MY DAY

No Art Flourishes on Censorship and Repression

By ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

NEW YORK, Tuesday— I have waited a while before saying anything about the Un-American Activities Committee's current investigation of the Hollywood film industry.

I would not be very much surprised if some writers or actors or stagehands, or what not, were found to have Communist leanings, but I was surprised to find that, at the start of the inquiry, some of the big producers were so chickenehearted about speaking up for the freedom of their industry.

One thing is sure—none of the arts flourishes on censorship and repression. And by this time it should be evident the American public is capable of doing its own censoring. Certainly, the Thomas Committee is growing more ludicrous daily. The picture of six officers ejecting a writer from the witness stand because he refused to say whether he was a Communist or not is pretty funny, and I think before long we are all going to see how hysterical and foolish we have become.

The film industry is a great industry, with infinite possibilities for good and bad. Its primary purpose is to entertain people. It can do many other things. It can popularize certain ideals, it can make education platable. But in the long run, the judge who decides whether what it does is good or bad is the man or woman who attend the movies. In a democratic country I do not think the public will tolerate a removal of its right to decide what it thinks of the ideas and performances of those who make the movie industry work.

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I HAVE never liked the idea of an Un-American Activities Committee. I have always thought a strong democracy should stand by its fundamental beliefs and that a U. S. citizen should be considered innocent until he is proved guilty.

If he is employed in a Government position where he has access to secret and important papers, then for the sake of security he must undergo some special tests. However, I doubt whether the loyalty test really adds much to our safety, since no Communist would hesitate to sign it and he would be in good standing until he was proved guilty. So it seems to me that we might as well do away with a test which is almost an insult to any loyal American citizen.

What is going on in the Un-American Activities Committee worries me primarily because litle people have become frightened and we find ourselves living in the atmosphere of a police state, where people close doors before they state what they think or look over their shoulders apprehensively before they express an opinion.

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I HAVE been one of those who have carried the fight for complete freedom of information in the United Nations. And while accepting the fact that some of our press, our radio commentators, our prominent citizens and our movies may at times be blamed legitimately for things they have said and done, still I feel that the fundamental right of freedom of thought and expression is essential. If you curtail what the other fellow says and does, you curtail what you yourself may say and do.

In our country we must trust the people to hear and see both the good and the bad and to choose the good. The Un-American Activities Committee seems to me to be better for a police state than for the U. S. A.

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