The Hollywood Ten Trials

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Historical Background of the Hollywood Ten

The incident started in the year 1947 at the time of the independence of two countries, Pakistan and India. In October 1947, ten members highlighted the policy followed by the House Un-American Activities Committee. They denounced the tactics followed by the House Un-American Activities Committee, also known as HUAC. The investigation was carried out over time and highlighted the fact that there was an effect of communist influence on the tactics followed by HUAC. The American motion picture business was getting under the influence of communists with every passing day. After this analysis, these ten major screenwriters and directors were then named the Hollywood Ten. They were further banned from working in Hollywood studios. Their defiant stands also placed them at center stage in a national debate over the controversial anti-communist crackdown that swept through the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. After the famous Hollywood Ten, there were more from the action industry who were banned from the big movie studios afterward. This blacklisting then came to an end in the 1960s (Athan G. Theoharis, 1999).

Communism and Alleged Threats to Hollywood

The actual crime or nastiness included in The Hollywood Ten Trials included the threats from the communists. In this perspective, Disney was the first one to confirm the threat of the communists. Besides this, Disney mentioned some of the specific names as well which were a threat to the industry at that time. As soon as the investigation started, the hearings of Walt Disney and Ronald Reagan began. Another crime highlighted by Reagan was the steer union policy being employed in the past few years in the industry. This steer union policy was using ‘communist-like tactics’ in the industry (Athan G. Theoharis, 1999). However, when the hearing for Reagan was carried out, he did not mention any name since, according to him, their power was greater than any other source of the community available at that moment. Reagan had to suffer from marital issues after the hearing, which eventually led to the divorce of the actor afterward.

Blacklisting and Public Accusations

As soon as the crimes and the communist acts started to increase, the rate of selling people also increased. At that time, a local paper mentioned the names of the communists as well. His communist

was Hayden. Another incident that needs to be highlighted in this perspective is the coming back of Bogart, who, after coming back to Hollywood, shouted at Danny, saying that he was the one behind selling him. Seeing the increase in the death rate of people during the trials and investigations, the Warner brothers decided to distance themselves from the Hollywood Ten. On their decision to distance themselves, Bogart gave his review that they were foolish and naïve since they were backing out of fear. Billy Wilder, however, focused on figuring out their way back into the industry. The sanctions of this act came out in the form of jail as well as fines. The banning of the Hollywood Ten from the industry ended the careers of these ten screenwriters involved.

Criminological Interpretation of the Trials

Nicole Rafter, while mentioning the entrance of criminology in the movies, explained the theories that apply to the Hollywood Ten scenarios. One of the most highlighted theories was the theory of the Hays Code (Athan G. Theoharis, 1999). He applied a set of questions to the working of the Hollywood Ten scenario. This set of questions highlighted what caused the ten screenwriters and directors to change their way. It was found that society plays an essential part in filmmaking. All the directors and screenwriters involved were influenced by society in the form of the communists. The Hays Code figured that the cinematic code of representation leaves the people to find out such things in their environment as well. Cultural anxiety and political controversies are some of the consequences figured out with the help of the Hays Code in the case of the Hollywood Ten. Besides this, the application of the Hays Code to the filmmakers highlighted that crime doesn’t pay; however, it makes the situation worse for the country in many ways. The theory believes that the outcome of the scenario should be strict since the strictness at that time would have presented the outcomes in the future.

Lessons for Contemporary Filmmakers

In the present time, many of the filmmakers have learned from the experience of the Hollywood Ten. These experiences have highlighted the importance of the idea that crime is not a factor that needs to be portrayed. No doubt that the accurate portrayal of crimes makes the spectators fascinated with them. These aspects of fascination and learning were highlighted by many of the filmmakers in their films. These writers were Rafter (2006), Leitch (2002), and Young (2009) (WITTES, 1999). These directors not only highlighted the crime but highlighted the solution to this crime as well. In this way, the spectators not only came to know about the issues going on but also the solution that needs to be implemented as a community in society for the betterment of the country.

Conclusion on Crime Politics and Film

To sum up, the Hollywood Ten trials were a lesson for many of the filmmakers of the present time.

These filmmakers gave a path to the present filmmakers that they should not follow. Crime is not a good thing to be portrayed, but the actual issue lies in the fascinating portrayal of the crime. Crime should be pictured with its solution.

References

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