IN SEARCH OF TRUTH:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE H.C.U.A. PROPAGANDA FILM "OPERATION ABOLITION"

The following exchange occurred on "The Goodwin Knight Show," KCOP-TV, Los Angeles, August 9, 1960

Burton White (Teaching Assistant, University of California, Berkeley) commented about the distortions in the film:

"I am basing my discussion on the fact that the film does have inaccuracies, does have distortions."

William Wheeler, (Chief H.C.U.A. Investigator on the West Coast):

"All right, we have admitted that. Let's go on to another subject."

Mr. White: "You have admitted that, Mr. Wheeler?"

Mr. Wheeler: "Certainly."

Bay Area Student Committee for the Abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities

1732 Francisco Street

Berkeley 3, California

Statement Of Bay Area Students:

The propaganda film "Operation Abolition" was made by carefully editing and selecting parts of news film subpoenaed from San Francisco television stations by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (H.C.U.A.). **These films were used in "Operation Abolition" without the knowledge or the permission of the owners, KPIX-TV and KRON-TV.**

Note that no credits are given: there has been no one willing to take responsibility for this shamefully distorted film.

The first question we might raise in **why are we not told** who made it? Who paid for it? Who decided what film footage would be used? Who wrote the commentary? Who is financing the distribution of the film? These questions are ones which a concerned public must want answered, but they are questions the film leaves unanswered.

Now, what of the film itself? It attempts to portray the recent San Francisco demonstrations against the H.C.U.A. as a Communist-incited riot in which thousands of students were duped into defying law and order.

This is probably the conclusion you will reach **if you make the mistake of relying on this film as your sole source of information.** The House Committee on Un-American Activities, in this sorry attempt to discredit legitimate criticism of itself as a Communist plot, has omitted or distorted innumerable important facts.

More important than what this film says is what it does not say.

THE FILM FAILS TO TELL US that the protest against the Committee was endorsed or actively supported by:

RELIGIOUS GROUPS:

Episcopal Diocese of California, First Unitarian Church of San Jose, San Francisco Society of Friends, Berkeley YWCA, Northern California Board of Rabbis, The East Bay Jewish Center.

ORGANIZED LABOR:

San Francisco Building Trades Council, AFL-CIO, Central Labor Council of San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, American Federation of Teachers.

EDUCATORS:

Over 700 faculty members from Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State College and San Jose State College.

STATE ASSEMBLYMEN:

John O'Connell, Phillip Burton.

All these protests against the H.C.U.A. are a matter of public record as are the numerous similar stands from institutions and individuals throughout the nation.

THE FILM FAILS TO TELL US about the now famous "white cards." These passes were issued in advance to organizations favored by the Committee, at the expense of individuals who had waited patiently in line for admittance to hearings which had been announced as open to the public. **No notice had been given to the public that passes would be necessary or available.** This practice, despite repeated protests by those unfairly excluded, was largely responsible for the demonstrators' increasingly vocal opposition to the hearings. **The rigging of the seating was so clearly unfair that San Francisco County Sheriff Matthew Carberry agreed to intervene on behalf of the public and attempted to change the "white card" discrimination so that the public could attend the hearings on a "first come, first served" policy.**

One of the many purposeful misrepresentations in the film is that statement that only 100 passes were issued for admission to a hall which is alleged to hold 400 people. By this misrepresentation, the film attempts to mislead those who see it into assuming that only one-fourth of the hall was filled by those sympathetic to the H.C.U.A. while the rest of the seats were available to the general public. The facts of the matter reveal a completely different situation:

1. Each of the passes issued by the Committee could admit as many as six people. In short, **100 passes could mean as many as 600 restricted seats.**

2. On Thursday morning of the hearings, the greatest number from the general public was admitted. On that morning, at least 75% of the hearing room was filled with guests invited by the Committee.

These last two facts were both admitted by William Wheeler, West Coast investigator and spokesman for the H.C.U.A., August 9, 1960, on "The Goodwin Knight Show," KCOP-TV, Los Angeles.

THE FILM FAILS TO TELL US of police brutuality. Such incidents were carefully deleted. Observed New York **Post** correspondent Mel Wax, "Never in 20 years as a reporter have I seen such brutality."

Police hurled women down the staircase. One woman was dragged through glass from a broken door pane. San Francisco **Chronicle** reporter George Draper wrote: "One plump girl was shoved from the top of the stairs and tumbled and slipped down two flights to land like a bundle of clothing at the bottom." Two policemen grabbed a thin boy. A third officer clubbed him three times and with the last blow he went limp. Said Draper, "You could hear the hollow smack of the club striking . . . Police were now clubbing demonstrators at will" (San Francisco **Chronicle:** May 14, 1960)

The film attempts to convince us that only the "Communist and pro-Communist" press asserted police brutality and that this assertion was untrue. This is but one more of the film's purposeful distortions. In fact, such publications as the San Francisco **Chronicle**, the New York **Post, Frontier, the Californian,** and the Oakland **Tribune** reported that the police action was unduly brutal. This is hardly a list of Communist or pro-Communist publications.

The Graduate Psychological Association of the Berkeley Campus called on Governor Brown for an investigation.

State Attorney General Stanley Mosk was asked by 65 Berkeley and 88 Stanford faculty members for an "impartial inquiry" into police activity during the riot.

The California Federation of Teachers Executive Council thanked the students for "their dedication and courage to protest, even in the face of brutal and unjustifiable coercion and arrest."

In viewing the film one must remember that in spite of the assertions of the provably false commentary on the sound-track, **the films have been edited,** and parts of the original film footage which disprove the film's assertions were not produced. **According to news members of KPIX-TV, footage which shows unjustified use of police clubs on demonstrators was deleted from the movie.** Once again the facts reveal the movie to be a purposefully distorted account of the truth, and brings into serious question the honesty of the members of H.C.U.A. who by their appearances in the film, endorse its assertions.

THE FILM FAILS TO TELL US the truth about student behavior. Listen carefully to the film's commentator. He asks you to believe that students were violent, that they induced a stroke in a 61-year-old policeman by knocking him down, and that they invited the fire hoses by charging the barricade and by attacking another policeman and striking him with his billy.

THESE CHARGES HAVE BEEN DENIED. **No witnesses have been produced who can verify them.** Note that there are no pictures of these "events." You see nothing on the screen to suggest that these "events" occurred.

Sworn depositions photographs and on-the-spot recording all testify to the utter fallaciousness of the film's assertions. In the face of such evidence the film offers no proof **other than the assertion of the sound-track** that such an event occurred. **It is further to be noted that no person was arrested for the act of rushing the barricades.** In spite of the attempts made by the H.C.U.A. to capitalize upon confused and inaccurate reports of the events which were promulgated the day of the demonstrations, the public record clearly shows that the film's assertions are not true.

One of the more outrageous perversions of truth perpetrated by the film is the charge that attempts by the police to communicate with the demonstrators were "met by jeers and boos." The film attempts to mislead the public by splicing together events which occurred hours apart and presenting them as if one followed immediately after the other. The first scene, showing Police Inspector Shelly speaking to the demonstrators, is immediately followed in the film by a shot of students singing and chanting. What are the facts?

You will notice that the film fails to provide the sound-track of the event it supposedly portrays. We can understand why those who made the film omitted this, for the sound track would reveal the commentary to be a lie. **Every time that the police or the sheriff spoke to the demonstrators, attention was given and the requests of the law-enforcement officers were compiled with.** Sheriff Carberry testified to the truth of this assertion over a public telecast on KQED-TV (San Francisco). Unedited tapes of the demonstration also substantiate this assertion. Further William Wheeler, again on August 9th, admitted that the sequence of events in the film were changed and that the shot of the vocal demonstration **did not follow on the heels of the communication to the demonstrators by the police.** (KCOP-TV).

HOW CAN THE FILM BE ACCEPTED as a true report of the San Francisco demonstrations when ever the Chief Investigator for the Committee on the West Coast succumbs to the overwhelming evidence to the contrary and admits that the film distorts the events of May 12-14?

THE FILM FAILS TO TELL US what really went on inside the hearing room. The film **does** show the squelched attempts of dissenting witnesses to read their statements. It does **not** show the freedom granted to "friendly" witnesses to read theirs.

It does **not** inform us that the sound-track which accompanies the film which was shot inside the hearing room during the demonstrations of the subpoenaed persons was a composite track made up of several tapes taken both **inside** and **outside** the hearing room.

These are some of the means whereby the film distorts the record. In addition, the film tries to smear the residents of the Bay Area who protested its three-day hearings in San Francisco. This the H.C.U.A. attempts to do in this film with its traditional and, by now, hackneyed innuendoes to the effect that anyone who criticizes the Committee must either be a Communist or is, in some mysterious way, a Communist dupe.

The words "dupe" and "duping" are used indiscriminately in the film "Operation Abolition." Perhaps these terms are relevant to the film itself, for this film endorsed by the H.C.U.A., **admittedly distorted by its makers, is** presented to the American people as a "true" story of what happened. Distortion is dishonest no matter who does the distorting, but it is a particularly grave matter when members of Congress participate in the distortion. Lack of respect for honesty has long been characteristic of the H.C.U.A. and is the reason countless citizens and organizations throughout the nation have added their voices in opposition to this particular Committee of Congress. A Committee which reveals such open contempt for the ideal of an informed American public and for our democratic institutions must, in the words of the California AFL-CIO, "be summarily dismissed."

WHAT IS THE COMMITTEE'S REAL MOTIVE IN SUPPORTING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THIS FILM? **The answer is quite simple:** In the face of an ominous groundswell of opposition from highly reputable sources the Committee has been driven to desperate, almost hysterical attempts to justify its existence.

We must keep in mind that the House Committee on Un-American Activities can have but **one legitimate function:** to conduct investigations which would provide information for necessary remedial legislation. **That is the sole justification for any legislative body.**

What have been the results? **The Committee's activities have not produced a single significant piece of legislation.** Perhaps this should not surprise us since it ha tried to investigate in those areas of free speech and peaceful association in which the Constitution **prohibits** legislation.

This has not, however, prevented the Committee from persistently and outrageously violating the Constitutional rights of citizens who have been forced to appear before it for interrogation and harassment. **A steadily growing condemnation has finally become sufficiently widespread to have a major impact on American society.**

In the historic 1957 Watkins Decision, the U.S. Supreme Court declared: "Who can define the meaning of 'Un-American'? . . . There is no Congressional power to

expose for the sake of exposure . . . (Committee investigations) can lead to ruthless exposure of private lives in order to gather data which is neither desired by Congress nor useful to it."

Justice Black, in his magnificant dissent in the 1959 Barenblatt Decision which was joined in by Chief Justice Warren and Justice Douglas, and concurred in by Justice Brennan, stated the case against the H.C.U.A.: ". . . exposure and punishment is the aim of this Committee and the reason for its existence. To deny this aim is to ignore the Committees own claims and the reports it has issued ever since it was established. I cannot believe that the nature of our judicial office requires us to be so blind, and must conclude that the Un-American Activities Committee's 'identification' and 'exposure' of Communists and suspected Communists, like the activities of the Committee in **Kilbourn v. Thompson**, amount to an encroachment on the judiciary which bodes ill for the liberties of the people of this land.

"Ultimately, all the questions in this case really boil down to one—whether we as a people will try fearfully and futilely to preserve Democracy by adopting totalitarian methods, or whether in accordance with our traditions and our Constitution we will have the confidence and courage to be free."

It is impossible to list all the inaccuracies and distortions in the film. We have already discussed some of the more flagrant misrepresentations, but there are many others. Let us examine a few:

1. The film asserts that a "directive" was issued by the Students for Civil Liberties (S.C.L.) telling students to "laugh out loud" at the Committee, and was published on the front page of the student newspaper, the **Daily Californian** at the University of California at Berkeley. The truth is that the newspaper, in a legitimate news article, reported an opinion which was expressed in an open meeting of S.C.L. This suggestion **was not** adopted by any organization participating in the demonstrations. The Oakland Tribune, which was the first source of the report that this was a student directive published by the **Daily Californian**, published a retraction, admitting that its report of such student "directive" was not true. The **Saturday Evening Post** (October 1, 1960), has also corrected its publication of this falsehood.

2. The film asserts, "Among the Communist leaders who had an active part in the San Francisco demonstrations were Harry Bridges, who you see here being escorted out of City Hall by police officials **moments before the rioting broke out.**" While we think that the report published under the auspices of the H.C.U.A. by J. Edgar Hoover contains as many distortions of the events as the film and is primarily a piece of propaganda, let us look at Mr. Hoover's report of this event: **"Order had been restored** when Harry Bridges, President of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, suddenly appeared on the scene" (Communist Target-Youth, page 8). The emphasis has been added, and the point is clear, **both of these assertions cannot be true.** In this matter of Harry Bridges, which is one of the few instances where the Hoover report is accurate, it is the report by Mr. Hoover which is correct. (A complete analysis of the Hoover report is available from our organization.)

3. The film asserts, "Shortly after 11 o'clock (Thursday) Chairman Willis is forced to ask police to eject Archie Brown, several students and Merle Brodsky from the hearing room." The fact is, that while Archie Brown was ejected on Thursday morning, **no one else was.** The young lady shown in the film was ejected on Friday morning as was Brodsky. Several other students were ejected at this time. The reason, they told reporters, was that one of them smiled at something said during the hearings. Observers who were present verify this report. (Another interesting aspect of this incident is that no attempt was made by the Committee to fill the dozen or more seats vacated by the ejected students with those people who had waited in line since early morning, in spite of the promise which had been made by the H.C.U.A. that any seat which became vacated would be filled by a person waiting for admission.) This telescoping of time may be but seemingly minor inaccuracy, but it shows the film's intention to distort the true nature of the demonstrations against the H.C.U.A. It contributes to the overwhelming record of distortions which places the film in the category of false propaganda, which reveals its complete inadequacy as evidence, and which negates its claim to be an honest documentary. Again and again this technique of dubbing-in scenes out of order is used to misrepresent the occurences during the days of the hearings. Several scenes (the large crowd scenes and all the scenes with mounted policemen) which were filmed Saturday, one day after the police riot, are presented as if they were from Thursday or Friday. Certainly one cannot obtain a true impression of the events as they occurred if the film presents scenes which did not take place at the time the film would have us believe they took place. The scene showing students clapping and singing as they descended the staircase occurred at the end of the hearings on Thursday, not at the noon break on the way to the Union Square Rally as the film asserts, and is another example of the dishonesty of the film.

4. While the actions by the subpoenaed people inside the hearing room on Thursday (fully 24 hours before the police riot) did develop into a demonstration against the Committee, the original purpose of lining up before the railing was to present a petition to Congress, a right guaranteed by the Constitution, on behalf of the people standing before the Committee. The petition read: "We petition this arm of the United States Congress either to move to a larger hearing room or to open its doors on a first come, first served basis." It was only when Chairman Willis **refused** to consider this petition for redress of grievances that the petitioners pressed their opposition to the Committee and its refusal to regard their request. As pointed out above, this distortion is compounded by the use of a "doctored" sound track, and the absurd implication that this demonstration **inside** the hearing room on Thursday set off the demonstrations **outside** the hearing room on Friday.

5. The film asserts that on Friday, 200 from the general public were admitted to the hearings. Mr. Wheeler had admitted that during the Thursday morning session when the percentage of the general public in the hearing room was the highest, only one-fourth of the room was filled by people without passes. On Friday morning, all impartial observers agree, no

more than 30 people were admitted without white passes. The same observers estimate the maximum admitted from the general public on Friday afternoon to be 15.

6. The film asserts that one of the songs the demonstrators sang was "lifted from the old Communists' **People's Song Book.**" The fact is that this song, "We Shall Not be Moved," was originally a religious spiritual and is well known to people acquainted with folk music. It is, in fact, the theme song of many of the sit-in demonstrators in the South. Certainly, contrary to the insinuations in the film, the mere use of a song does not characterize the policies of the singers. This is certainly true when the film deliberately misreports the source of the song for the purpose of innuendo.

7. The sound track of the film asserts that the use of the fire hoses was prompted by a rush of the demonstrators over the police barricades during the time a policeman was beaten. It is significant that **no film shots of this alleged event are shown in the movie.** The reason is simple: none exist. **All pictures taken at the start of the hosing show the demonstrators seated, separated from the police by barricades which have not been disturbed.** For instance, the picture in the May 23 edition **LIFE** magazine shows this scene which points up to the gross misrepresentation of the facts by the film. In the **LIFE** photograph, the hoses are turned on although most of the students are not yet wet. You will notice in this photograph that the students are either seated or are moving **away** from the barricade. There is no action in the photograph to substantiate the allegations made in the movie although this photograph was taken only **a split second after** the hoses were turned on. There was no rush for the barricades; no policeman was beaten. Photographs, eye-witness affidavits, and sound recordings all testify to the truth of this. On KQED-TV in San Francisco, Sheriff Matthew Carberry told the public the true version of the events: "There was no act of physical aggression on the part of the students."

8. The film would have us believe that the police gave notice that the building would have to be cleared, that they gave warning that hoses would be used. **This is not true.** Sound-tapes taken on the spot when Sheriff Carberry spoke to the demonstrators, one hour and fifteen minutes before the hosings show that **he told them they could remain in the building.** during this one hour and fifteen minute period **before** the hoses were turned on, **no official spoke to the group about any matter. No order to disperse was given, no warning was offered. Instead, hoses were turned upon the group of seated demonstrators.**

9. The film asserts that the sit-down by the students was called by "Communist agitators" **after** the hoses were turned on. This is a lie on two counts:

   a. The sit-down was called moments **before** the hoses were used in order to demonstrate to the police who were deliberately preparing the hoses, that the demonstrators intention was to be non-violent.

   b. Contrary to the film's vicious innuendo, the call for the sit-down, regardless of its source, was a responsible action designed to prevent panic. In point of fact, the call for a sit-down came from responsible student leaders who had become known to the demonstrators and who were respected by them. At least one of the two or three who suggested the sit-down was a student who had spent all the morning urging the police to take action which would prevent violence of any sort and who had been spurned by the police who seemed intent upon their own inept policies. Seeing that the police would take no responsible action, these students did what the authorities refused to do: they insured an orderly and legitimate demonstration, and their suggestions were complied with by the demonstrators.

10. The film asserts that "four students suffered minor injuries, eight policemen are injured to the point where they require hospitalization." The fact is, as reported in the San Francisco newspapers, that one student suffered a ruptured eardrum, two had head injuries requiring several stitches, one girl's tooth was knocked out, one man's back was injured to the point where an operation is necessary. The injuries to the police are as follows: two heart attacks and one stroke (perhaps a comment more upon the physical condition of the police rather than upon the "violence" of the students), one bump on the head, one bitten thumb, and one wrenched back.

11. The film asserts, "One of the Communist professional agitators arrested is Vernon Bown, who was in 1954 among the notorious 'Louisville Seven,' charged at that time with sedition, destruction of property, conspiring to destroy property to achieve a political end, and contempt of court." The truth is that **the H.C.U.A.** itself, in its Friday morning hearing, **indicated that Vernon Bown is not a member of the Communist Party.** Less ironic and more flagrantly defamatory is the statement about Mr. Bown's court "record." The film omits the vital background in the case. Mr. Bown was guarding the home of a Negro family which had been threatened by racists in a Southern state. The house was subsequently bombed by a group of segregationists in an automobile, and Bown was indicted for the bombing. The charge was sedition (to overthrow the Southern state), and the destruction of property with which he was charged was the destruction of the house he was attempting to protect. What the film does not tell us is that the laws under which Bown was indicted were declared un-Constitutional by the United States Supreme Court. **The film did not tell us that these charges were thrown out by the courts,** and that Vernon Bown was **never convicted of these "crimes."** It is a sacred American principle that a man is innocent until proven guilty, but the H.C.U.A., in its attempts to justify its own existence, disregards this principle. Furthermore, it is frightening that a branch of the House of Representatives, which is financed supposedly to discover "facts," would **purposely distort the facts** in a case in which the truth is a matter of public record. We maintain that the flagrant distortions exhibited in this film are indicative of the traditional H.C.U.A. contempt for the intelligence of the American public.

12. The film asserts that the demonstrators were "duped" by a handful of Communist agitators. Nevertheless, **beyond this assertion no evidence is presented.** No arrests of "Communist agitators" were made at the time of the demonstrations, nor have any been made subsequently. Surely, if "agitators" did incite the

demonstrators to riot, this is a crime, and if the film's assertion that these people are known is true, why have no arrests been made on this charge? The answer is clear: the assertion by the film is untrue, and even the makers of the film, the H.C.U.A. and the law-enforcement agencies have been unable to produce any evidence to substantiate this irresponsible charge. It is certainly difficult to believe. In the absence of any real evidence to the contrary, that high-ranking students from some of the nation's finest colleges and universities could be "dupes" of any group. To prove this assertion requires a great deal more documentation than has been offered by those who have attempted to discredit the San Francisco demonstrations.

13. The film asserts that it presents the true testimony of William Mandel, but it is clear from the film that much of what Mr. Mandel said to the Committee was edited out of the film. Even more important than this flagrant attempt to doctor the record is the significance of the fact that not one of the charges voiced against William Mandel or against any of the other dissenting witnesses was based upon evidence presented before the Committee and displayd by them. The Committee bases its attacks upon allegedly unimpeachable informers, but it has consistently been afraid to present these dubious "sources" for examination. Typical of the Committee's procedure, no evidence against these people was presented, no witnesses against them were produced, no cross-examination was permitted. The Committee's procedure, far from being based upon the concepts of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence which guarantees fair play to the accused, the Committee's methods are totalitarian in concept: unidentified, irresponsible, unevaluated and nameless reports are given as the source of unsubstantiated charges. The Committee denied the accused the right to know and refute his calumniators.

THIS IS THE H.C.U.A. AND ITS METHODS.

These are but some of the distortions in this film endorsed by members of the H.C.U.A., which pretends to be a documentary. Doesn't this last example of the typical disregard on the part of the Committee for honesty, for decency, for fundamental Constitutional rights provide one more reason for the urgency of its abolition?

This pamphlet has been prepared and issued as a public service by the Bay Area Student Committee to Abolish the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1732 Francisco St., Berkley 3, California.

On September 11, 1960, a group of those arrested on May 13, during the hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in San Francisco met with others interested in the drive to abolish the House Committee and formed themselves into a permanent organization, "Bay Area Student Committee for the Abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities."

Judge Axelrod, Presiding Judge of the Municipal Court in San Francisco, said when dismissing all charges against 67 of the 68 people arrested:

> The defendants for the most part are clean-cut American college students who will within the next few years enter into the business and professional worlds, and many of them I am sure will become leaders in their respective fields. I am convinced that they are not engaged in subversive activities nor in spreading subversive propaganda.

The following are the purposes of this organization:

1. To work for the abolition of the H.C.U.A.
2. To work for the preservation of Civil liberties for all and to fight any abridgement of the freedoms guaranteed all citizens under the United States Constitution.
3. To provide information on the history, purpose and methods of the H.C.U.A.
4. To present the truth about what happened in San Francisco on May 12-14.
5. To help contribute financial aid to the defense of Robert Meisenbach, who was one of those arrested on May 13 and whose case is the only one still before the courts. He is charged with felonious assault and we are dedicated to his defense and to prove his innocence.

The Executive Committee of our organization is composed of Burton White, Irving Hall, and Jane O'Grady, students at the University of California, Rebecca Jenkins and Bruce Benner, students at San Francisco State College. Membership is open to anyone of student age who will subscribe to the purposes of this organization and will assume the obligations of membership.

All assertions made herein can be substantiated by photographs, sworn affidavits, and on-the-spot tape recordings. Any questions about our organization and about ways to join in the fight to abolish the Committee may be addressed to the above address. Copies of James Roosevelt's speech, "The Dragon Slayers," which was made on the floor of the House of Representatives, as well as our reply to the Hoover report, along with other material on the H.C.U.A., its record and its subversion of the Constitution are available from us. A complete list of the literature available from our organization will be sent upon request. Contributions for literature costs to enable us to continue our work may be sent to 1732 Francisco Street, Berkeley 3, California. Donations to the Meisenbach Defense Fund are necessary to insure a thorough defense. We urge you to join this goal: the demonstration of the innocence of Robert Meisenbach. Please send donations to the Bay Area Students Legal Aid Fund at the above address.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER .. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1960 PAGE A8

Forgery by Film

A propaganda movie called *Operation Abolition*, confected in large part by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, is now being given wide commercial distribution. The movie presents a mendaciously distorted view of the demonstrations staged by a group of college students when the committee held hearings in San Francisco last May. This is a flagrant case of forgery by film.

The film warps the truth in two important respects. First, it suggests as its main thesis that the demonstrations were Communist-inspired and Communist-led. Diligent inquiry has led us to a conviction that this charge is wholly unjustified. It cannot be asserted of course, that no Communists took part in the demonstrations. But the main body of students who picketed the Committee hearings in protest were inspired only by their own valid and thoroughly creditable indignation at the Committee's conduct; and they were led by fellow-students loyal to American ideals and acting in accordance with that loyalty.

Second, the film attempts to represent the rioting which followed the student protest as resulting entirely from student violence and disorder. In point of fact, the San Francisco police acted with altogether needless brutality, turning fire hoses on students whose protests were not flagrantly unruly. In an article telling about the film in the current isue of *The Reporter*, Paul Jacobs, a respected West Coast newsman, explains how the distortion was acomplished:

> Both the narration and the way the film clips were edited deliberately distort a number of facts. For example, separate sequences have been run together in *Operation Abolition* to give the impression of mob action, and the film shows students displaying defiance after police warnings, although actually the demonstrations occurred at a completely different time . . . After the riots were over, the sheriff of San Francisco County said: "There was no act of physical aggression on the part of the students."

The film is made up of newsreel shots subpenaed by the Committee and edited by members of its staff who also supplied a highly loaded running commentary. The Committee then turned this concoction over to a commercial film company which, according to Mr. Jacobs, has sold 500 prints of it during the past few months at $100 each. The film was made an official House document and advertised by the Committee in a special publication. In every respect—in its distribution for private profit, in its falsification of facts, in its whitewashing of the Un-American Activities Committee—this film makes a dirty joke of the congressional investigating power.

Washington Post
November 30, 1960

Security Upside Down

That curious little film fraud—a movie called *Operation Abolition*—concocted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities and given commercial distribution with the Committee's blessing—is now being shown to employes not only by private industrial concerns but by Government agencies as well. The film gives an elaborately edited—and elaborately distorted—view of the student demonstrations against the Committee in San Francisco last May. It was shown last week, according to a letter published here Tuesday, to employes of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

When a corporation buys a print of this film, it is guilty of nothing worse than wasting money that belongs to its stockholders and time that its employes could use much more profitably for a coffee break. But when a Federal agency buys the film, it is wasting taxpayers' money and wasting it for a purpose which is essentially improper. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is not an advertising agency for the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

It is still more disquieting to suppose, as our correspondent suggested, that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare shows this film in order to promote national security. For the aim and impact of the film is to discourage dissent. Student protests against the HUAC may be a threat to the Committee; but they are not a threat to the Nation. On the contrary, they are a heartening symptom of reviving national health.

YOU CAN HELP BY SENDING COPIES OF THIS PAMPHLET TO YOUR LOCAL EDITOR, AND TO YOUR MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND TO EACH OF YOUR TWO U. S. SENATORS!

THE REPORTER
THE MAGAZINE OF FACTS AND IDEAS

November 24, 1960 25¢

A Movie With A Message

PAUL JACOBS

WITH THE ACTIVE HELP of the House Un-American Activities Committee, a commercial film company in Washington, D. C., has sold five hundred prints of a movie called **Operation Abolition** during the past few months at $100 each. Although the committee has attempted to disguise its role, it is responsible for much of the production of the film, which presents a distorted version of demonstrations that were staged by a group of college students when the committee had hearings in San Francisco last May on the subject of alleged Communist activities in northern California.

The movie is made up almost entirely of newsreel shots, filmed by TV cameramen who covered the events for stations KRON and KPIX in San Francisco. After the hearings had been completed, two committee staff members — William Wheeler, chief West Coast investigator, and Fulton ("Buddy") Lewis III, went to the television stations with subpoenas for all the newsreel film that had been shot during the demonstrations. They then selected the footage they wanted and had prints made of it, telling the stations that the film was needed for "documentation." Neither the studios, the staff photographers, nor the reporters were paid for their film, although **Operation Abolition** is ostensibly a commercial venture.

The prints were sent to Washington, where the committee staff edited the film and wrote a commentary for it. After that had been done, film and commentary were turned over to a commercial film company, Washington Video Productions, to be made into a movie.

"Buddy" Lewis assisted the company with the technical work on the film, and the narrator's voice is his. Representatives Francis E. Walter (D., Pennsylvania), chairman of the committee, and Gordon Scherer (R., Ohio), a committee member, both appeared as commentators. The film was then made an official House document and advertised by the committee in a special publication, "The Communist-Led Riots Against the House Committee on Un-American Activities in San Francisco, May 12-14, 1960."

Cutting-Room Floor

The film itself opens without any of the usual credits. Instead, Congressman Walter launches immediately into the main theme of the picture, which is to suggest that the demonstrations were Communist-inspired and Communist-led. In the attempt to prove this assertion, both the narration and the way the film clips were edited deliberately distort a number of facts.

For example, separate sequences have been run together in **Operation Abolition** to give the impression of mob action, and the film shows students displaying defiance after police warnings, although actually the demonstrations occurred at a completely different time. And the police use of fire hoses on the students is justified on the basis of the claim that the students attempted to rush police barricades inside the City Hall, where the committee was holding its hearings. But no film accompanies the commentary about this alleged attempt; in fact, photographs taken at the time show the students seated on the floor and in the corridors when the hoses were turned on them. After the riots were over, the sheriff of San Francisco said: "There was no act of physical aggression on the part of the students."

The film has received wide distribution. The **Saturday Evening Post** recommends it, with the claim that "For once the facts are pictorially recorded for all to see!" The **National Review** has plugged it, pointing out that it is "available from the HUAC." A retired admiral has written letters on behalf of it and some Republican candidates used it during their campaigns. Prints have been bought by a number of corporations, including the Schaefer Brewing Company of New York and the Standard Oil Company of California, which purchased ten prints to show to its employees. The staff of Washington Video Productions say that requests for prints of the film are coming in so fast they can hardly keep up with them.

When the Arizona A.C.L.U. protested against the showing of the film at a P.T.A. meeting without any indication that a number of students who had participated in the demonstration disagreed with the film's presentation of the events, members of the group were warned of vague but dire consequences that might follow if they continued in their protests.

Students at the University of California in Berkeley have prepared a detailed answer to the movie which they are distributing wherever they can. William Wheeler of the House committee staff has admitted on a Los Angeles TV program that there were distortions in the film.

Some of the students may have misbehaved, but no evidence has been offered proving that their original demonstration was under the control of the Communist Party. Although **Operation Abolition** seems to be doing well at the box office, this unusual venture of the House Committee on Un-American Activities into moviemaking is not apt to win any prize for accuracy.