Register of the Hollywood Studio Strike Collection, 1930s - 1940s

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Register of the Hollywood Studio Strike Collection, 1930s - 1940s

Collection number: MSS 019

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
Los Angeles, California

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Date Completed:
May 1995
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Hollywood Studio Strike Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1930s - 1940s
Collection number: MSS 019
Creator: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees
Conference of Studio Unions
Extent: 2 boxes
Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research.
Los Angeles, California
Language: English.

Access
The collection is available for research only at the Library's facility in Los Angeles. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Researchers are encouraged to call or email the Library indicating the nature of their research query prior to making a visit.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Hollywood Studio Strike Collection, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles.

History
The 1940s was a period of tumult in the Hollywood labor movement. It came to a head during the Hollywood Studio Strike of 1945-1946, the last in a series of strikes involving the major studios, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), and the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU). It pitted the rank-and-file labor federation, the CSU, led by the militant organizer Herb Sorrell, against IATSE, which, following years of Mafia domination, was headed at the time of the
strike by anti-Communist crusader Roy Brewer.

In the 1945-1946 labor conflict, the CSU, as in previous strikes, lobbied the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), not just to remain neutral but to honor CSU picket lines. Under the influence of its executive leadership (Ronald Reagan, Robert Montgomery, and George Murphy), SAG ultimately voted to cross the CSU lines. Communist influence within the CSU, as much as the grievances of the set and prop builders (which had been the specific impetus for the strike), became a major issue in the dispute.

This last battle of the CSU, was, in some respects, the end of the struggle for a democratic labor movement in Hollywood and the prelude to the blacklist that would soon permeate the entire film industry. With the CSU decimated, IATSE regained its dominance and made business unionism the labor agenda in Hollywood for the rest of the century.

Scope and Content

This small collection is arranged alphabetically. It includes clippings from Los Angeles daily newspapers and the Hollywood trade papers, pamphlets, and a file of the *Picket Line*, October 1945-May 1947, a strike newsletter put out on a daily basis during most months of the strike. While the clippings, articles, and pamphlets in the collection document the strike in considerable detail, the *Picket Line* documents the strong feelings (sometimes expressed in cartoons) of the striking union members as well as the daily course of this pivotal labor conflict in Hollywood.