

WILLKIE ENGAGED TO DEFEND FILMS

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He Will Appear Before Senate Inquiry Into Charge of War Propaganda in Movies

HAYS UPHOLDS PRODUCERS

Accuses Senators of Attack on Free Expression—Clark of Idaho Denies 'Witch Hunt'

WASHINGTON, Sept. 1 (UP)—Wendell L. Willkie, 1940 Republican Presidential candidate, has been retained to defend motion picture producers against charges, soon to be brought before a Senate interstate commerce subcommittee, that they are producing war propaganda movies, it was disclosed tonight.

The subcommittee, a predominantly noninterventionist group opposed to President Roosevelt's foreign policies, is scheduled to open hearings on Wednesday.

Mr. Willkie confirmed from New York tonight that he had been retained by Austin C. Keough, chairman of the law committee, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.

"We will show that the industry is not taking part in any propaganda," he said, adding that he had asked the subcommittee to postpone its proceedings for one week so that he would have time to prepare his case.

Members of the subcommittee, which is headed by Senator Clark of Idaho, have accused the producers of attempting, through the medium of pro-British and anti-Nazi films, to involve the United States in the war.

Motion picture interests countered with the charge that the impending inquiry was a "fishing expedition" intended to discredit both them and the Administration's foreign policy.

Hays Denounces Inquiry

Their position was stated by Will H. Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, who wrote Senator Clark that the noninterventionist attack was "unjustified" and "a challenge to the fundamental principles of freedom of expression."

Mr. Hays said that the industry welcomes a chance to defend itself, that it merely has been portraying events of the day, and that "no charge of propaganda" will deter it.

Mr. Clark denied that the committee was going on a witch hunt.

"We are determined to get at the facts, which I believe are of the utmost importance to the American people," he said. "The movies control one of the most important sources of information the people have. We should ascertain whether they are being used to deluge the people with propaganda tending to incite war."

Committee members indicated that Mr. Willkie's request for a delay would be granted. He requested the postponement earlier today.

His presence before the group in an interrogative capacity assures a battle. An adherent of Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policies, Mr. Willkie will have an opportunity to come to grips with non-interventionists such as Senators Clark of Idaho, Clark of Missouri, Bone of Washington, McFarland of Arizona and C. Brooks of Illinois.

List of Prospective Witnesses

The subcommittee's first witness is expected to be Senator Nye of North Dakota, co-author with Senator Clark of Missouri of a resolution calling for an investigation of the movies. He will be followed by Jimmy Fidler, Hollywood radio commentator and columnist; Nicholas Schenck, president of Loew's, Inc.; Harry Warner, president of Warner Brothers; Barney Balaban, president of Paramount, and Darryl F. Zanuck of Twentieth Century-Fox.

Senator Clark of Idaho said that the subcommittee had compiled data and was reviewing films which "deal with controversial subjects." He added:

"We are not going to enter any indictments until we have had a full investigation with every opportunity granted to all sides to present the facts."

The committee, he explained, will attempt to build up a record "so that the Senate may decide upon the question of launching a full investigation." Senate approval of the inquiry would permit the use of funds to hire investigators.

After hearing the motion picture producers, Senator Clark of Idaho said, the committee will inquire into "the workings of the March of Time." He said that Louis De Rochemont and Henry R. Luce, producers of the monthly film, would be called to testify.