

Should Stars Fight?

THIS most vulnerable of all industries has another problem, a problem involving public opinion, patriotism—and propaganda. It began when Brigadier General Lewis B. Hershey, director of selective service, declared that motion-picture actors, directors, writers and technicians may apply for draft deferment as workers in an essential industry.

The answer came from the Screen Actors Guild, who rejected the classification and demanded that actors be treated like all other Americans.

This was echoed by old-time theatrical producer William A. Brady, who said, "I don't think either screen people or theater people can be termed essential."

On the one hand there is a perfectly logical argument: Why shouldn't a movie star who has made a sizable income for months and years, who probably has enough saved up so that life in the Army will work no financial hardship on him, why shouldn't he serve as well as you or I or our brothers and sons who have not been so fortunate? Will a woman seeing a handsome movie star on the screen resent the fact that he is in Hollywood while her husband or son or brother or sweetheart is fighting on a foreign field of battle?

This is the view that Hollywood takes and, as I understand it, does not plan to request deferments except in the case of a few older executives whose unique services in the producing of films for morale are legitimately considered indispensable.

Of course, this policy is relaxed in the case of an actor who is caught in the midst of making a picture at the time of his call or who, after entering the service, is needed by the studio for retakes on a film already completed. In such instances Hollywood to protect its investment has asked for and obtained a release for the star concerned. This sort of co-operation between our armed forces and the industry makes for good will and all-around efficiency.

ON THE other hand, there is the argument that although no individual star is indispensable to the morale effect of motion pictures, it is true that a complete upset of the present structure of stars and executives would so disrupt the industry that its full power from a propaganda standpoint could not be exerted. This argument implies that the audience should withhold its resentment toward individuals out of respect for the effectiveness of the whole weapon.

Take the statement made to Walter Winchell and quoted in his article on page 28 of this issue, "We want Clark Gable to stay where he is—on the screen," an Administration official told Winchell. "Clark Gable," he went on, "is one of the people's daily habits and we don't want to rob the people of their steady habits all at once."

How about it, people? It is the considered opinion of the authorities that the stars should stay where they are. Yet Hollywood doesn't wish to be considered any different from you or me. Who's right? Will you give up your habits without losing morale? Will you resent seeing stars on the screen while your boys are fighting? It is really up to you and I wish every one of you would tell me what you think. Your letter will reach me at 205 E. 42nd St., N. Y. C.

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