

FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

BY THE WIVES OF
THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

This brief, *amicus curiae*, was submitted to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Believing it will interest the wives and mothers of a people fighting to retain the right to speak and act for a peaceful world for their children—the Committee For The Hollywood Ten has caused this brief to be published especially for the women of America.

COMMITTEE FOR THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

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We, the wives of the ten writers, producers and directors known as the Hollywood Ten, respectfully urge the Supreme Court of the United States to grant a rehearing in the case of John Howard Lawson and Dalton Trumbo, petitioners for writs of certiorari to the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Consent to the filing of a brief *amicus curiae* has been received from counsel for the petitioners. Consent to such filing has been refused by counsel for the respondent. In the following discussion, we set forth relevant questions of law and fact which have not heretofore been fully discussed by the parties to these proceedings.

It is now two and a half years since the Un-American Activities Committee cited our husbands for contempt of Congress. During this time, in which our children have been deprived of emotional and economic security, our husbands prevented from making a living, ourselves blocked on all sides from taking their places as breadwinners, we have had reason and time to look closely at the circumstances that could allow these things to happen.

All of us have grown up in the United States. As children we learned of and accepted as our natural heritage the great democratic traditions that have grown out of the struggles of our people from the beginnings of our nation down to the present time. We learned and believed that in our country certain rights are guaranteed to every individual: the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; the right to worship freely; the right to speak freely, in the press or in person; the right to think freely;

the right to assemble peaceably and petition those in authority for a redress of grievances. We learned and believed that in our country no person can or shall be prosecuted for his beliefs or intimidated in any way for differing opinion. We learned and believed that government in our country is of the people, by the people and for the people. And we learned and believed that it is the fundamental responsibility of all Americans to help their country in the preservation of these traditions.

These are the things that we, as children, learned in school and from our parents. These are the things that our children are learning today—in school and from us.

In the long and various struggle of the American people to establish, to defend and to extend their democratic rights and responsibilities, American women have always played a positive and forceful and clear-headed part in fighting those forces which would betray our country. In the Revolution, in the Abolitionist movement and the Civil War that followed it, in the endless struggles of our working people for a just share of the abundance that is America, American women have not hesitated to think, to speak, to act. As women and mothers we wish to declare ourselves on the side of those who have fought for the welfare of their children and their people as a whole and against those who would betray that welfare.

It is our most thoughtful and honest belief that the ten men who challenged the right of the Un-American Activities Committee, through its chairman, J. Parnell Thomas, to demand disclosure of their trade-union and political affiliations, acted in the full and direct tradition of those who would protect our people and preserve our principles.

We take great pride in the fact that our husbands have fought consistently *against* all forms of oppression, religious, racial, political, moral, intellectual or economic and *for* every idea, act, individual or group, sincerely devoted

to the extension of the democratic process. The considerable body of their work—in the field of the motion picture, the novel, the drama, short story, essay, history or on the public platform, works for which each of them has been individually honored by our people—reveals what kind of men they are and what they believe and have fought for. They stand upon this work and we with them.

The position these men took before the Un-American Activities Committee demonstrated that there is no separation between their creative work and their public action. Both carry forward the great traditions of our country, for which Americans in every period have been willing to fight and even die. This is why we are outraged by the decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals, in the Lawson-Trumbo cases, which you—the guardians of our Constitution—by your refusal to hear argument have allowed to remain standing as the law of the land.

According to our understanding, the decision by the Circuit Court is a bald subversion of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It rules, in effect, that the guarantees of free speech, opinion and association may be abridged or totally abrogated at any time that Congress sees fit. The decision “justifies” such abrogation of the First Amendment by contending that we are engaged in an “ideological struggle.” Thus, government—for the first time in our history since the Alien and Sedition Acts—is permitted to invade areas forbidden it by the First Amendment on the specious ground that our nation is “at war.” We are not at war. We are opposed to the hysteria of the “cold war,” which is an evil design meant to involve us in a real war.

As mothers, we are firmly committed to the belief that any ideological differences among nations can be settled without resort to the murder of millions of the world’s populations. With all women everywhere we share a most cruel and constant anxiety for the peace of the world.

We call upon the Supreme Court of the United States to stop the invasion of our judiciary system by those who would regiment, intimidate and oppress the American people in a bold and shameful drive toward a criminal and unjust war.

We ask that the Supreme Court of the United States fulfill its historic role in our American democratic system by reaffirming, as it has done so many times and so eloquently in the past, those principles which are and must remain the heritage of all Americans.

We ask that the Court shall issue a writ of certiorari in the Lawson-Trumbo cases and reverse the cynical and un-American decision of the court below.

Respectfully submitted,

HELEN CLARE NELSON BESSIE,
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