The MPPDA Database

A database of the extant records of the General Correspondence files of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc.

Professor Richard Maltby and Liz Milford

http://mppda.flinders.edu.au/
A CODE TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VALUES

IN THE PRODUCTION OF SILENT, SYNCHRONIZED AND TALKING MOTION PICTURES.

Adopted by Association of Motion Picture Producers, Inc. at Hollywood, Calif., and ratified by the Board of Directors of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. March 31, 1930.
CODE OF ETHICS
FOR THE PRODUCTION OF MOTION PICTURES
As Adopted by the Industry in 1930

PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE CODE

1. Motion picture producers recognize the high trust and confidence which have been placed in them by the people of the world, and they recognize their responsibility to the public because of this trust.

2. Theatrical motion pictures that is, pictures intended for the theater as distinct from pictures intended for churches, schools, lecture halls, educational purposes, social reform movements, etc. are primarily to be regarded as entertainment. Standards have always regarded the importance of entertainment and its role in the advancement of human beings.

3. It is recognized that there is entertainment which tends to improve the race or at least to recreate and build human beings in the realities of life, and entertainment which tends to harm human beings or to lower their standard of life and living.

4. Motion pictures are an important form of art expression. Art enters intimately into the lives of human beings. The art of motion pictures has the same objectives as the other arts—the presentation of human thought, emotion, and experience, in terms of an appeal to the soul through the senses.

5. In consequence of the foregoing facts, the following general principles are adopted:

- No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
- No form of enjoyment shall ever be presented on the screen, subject only to necessary dramatic contrast.
- Law, nature, or human beings shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

PARTICULAR APPLICATIONS

Crimes Against the Law

There shall never be presented in such a way as to the audience may sympathize with or condone others with a desire for vengeance.

- The commission of a murder shall not be shown.
- The commission of suicide shall not be shown.
- The commission of a crime shall not be explicitly illustrated.
- The commission of a crime shall not be shown.
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Sex

The stories of the commission of marriage shall not be shown.

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Vulgarity

The presentation of low language, vulgarity, and tricks should be avoided. The presentation of power should be avoided.

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Profanity

Profanity of any kind is not to be tolerated.

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Cruelty

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National Feelings

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Titles

Titles which encourage indecent or obscene titles shall not be used.

1. The use of obscene term or obscene titles shall not be used.
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(THE END)
August 17, 1927

Mr. Maurice McConkie
Motion Picture Producers and
Distributors of America
140 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Mr. McConkie:

Your few lines of the last note attached to letter from Mr. Frank S. Reaume, Secretary-Treasurer of the Association of Motion Picture Producers, Inc., 6371 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, California, to which there is a copy of the signed contract signed by Ben Rothwell, Frank Leon Smith and Sherman Ross, has been referred to this department.

The facts in this case are:

In the first place, a zero contract was entered into by Mr. Frank Leon Smith, a busy writer for our Serial Unit, Ben Rothwell, an agent for certain artists, and Sherman Ross, a rather unknown quantity who had become kind of a playmate of Frank and I, to use Rosa for a strictly casual period of six weeks at $200.00 per week in a serial we were placing in production entitled “A HOME WITHOUT A KEV” before we had actually started production. Mr. Reaume worked out an arrangement with Gene Tunney to make a serial for PATHE before he started training for the Dempsey-Tunney fight. This necessitated a change in our production date to accommodate the Tunney agreement and, instead of placing “A HOME WITHOUT A KEV” in production as had been planned, we placed it on the production schedule the serial entitled “THE HOUSE WITHOUT A KEV” and had a very clear understanding with Sherman Ross that we would use him in that serial including long songs and a view. As the production was not started for another three months later, not only was Mr. Ross given a six weeks’ engagement, but his services were used for considerable additional time in the Tunney serial.

This action on the part of Ben Rothwell and Sherman Ross to fatten the profits was not the way things were written, and also of course, it is considered by in excess, in my opinion, of his

Please address all communications to the company.
PERSONAL:

WILL H. HAYS, Exec., Chairman,

MRS. THOMAS H. WINTER,

MRS. E. R. SCHNEIDER,

MRS. E. H. WINTER,

TERRY TOOLEY,

J. L. LAYRE,

SOL MURPH,

PAUL BEEH,

MAUDE MAXWELL,

J. QUIEN,

CHARLES E. CROSS,

CHARLES BULGroN,

JASON S. JOY,

FATHER LORD.

HELDP at the Offices of the
Association of Motion Picture Producers
5094 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, California

Monday, February 10th, 1950
Commencing at the hour of 1:30 o'clock P.M.

Associated Court Reporters
REPORTERS—NOTARIES

Reported by Paul Leinhardt, Jr.

715 Associated Realty Building
Sixth and Olive Streets

Phone VAndike 3823

WHILE OTHER CITIES EAGERLY
AWAIT THIS WHITE-HOT SENSATION
LOS ANGELES CAN
NOW SEE!

SCARFACE

HOWARD HUGHES'
POWERFUL DRAMA

The picture that pow-
nerful interests have
tried to suppress—in
its uncut, unaltered,
original version...!

with
PAUL MUNI
ANN Dvorak
BORIS KARLOFF
KAREN MOORE
O'SGOOD PERKINS

Directed by HOWARD HAWKS

STARTS
10 A.M.
TODAY
3:30 in 5 P.M.
LORD TO JOY

"So many important violations of the code have been going on that a little thing like a "hell" now and then seems too me a distinctly unimportant matter. I never was at all excited over "damn" or "hell" where it was wanted for the context, but I would not be at all enthusiastic about putting that into writing in the Code. If you do, I am afraid "The Front Page" language and "What Price Glory" talk is going to come in under the head of "essential to the realistic presentation of the subject." If they will cut out some of the nastiness that has been coming out lately, I shall not mind if the edit says "doggon" instead of merely "damn.""

I hope you are telling your very intelligent group of producers to take a look at the fifteen box office champions of the present year. Marlo Dressler gets three places among them and Gina Marosa and the un-speakable Constance Bennett get none... I am beginning to be pretty confident of the fact that the empty theatres, the double features they attract a fair sized crowd, and the deplorable financial condition of the industry at present can be attributed to practically the same element that made Lloyd Corrall's "Vanity" leave Broadway after a short run at a three-dollar top while the absolutely clean 3-D film has settled down for a good run. You can remind them that the same factor which has chased Broadway to death is at the present moment going to chase their cinema as if they don't give us more pictures like "Cimarron" and "The Connecticut Yankee" and stars like Janet Gaynor instead of sex and murder and the type of motion picture actress whose private life is a public scandal.

I must interest you to know that I wrote a letter to Louis B. Mayer protesting Ramon Novarro's [sic] and praised Metro-Goldwyn for his type of picture. Mr. Mayer did not answer the whole story for our paper which reaches about one hundred and fifty thousand readers. We all know the terribly hard job that you are doing, and we know that you have made decision.
### MPPDA Browse by Year

**Choose a year to browse**

- 1915
- 1919
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Showing records 61 to 75 of 111

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Subject</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Detail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922-08-16</td>
<td>uniform contract</td>
<td>Cohen argues that since the MPPDA and MPDA have reached an Impasse over the Uniform Contract, they should turn to representatives of the public to act as mediators. Letters by Hays suggest that he took the suggestion seriously, although there is no evidence that he acted upon it.</td>
<td>Cohen Sidney Hays Will</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-08-26</td>
<td>uniform contract</td>
<td>The justification for the Film Boards of Trade (Film Quo) by the man who claims to have originated them. Includes detailed description of their operations and functions, which include battled censorship and creating favorable public opinion, especially amongst “insulters of public opinion.”</td>
<td>Goldman Benjamin Hays Will</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-09-05</td>
<td>civic committee</td>
<td>Proposal for Warner studio cooperation with the Public Relations Committee. Describes public relations progress of Committees of Twenty – relations with press, improving – proposals for reviewing service – Hays proposed that favorable reviews be published, unfavorable ones sent to MPPDA.</td>
<td>Hays Will Warner Albert</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-09-12</td>
<td>civic children's committee motion pictures</td>
<td>Propositions for public relations action, arising from meeting of 09-15-1922. Involves national headquarters of affiliated local committees. Public relations reviewing plans – aims include encouraging publication of story by story guides in newspapers classifying films according to type of audience they would suit – children’s motion pictures.</td>
<td>Hammer Lee Hamman Oliver McManus</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MPPDA Record

**Record ID:** 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related People</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>To: Albert Warner</td>
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<tr>
<td>From: Will H. Hays President, MPPDA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Related Organisations**

- MPPDA Committee on Public Relations
- MPPDA Committee on Public Relations, Committee of Twenty

**Proposed for Warner studio cooperation with the Public Relations Committee.**

Proposes for Warner studio cooperation with the Public Relations Committee. Describes public relations progress of Committees of Twenty – relations with press, improving – proposals for reviewing service – Hays proposed that favorable reviews be published, unfavorable ones sent to MPPDA: “I need not point out that this proposal would go far toward being the antithesis of any political censorship project.”

**Additional Text**

"I need not point out that this proposal would go far toward being the antithesis of any political censorship project; any producer would be entirely at liberty to participate or withdraw from the arrangement; more than that, he would be at liberty to accept or not the suggestions made with respect to any motion picture; also, none but affirmatively favorable comment will be made public. There would be no attempt to have the several organizations viewing pictures apply their estimate relative to any specific picture. Each organization would send out favorable reviews simply to its own local organizations throughout the country. Organizations on committee of 20 have membership of 1/3. They are the type who will be constructive, not destructive, who believe and will help in a spirit of an honest appreciation of our difficulties and the inestimable value of motion pictures. No other activity of this Association seems to me more important than our securing the allegiance for the industry of these large, numerous and influential groups whose cooperation we have not had sufficiently in the past.”
The MPPDA Digital Archive consists of a database of the extant records of the General Correspondence files of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., covering the period from 1922 to 1939. Established in 1922, the MPPDA was the trade association for the motion picture industry, and included all the major companies producing and distributing motion pictures in the United States in its membership. The association was popularly known as the Hays Office, after its first President, Will H. Hays, who remained in office until 1943. Hays was a leading Republican party politician, who resigned from President Warren Harding’s Cabinet to take up the MPPDA position. After Hays’ retirement, the association was renamed the Motion Picture Association of America.

The documents in the MPPDA’s General Correspondence files are an immensely rich source of information about the history of the motion picture industry. They describe the organization and operation of the industry’s trade association, and include extensive correspondence and other documentation relating to industry policy and public relations, distributor–exhibitor relations, censorship and self-regulation. The great majority of this material is unavailable from other sources.

Featured People
- Mr Charles C. Pettijohn
- Mr Will H. Hays
- Franklin H. Martin
- Fred W. Beetson
- Harry Warner

Featured Records
- Record ID: #1260
  Re article on “Motion Picture Morality” in current issue of America by Winfield Parsons -- including article and “A Code for motion pictures” also by Parsons.
- Record ID: #8
  Appointment of Col. Jason Joy as Executive Officer;

Featured Organisations
- Allied States
- Metro-Goldwyn
- MPPDA
- Universal
- American Mercury

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Record #225

Date: 12/08/1924
Record Type: Advertising/publicity
Reels: Reel 1
Frame Start: 1-2618
Frame End: 1-2620
Legacy ID: 225
Legacy Years: 1924
Legacy Index: Woman to Woman

Presumably this is the kind of advertising that the Wampas are resolving not to issue. Extracts include: "A CHILD BORN OUTSIDE OF MAN'S LAW: His Fate Hanging on the Caprice of a Society Butterfly ... Betty Compson as the Notorious Dancer of the Queens of Sin in the Famous Paris Underworld ... SEE THIS SHOW AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR TO SEE IF YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE." There is also a daring picture. The movie is Woman to Woman.

Keywords
Advertising - offensive (10)  Show all keywords

Scans

Linked Films
- Woman to Woman

Scan #1-2618 For Record #225
View the full size scan. You can also hover over the image to view a zoomed in version.

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Record #1262

Date: 02/04/1930
Record Type: Miscellaneous
Reel: Reel 8
Frame Start: 8-2142
Frame End: 8-2281
Legacy ID: 1273
Legacy Year: 1930
Legacy Index: MPPDA - Production Code

Press clippings and letters, all showing confidence in, and enthusiasm for, the new Production Code.

Keywords
There are no keywords associated with this record.

Scans

Scan #8-2151 For Record #1262

View the full size scan. You can also hover over the image to view a zoomed in version.

Linked Organisations
- General Federation of Women’s Clubs
- International Federation of Catholic Alumni

Linked People
- Rita C McEldrick, Public relations, International Film Foundation, International Federation of Catholic Alumni
- James C. Egbert, Columbia University
- Senator Robert Wagner
We gratefully acknowledge:

- The cooperation of the Motion Picture Association of America, and its then President, Jack Valenti, and Vice-President James Bouras, for their generosity in giving us permission to access, copy and use the archival material catalogued here. The project owes a particular debt of gratitude to Carolyn Stein of the MPAA for her help in accessing the material.
- The staff of the Department of Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, have been involved with this project, and facilitated its development, since its inception. In particular we thank Sam Gill, Barbara Hall and Howard Prouty for their invaluable help at various stages of the project.
- Financial support for the MPPDA Database Project, and the research underlying it, from:
  - The American Council of Learned Societies
  - The Australian Research Council
  - Australian National Data Service
  - Exeter University
  - Flinders University
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