

Merry-Go-Round

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By DREW PEARSON and ROBERT S. ALLEN

Chief questions being asked of the Senate's investigation of Hollywood are: "Who is really behind it? Who persuaded a subcommittee to proceed with an unauthorized probe?"

The Senators who introduced the resolution, Nye and Clark, admit that they haven't seen the movies which they are criticizing. Yet they are armed with a great mass of data which someone must have dug up for them. The other members of the subcommittee also admit they haven't seen the alleged propaganda pictures. And the Senate as a whole rejected the investigation and declined to appropriate any money for it.

But despite all this, five Senators are going ahead anyway, spending considerable money and even more time than to stage a solemn investigation of Hollywood.

Senators are famous for their laziness. They don't go looking for extra work. Obviously someone coked them up.

The answer to this mystery has for some time been in the hands of Wendell Willkie, counsel to the picture industry. But he has no right of cross-examination, and so far has prevented his making public the solution.

However, he has significant evidence that for several weeks the America First Committee has had a group of research people busy in New York studying the movies and radio programs. They have been working under the direction of John T. Flynn, head of the New York America First Committee. And one research worker hired to listen in on radio programs was Guy Juneman, a henchman of the famous Joe McWilliams, Christian Front leader in New York. These were the people who dug up part of the dope for the Senators.

Hollywood Ghosts

But even more important than this New York group has been the little group of ghosts in Los Angeles who helped inspire the present Senate investigation. The members include:

G. Allison Phelps, Los Angeles radio commentator and author of the "Tower of Babel," a booklet scathingly critical of Hollywood.

Russell Mack (real name Mahoney), a former motion picture scenario writer, who visited Germany shortly before the war started.

Winfield Sheehan, husband of the famous opera singer, Jeritza. Sheehan was a producer for Shirley Temple and Will Rogers.

Sheehan had some lucky breaks and some unlucky ones. He was lucky enough to be with Twentieth Century-Fox just at the time Shirley Temple and Will Rogers were in their heyday. But, on the other hand, he had no success whatsoever with Alice Faye, who went over big only after Sheehan left Twentieth Century.

Subsequently, for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer he produced "Florian" supposed to be the story of his wife, Jeritza, with the plot laid in a Spanish riding school in Vienna. The film was a flop and Sheehan has been down on Hollywood leaders ever since.

For more than a year these three men have been collaborating in attacks—some public, some behind the scenes—on the motion picture industry.

Most of the out-in-front fighting has been done by G. Allison Phelps in his daily broadcasts. However, the man behind him was Russell Mack (Mahoney) and the man behind Mack in turn was Winfield Sheehan.

Last summer G. Allison Phelps,

the Los Angeles radio commentator, went to Washington. There he hung out at the office of isolationist Senator Reynolds, of North Carolina, and conferred at length with the isolationist Senators who now have turned up on the subcommittee investigating motion pictures.

Returning to Los Angeles, Phelps boasted over the radio that he had accomplished big things in Washington. And sure enough, on August 1, Senator Clark of Missouri, introduced a resolution demanding an investigation of Hollywood. Two days later, Phelps in his radio broadcast commented on the Clark resolution as follows:

"And now, friends, this is but the beginning. I wish I could read you the letters I have received within the last two weeks from certain Senators bearing on the investigation. I wish I could read to you one telegram I received from Senator Charles W. Tobey (now on the investigating committee). This is but the forerunner of the congressional investigation of the entire motion picture industry."

Mr. Phelps had gone to town in Washington.

Hollywood Comes To Washington

Real lowdown on the alleged \$100,000 fee Willkie is said to be getting from the movie industry is that he did not talk fee in advance. At first he refused to take the case because he hadn't time to prepare it, finally consented but said the fee would depend on how much time the hearings took. . . . Movie moguls have wisecracked that they might pay Willkie with the proceeds from one anti-Nazi propaganda film. If so he would get far more than \$100,000. Contrary to the impression spread by the Senate committee, these films make real dough. That, say the moguls, is why they produce them.

Isolationist Senators gave it out that Nick Schenck, of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, shunned an appearance before their committee. Schenck is probably the biggest force in Hollywood, produced "Escape" and some of the biggest money-makers among the anti-Nazi films. Actually he has been itching to get on the witness stand, but the Senate committee has stalled for time, allegedly to let Senator Curley Brooks go to the American Legion convention.

James Twohey's weekly Analysis of Newspaper Opinion shows that about 90 per cent of the newspaper editorials panned the Senate for investigating the movies. . . . Ninety-three per cent of the newspapers also were critical for blaming the trend to war on the Jews.