate inmates how to read. Scott was released from prison after ten months in July of 1951.⁶⁵

Out of the trio that had worked on such films as *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *Cornered* (1945), and *Crossfire* (1947), it seems that Scott was the unluckiest. Paxton, who was not a member of the Communist party, was never blacklisted. Dmytryk, despite being one of the Hollywood Ten, later on agreed to name names and was able to return to Hollywood, where he directed twenty-five more films. Scott, as a result of the 1947 hearings, had gone through a divorce with his now ex-wife Anne Shirley, had fallen into depression, and was now financially struggling as a result of being unemployable.⁶⁶

Upon getting out of prison, Adrian Scott and Ring Lardner Jr. wanted to sue the studios. They sought legal representation from Morris Cohn, it was in Cohn’s office that Adrian met Joan LaCour. LaCour recalls upon seeing the two men: “I remember thinking how gorgeous these two guys were. Adrian was getting prematurely gray, but he was as handsome as could be.” Scott

⁶³ *The Hollywood Ten*, directed by John Berry (The Film Division of the Southern California Chapter, National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, 1950), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taancRcLQ8o> (accessed October 22, 2018).

⁶⁴ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 133.

⁶⁵ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch10 par24-25.

⁶⁶ Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, ch10 par26.

eventually called the Cohn office to ask out Joan LaCour, after three years of dating they got married in 1955. In 1956, the couple bought a small house in Los Angeles. Money was a struggle for the couple, with Joan working as a typist and Adrian trying anything he could, “even down to writing story lines for comic strips.”⁶⁷

Eventually, in 1961, the couple moved to London where Adrian Scott found employment as an executive assistant to the head of MGM’s British division. Originally, this job was supposed to lead to Scott becoming a producer. Unfortunately, he was met with more bad luck. Every film that Scott had planned failed to come to fruition.⁶⁸ Then in 1968, Adrian Scott got an offer from Universal Studios to return to Hollywood. After getting reestablished in the area, catching up with old friends and buying a new house, it seemed that things may finally have been back to normal. Joan described her husband as being like a “crazed teenager”, excited to go to work every day. But then Adrian Scott once again was hit with bad luck. Universal decided to cancel his contract, presenting him with two options: accept a buyout or come in and sit out the rest of time. Adrian Scott took a buyout which offered him 75 cents on the dollar. Joan describes this as being the start of a new old Adrian. It seems that he had fallen back into a depression, where he would spend his days sitting in his home office, unable to write. Although he wasn’t provided with a reason for having his contract bought out, Joan suspected it was due to Adrian’s age. She described him as being trapped in a different generation and unable to adapt to the changes in the industry.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Patrick McGilligan, Paul Buhle, *Tender Comrades a Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 692-693.

⁶⁸ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 133.

⁶⁹ McGilligan, Buhle, *Tender Comrades a Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*, 694-695.

Adrian Scott did have one final production before he died on December 25th, 1972, adapted from a play he had written in 1947 *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*. The play was adapted into a television movie by his old friends John Paxton and filmed in 1969, however it was never aired until 1973.⁷⁰ Joan describes his demeanor as changing with the enjoyment he had making the television film. However, a routine medical check-up turned up a spot found on Adrian's lung. Even though the doctors first assured him it was probably TB or possibly valley fever upon exploratory surgery it was revealed to be cancer. Joan believed "Looking back, I almost think Adrian willed himself to die. Life had gotten too painful. They didn't catch all the cancer, and Adrian died three months later. Six weeks after his death, the TV movie played, and the credit read Produced by Adrian Scott."⁷¹

Conclusion

Scott, hoping to be a hero for freedom, suffered as a martyr. Made a pariah by his association with the Communist party and desire to spread a message of tolerance and brotherhood, he was imprisoned, fired, and blacklisted. Looking back at his life, focusing on all the struggles he went through due to his unwillingness to cooperate with HUAC's investigation, it can be asked was it worth it? Ultimately, his efforts would seem to be done in vain. HUAC would be allowed to continue their investigations into subversive behavior in the US all the way through 1969, when the committee was forced into a "tactical retreat", adapting a new name as the House Committee on Internal Security.

⁷⁰ Dick, *Radical Innocence*, 133.

⁷¹ McGilligan, Buhle, *Tender Comrades a Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*, 695.

Eventually, in 1975, as part of structural reorganization of the House of Representatives, the committee was eliminated altogether, and their files were sent to the National Archives. It wasn't until 1976 with the amendment of the Freedom of Information Act that the illicit partnership between HUAC and the FBI would be revealed.⁷²

However, by the time the American public learned of the illegal activities that had taken place between the committee and the FBI, Scott had already been dead for three years. Though he may not have been able to see the vindication of the stance he took back in 1947, it doesn't mean it was done in vain. I believe there is an important lesson to be learned from Scott. In a country founded to liberate itself



Figure 4: Photo of Adrian Scott taken from "Someday We'll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas".
Source: <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/pdfs/c10-17-as-interview-labors-daily.pdf>

from oppression, history shows us that we have had our own issues with oppressing citizens. Although the constitution sought to establish the rights of Americans, we see that the line of injustice is not always black and white. On the basis of his constitution rights Scott saw to challenge HUAC on what he perceived to be an invasion of the first amendment. HUAC saw to flush out communist influence in Hollywood with the legal protections of public law 601. Scott's cunning statement at the hearing in which he states his belief that the committee's inquiry into his political ideology should not be entertained: "I believe it also invades the first amendment. I believe that I could not engage in any conspiracy with you to invade the first amendment."⁷³ Illustrates his belief that he was fighting for a just cause. Scott took a stand in defending his right

⁷² *Encyclopedia of the American Left*. Buhle, Buhle, Georgakas, 335.

⁷³ "Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry", 467-468.

to have ideas. Reflecting on his experience, Scott states that through being persecuted he began to understand.

I began to understand, too. Being persecuted, I could understand what others had to contend with. The union organizer slipping down back streets in a company town full of thugs to bring the word of labor to the underpaid...Anti-Semitism became something real, a vivid actual thing, a frightening reality... I understood Jim Crow better, too. When I saw a Negro walking down the street, I knew what it was to have people look at you, watch what you're doing, watch closer if you 'overstep' the line.⁷⁴

Through Scotts understanding we can also understand the importance of fighting for the rights of others, something that even to this day continues to be a prevalent issue facing the country. Although it may present itself in different forms than it did in Adrian Scotts times the root of the problem is the same, "how will the majority know what is right or wrong unless it can hear the ideas, but the important thing is to let the ideas flourish, popular or unpopular."⁷⁵ For the right to have ideas should be a celebrated characteristic of being an American.

⁷⁴ Friedman, "Someday We'll Uphold the Right to Have Ideas, Says Adrian Scott,".

⁷⁵ Ibid.

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