MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS & DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA, INC.
28 WEST 44TH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

WILL H. HAYS
PRESIDENT
CARL E. MILLIKEN
SECRETARY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 25, 1933

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19th Street
New York City

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Probably once a year I see a copy of "Judge". Last night was one of the rare occasions and the first thing I noted was the page enclosed. The only thing on that page that interested me was the marked item, so I tore it out and brought it to the office with me this morning to write you. Now, I am not sure whether it is facetiousness on the part of "Judge" or not. However, I am going to follow my original idea of last night and write you, because it gives me an opportunity to tell you some of the things we are trying to do for motion pictures.

It was apparent, from the outset, that the ideals we held for production could not be realized unless there was developed public support for them as they became crystallized in the form of photoplays. In the weeks just past, with Will Irwin I have been going over some of the initial activities here that grew directly out of the Articles of Incorporation we had framed to guide us. Significantly the first of those activities entailed the cooperation of local and national groups of people interested in social progress. The results of this sharing of our problems, and to some extent responsibilities, with people not professionally interested in the films constitute two, instead of one, long stories. The first is a story of developing precedents for production; the second, a story of evolving a technique for measuring the social significance of films and translating that into support for those photoplays deemed worthy.

I am sending you copies of the Production and Advertising Codes. In their present form they differ markedly from the initial "don'ts" and "be carefuls" that appeared many years before them as precepts for production. Doubtless they will change again. At any time the effort has been to have them reflect what the average man considered good art, good morals, and good entertainment in the films. We have been continually conscious that the Codes were finite, that at most they constituted a conservation measure to preserve the best of social convention in the rapidly changing social order.

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I wish I might relate to you some of the intensely interesting problems that arose in the studios when the Code was applied to the process of production. This process has not been entirely negative as is the case with externally applied censorship. It has been responsible for evolving new and acceptable treatment for subject matter that otherwise would have been rejected; and so the process has really been creative. Resented at first, you would have great difficulty in finding an individual engaged in making pictures who does not think the Production Code of actual benefit to pictures generally and to his specific work.

Furthermore, I am inclined to believe that the Code's tempering of realism and ostracizing of the vulgar in pictures has had a beneficent and similar influence on current literature.

You will know that this whole enterprise was an experiment in self control. There were no precedents to guide it. It involved the development of a collective conviction in the consciousness of some 30,000 people engaged in production. It has been the target for invective from puritanism and the advocates of liberalism even though that involved license, alike. In the pragmatic test, it has proved its value.

Our efforts to organize a public demand for better pictures have similarly been impugned. But today twelve national socially minded organizations are previewing the output of Hollywood and supplying to their constituents a sound appraisal of the social and entertainment value of motion pictures. And in more than 3,000 communities groups of volunteer workers are engaged in making the pictures endorsed, popular at the local theatres. The two pamphlets, "Better Pictures in Your Home Town" and the reprint from the Motion Picture Herald, together with two issues of "Selected Motion Pictures", enclosed, will acquaint you with this endeavor.

It is important, of course, that a majority of these groups have endorsed three out of four of the pictures produced in 1932. But the real significance of the endeavor is reflected by the fact that 71 out of 87 of the best box office pictures for the past year were pictures that had found favor with these organizations. In view of this, I think, it would be difficult to sustain an opinion that American motion pictures were having a depressing cultural influence on our people.

In a recent issue of The Guardian, a bulletin for leaders of Camp Fire Girls, there appeared this terse commentary which reflects a point of view with which you should be familiar:

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"In the days before the motion picture industry took itself seriously, to say, 'Let's go to a movie', was equivalent to saying, 'Let's go to Coney Island.' You didn't inquire what was on the bill; it didn't much matter because most of the bills were alike. But to take that view of motion picture entertainment is not only unnecessary today, but unwise. By exercising discrimination girls can make their moving picture time mean something to them."

We are all interested in Glenn Frank's editorial, under the caption "When Ugliness is Beautiful":

"The other day a personal obligation took me to an obscure village of about a hundred inhabitants.

"I spent two days there. The first evening I dropped into a village hall in which the monthly movie was being shown. The seats were long and backless benches built by the village carpenter. One generation-old 'coal oil lamp' swung from the ceiling, throwing its dubious light in patchy penetration here and there through the semi-darkened hall.

"The picture machine was an early model. The operator of the machine was the village blacksmith, unwashed from his day's work, or so he appeared. The hiccoughing and sputtering of the machine as it yielded reluctantly to the blacksmith's efforts to get it going and the muffled gossiping of the old and the more noisy bantering of the young in the audience took the place of an orchestral overture.

"Finally, a flash of light on the suspended sheet, a few jerky efforts to bring the picture to focus in the center of the sheet, and the show was on.

"The film was old beyond my expectation, a melodrama of early vintage. The heroine's hair rose in pompous pompadour; her skirt was long and large; her shirt waist was stiffly starched, a choker encasing her neck, and mutton leg sleeves enveloping her arms.

"The hero's obviously thin black hair was meticulously parted in the center and pasted to his head with accurately circular combing at the sides. His gestures were of the old stage at its stagiest.

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"I wanted to laugh. I looked about at the audience. My laughter died in me. Old women on whom life had forgotten to smile sat with worn hands and wrinkled faces, but with something akin to rapture in their eyes. A hush had fallen over the bubbling noisiness of youths who had been unconsciously starving for beauty and adventure.

"Hard-working men in hickory shirts had, for the time, gone out of their world of work and worry, of debt and drabness, and were drinking at the springs of romance. I felt something akin to emotional reaction, I felt as if I sat with a crowd of drab-lived peasants in an ancient cathedral.

"I had seen something that rarely gets into learned treatises on esthetics.

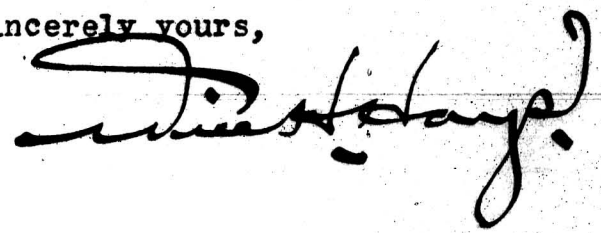
"I remembered that Anatole France once said: 'I believe that we shall never know exactly why a thing is beautiful.'"

In these depressed days, I know there are countless thousands of people without employment who, given the necessity of expressing an opinion, would say: "The most cheering force in America right now is the motion picture."

I remember father used to tell me about his first job which was as a farm hand, plowing. After the landlord had showed him how and where to plow, he said to him, "And, John, while you are resting at noon you can pick up these stones." While you are "resting at noon" sometime, read the enclosed.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



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No more overhead on your HEADGEAR

Restaurant Check Room Tips Abolished



AGAIN THE STATLER HOTELS PIONEER

Buying a hat is the only installment purchase you never complete. You buy it once from the store and a thousand times from check room attendants. It may be *your* hat, but it's *their* meal ticket.

But not in a *Statler hotel* . . . Not after today! We've banned gratuities at the check rooms of all our public dining rooms. They're barred — forever! The attendants, hereafter, *cannot* and *will not* accept a tip.

You'll acclaim and help us with this reform. We know you will, because you helped us when we banished the tip-soliciting attendants from our wash rooms and applauded when we barred all surcharges at lobby news stands and cigar stands.

Statler pioneering, Statler leadership is continually blazing new trails to greater comfort, finer service, more perfect economy in hotel living. You know the Statler record . . . that these hotels were the *first* to provide a private bath with every room, circulating ice water, a morning newspaper under the door, free radio reception and a dozen other comforts.

You know, too, that the friendly, courteous service you have always received in these hotels has grown out of a genuine desire to make life more pleasant for the guest. This last innovation, the abolition of the hat check tip at restaurant check rooms, is present day proof that our spirit of service marches on.

HOTELS STATLER

Boston . Buffalo . Cleveland . Detroit . St. Louis

HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA IS THE STATLER IN NEW YORK

YOU'RE TELLING US?

"THERE are more lunatics out of the asylum than in."—*Rose Ponselle.*

"The revision of the money system will all come at once, just like we got rid of the saloons."—*Henry Ford.*

"The nation needs a good five-cent glass of beer."—*Matthew Woll.*

"Every time I say something, I get into trouble."—*Clara Bow.*

"I am a dreamer."—*Charles M. Schwab.*

"Herbert Hoover gave the country exactly what it needs."—*John R. Mott.*

"Life is a habit."—*Norma Talmadge.*

"I am not going to run again for anything."—*James J. Walker.*

"In the sound films, it's a madhouse."—*Conway Tearle.*

"Europe is largely populated by ingrates."—*Senator G. W. Moses.*

"I don't think—I write."—*Benjamin de Casseres.*

"The world is crazy—absolutely crazy."—*Theodore Dreiser.*

"Drinking has no place in our college life."—*Dr. Harry A. Garfield.*

"New York, however, is part of the nation."—*Ella A. Boole.*

"How can anybody be funny in a dress suit!"—*Bert Lahr.*

"I would swap debts for prosperity any day."—*Senator Borah.*

"It's no use to make a tragedy of a divorce."—*Maurice Chevalier.*

"The most depressing force in America right now is the motion picture."—*Ida Tarbell.*

"There's too much education."—*William Muldoon.*

"It's just as hard to starve in Philadelphia as it is in New York."—*Joseph V. McKee.*

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