

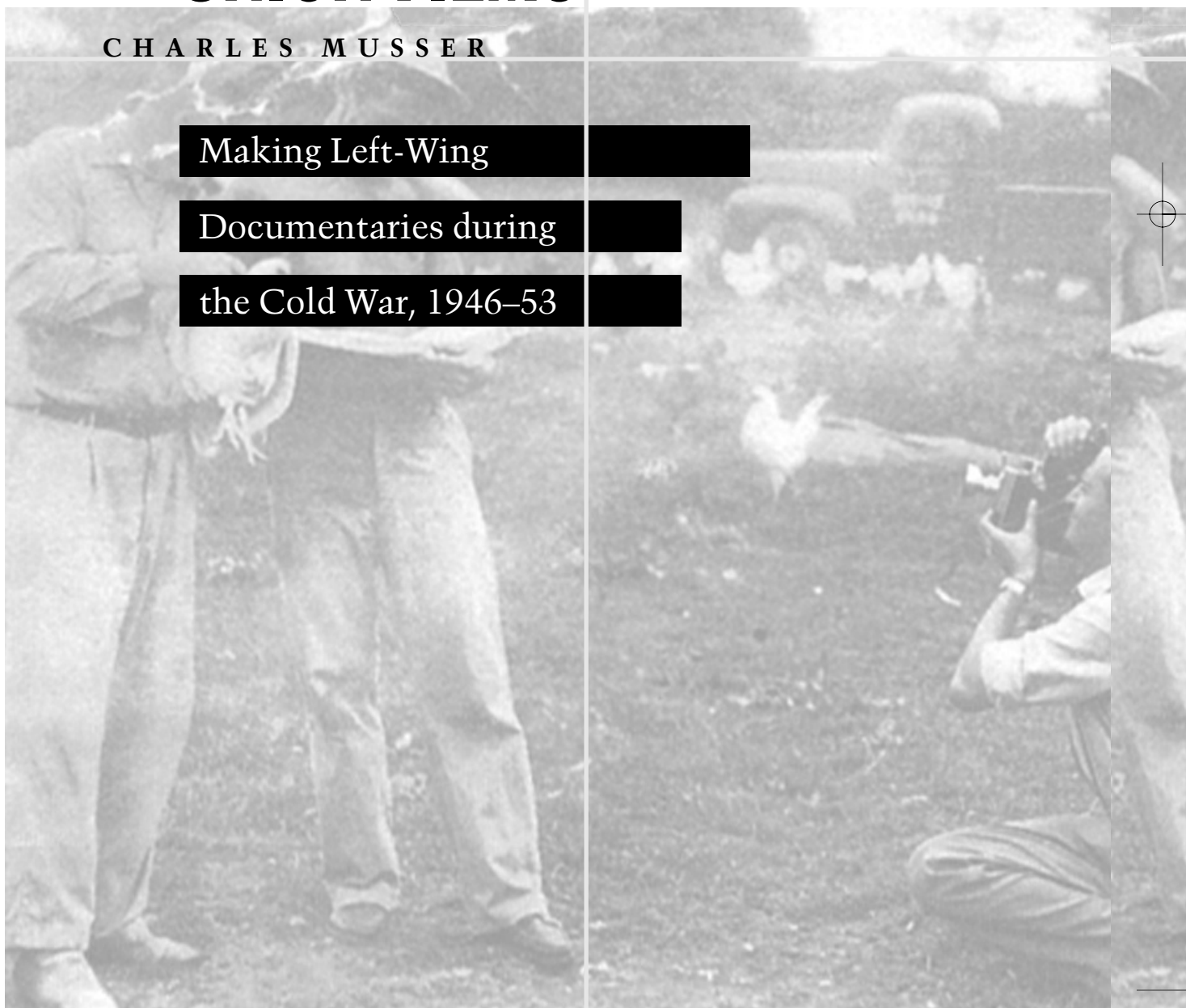
CARL MARZANI AND UNION FILMS

CHARLES MUSSER

Making Left-Wing

Documentaries during

the Cold War, 1946-53

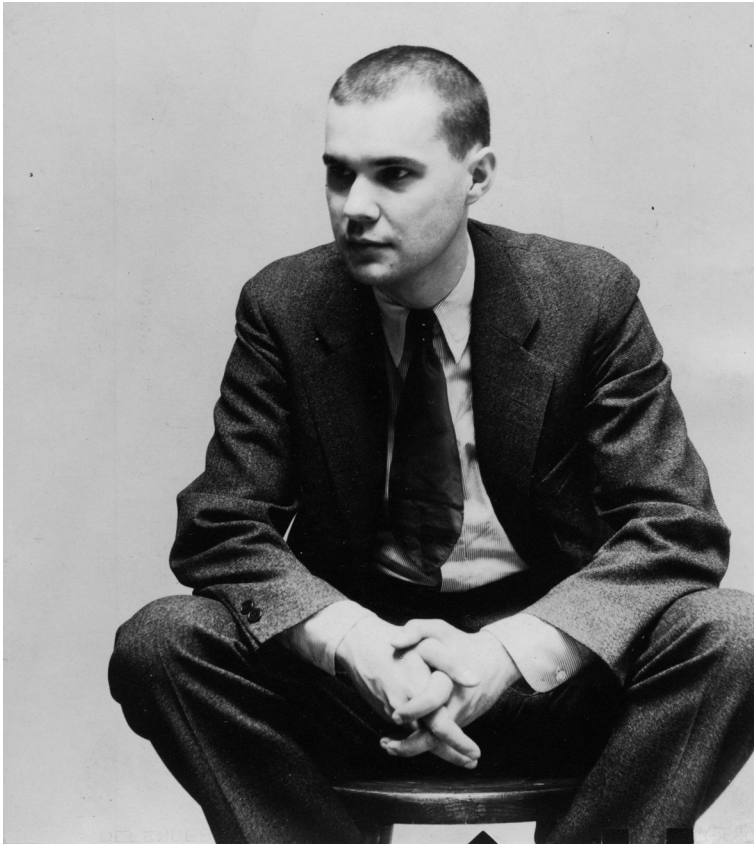


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Jay Leyda—or rather his absence—frequently haunts my efforts at film scholarship.¹ Consider *People's Congressman* (1948), a campaign film for U.S. Congressman Vito Marcantonio, which I first encountered in the late 1990s. Ten years earlier, when Jay and I were curating the *Before Hollywood* series of programs, he insisted that campaign films were an unjustly ignored genre. (Leyda wanted to include a Woodrow Wilson campaign film in one of our programs, but it was only available in 16mm and we reluctantly dropped it.) I never really understood his passion for the genre—until I saw *People's Congressman*. Then I *knew*. The realization that I had once again improperly discounted one of his seemingly casual but actually profound remarks increased when I tried to find out who made the film, which lacks the most basic production credits in its head titles. The Film Study Center at

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Jay Leyda as a young man.
 Courtesy of the Jay Leyda/
 Si Lan Chen Photographs
 Collection, Tamiment Library,
 New York University.

the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) had a file for *People's Congressman*, which I eagerly opened—only to find a single scrap of paper that read “Jay Leyda knows who made this film.” Once again, an unexpected but not unfamiliar sense of loss hit me. Once again I was overwhelmed by a sense of stupidity and guilt. To be sure, I have paid a serious penalty for my lack of appreciation—for failing to ask him for his favorites in the genre. For more than a decade I have looked for the answer to a question I could have easily asked my mentor before he died in 1988.² Who made this film?

My own interest in *People's Congressman* began when I was a consultant for the Paul Robeson Cultural Center at Rutgers University: its director, Rae Alexander Minter, was organizing a touring exhibition celebrating the centennial of Robeson's birth and she brought me on as a film specialist.³ The 12-minute motion picture had gone unmentioned in Robeson biographies, but Larry Kardish at the MoMA had conducted a wide-ranging search of the archives at the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) and the title had popped up, with MoMA in possession of the only known copy. A viewing quickly confirmed that Robeson both narrated and appeared in the film. Again this was

poignant, for Leyda had known Robeson through both Sergei Eisenstein and Joris Ivens—and no doubt in his own right. Given the scrap of paper in the museum’s file, it seems likely he facilitated the 1979 acquisition. *People’s Congressman* screened at two Robeson retrospectives curated by Ed Guerrero, Mark Reid, and myself: “Paul Robeson: Star of Stage and Screen” (UCLA Film & Television Archives, October 1998) and “Borderlines: Paul Robeson and Film” (MoMA, June–July 1999).

A decade later, I was eager to revisit this picture, hoping that a screening at the Orphan Film Symposium would inspire some fresh perspective or scholarly breakthrough. Dan Streible concurred and agreed to work with MoMA to obtain a new print of the film, which would be screened at “Orphans 6” in March 2008. Perhaps fellow *orphanistas* would help to unlock the mystery of its production. But I hoped to offer my own insights, and even seeing the film again in a way that allowed for careful analysis was proving difficult. Finally, six days before the conference, I received a DVD copy, courtesy of curator Steven Higgins and the museum.

As I began to watch *People’s Congressman* on my computer, I hit the pause button. What was to be my fresh perspective? Were the anonymous filmmakers ever to be identified? Perhaps Leo Hurwitz was involved in some way? Should I go to the George Eastman House and plow through his papers? The opening credits on the film read “American Labor Party presents” and “Union Films.” The latter seemed purposefully vague and generic. If “Union Films” was a cover, perhaps this cover had been used elsewhere?

A single Google hit began to unravel the mystery. In 2005, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* had published a review of two documentaries produced by Union Films, *Deadline for Action* (1946) and *The Great Swindle* (1948). These were being distributed by the Cinema Guild, courtesy no doubt of Gary Crowdus (himself a historian of political documentaries). Bingo! But then a call to Cinema Guild produced a momentary dead end. Crowdus had departed and the films were no longer in distribution. After pleading for a lead, I was given the name and number of the producer’s widow, who might still be alive. Fifteen minutes later, I was talking to Tony Marzani, the producer’s son. I soon learned that Union Films was a bona fide organization: its driving force, Carl Marzani (1912–94), had written a five-volume memoir, *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, and left his papers to New York University.⁴ (Hereafter Marzani’s five-volume autobiography will be cited parenthetically, volume and page number.)

The research that followed was unexpectedly rich. Starting from Marzani’s obituaries and autobiography, as well as a few film reviews, I began to build a history of Union Films and Marzani’s engagement in documentary production by incorporating primary source documents. Indeed, this history rapidly expanded until I realized that (1) Union Films was central to our understanding of post–World War II documentary and

(2) my research exceeded the limits of an article and had to be presented here selectively. As this article seemed near completion, one aspect of my undertaking suddenly gained new prominence: the campaign films that Union Films made for Henry A. Wallace and Vito Marcantonio in 1948. After consulting a little-known motion picture catalog, *Films for '48: A Guide to Progressive Films and Their Use*, I almost doubled the number of relevant items.⁵ A whole section of the catalog is devoted to "Films for Wallace," almost all of which were Union Films productions. Surprisingly, these differ from the Wallace-related titles that Marzani mentions in his memoirs. Moreover, of the dozen or so Wallace campaign films, Robeson appears in four (and sings in two), providing an unexpectedly rich frame of reference for an understanding of the film that initially spurred this search: *People's Congressman*. And while that congressman's name is known to few people today, a recent biography begins, "Vito Marcantonio was the most consequential radical politician in the United States in the twentieth century."⁶

REVIEWING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although my "discovery" of Marzani's five-volume autobiography made me feel a little foolish at first, a further review of the literature on documentary only confirmed that Marzani and his films have gone unmentioned in standard film histories such as Erik Barnouw's *Documentary* (1974/1993) and Jack Ellis's *The Documentary Idea* (1989).⁷ Historians interested in American leftist documentary have focused primarily on the 1930s, typically concluding with Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand's *Native Land* (1942), and then jumped to the mid-1960s. Such is the case with William Alexander's *Film on the Left* (1981) and Jonathan Kahana's *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (2008). In *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942* (1982), Russell Campbell did not so much as nod to the post-World War II era.⁸ In a chapter on "American Nonfiction Film after World War II" in *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (1973/1992), Richard Barsam briefly discussed two instances of left-wing filmmaking in the 1940s, Hurwitz's *Strange Victory* (1948) and Sydney Meyers's *The Quiet One* (1948), but little else.⁹ Unsurprisingly, Barsam sided with his fellow historians of the documentary and focuses on *Louisiana Story* (1948), praising it as "Flaherty's most ambitious and most beautiful film."¹⁰ More generally, he claimed that American documentaries had displayed a tendency to avoid labor issues, one that continued into the 1950s.

Corporate, institutional, and (to a lesser extent) state sponsorship has been seen as defining documentary practice in the postwar era (roughly from 1946 through 1960). In George Stoney's view, reliance on such sponsorship adversely affected the documentary

tradition in this period: “However justified we thought we were in making these films, by doing so we lost the respect we once had as documentary filmmakers on the part of the intellectual and artistic community,” he wrote. “For, in truth, the disillusionments of the late 1940s and the intimidations of the McCarthy period that followed destroyed our political underpinnings.”¹¹ Likewise, having argued that “the power of documentary and its uniqueness lay exactly in its fusion of social purpose with artistic form,” Jack Ellis found a lack of this progressive perspective in the postwar period.¹² The veterans of the 1930s “were dispersed and disorganized with no clear leadership or rallying point,” while “the younger documentarians, with only the war experience as background, had little commitment or sense of direction.”¹³ Corporate sponsorship seemingly defined documentary filmmaking in the 1940s, with Robert Flaherty’s *Louisiana Story* (1948), commissioned by the Standard Oil Company, once again celebrated as America’s foremost achievement.¹⁴

Certainly sponsorship was not easy to escape, but radical unions and other left-leaning organizations funded many documentaries in the post–World War II period. These left-wing documentaries have been virtually ignored, and symptomatic of this fact is that Marzani’s film legacy has been all but forgotten. When I asked George Stoney, who had begun to make films in the late 1940s, if he had known Marzani and some of his associates, he responded, “Unfortunately the names you list do not strike a bell.”¹⁵ Ricky Leacock, D. A. Pennebaker, and Michael Roemer also drew blanks.¹⁶ This is surprising in that Marzani was responsible for more than twenty documentary and campaign films between 1943 and 1953—one nominated for an Academy Award. The one person I know who knew Carl Marzani in this period was studio potter Gerry Williams, the subject of my documentary *An American Potter* (1976). Gerry met Marzani while they were both serving time in Danbury State Prison where Williams was the librarian and Marzani was writing a book.¹⁷

One exception to this loss of historical memory is an interview with Carl Marzani published by *Cineaste* in 1976 (linked no doubt to Cinema Guild’s distribution of *Deadline for Action* and *The Great Swindle*). Focusing on the period when he was in New York City, Marzani told Gary Crowdus and Lenny Rubenstein, “There were four of us—myself, an editor, a soundman, and a cameraman. We had a contract with the UE [United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America]—\$50,000 per year to produce ten reels of film—and that gave us the financial backing.” This group thus formed a film collective of sorts, living and working in a brownstone at 111 West 88th Street, which they turned into a 16mm studio. Marzani recalled, “By cutting costs we were able to make a small but steady living.”¹⁸ Marzani, who owned the brownstone, generally acted as producer and writer, though roles were fluid and often shared. This valuable *Cineaste* interview had no impact on book-length accounts of the documentary tradition.

In his interview Marzani did not name other members of Union Films—but not for purposes of self-aggrandizement. Marzani had been asked to “name names” in the 1940s and had refused.¹⁹ Even into the 1970s, this habit had not died. Perhaps this also explains Leyda’s hesitancy to name names in the MoMA file. Like Marzani, Jay had been blacklisted (twice). Fortunately Marzani was more forthcoming in volume four of his memoirs, *From Pentagon to Penitentiary* (1995), as he detailed many of his own experiences, buttressed by an impressive amount of primary-source documentation. Although the Union Films membership changed over time, he remembered its key members to be Max Glandbard, who was director/editor; Andy Cusick, a “good natured young fellow” who did sound; and Victor H. Komow, the cinematographer, who had his own blimped, synchronous-sound 16mm camera. Carl’s wife Edith Eisner Marzani was the business manager (4:230).

Who were these people who made up this collective and what happened to them?

THE COLLECTIVE: BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

Max Glandbard (1915–87) was born in Lodz, Poland, and came to the United States at the age of four.²⁰ He later claimed to have acted in a movie shooting in Philadelphia at the age of five and had wanted to act ever since.²¹ A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania drama program, he was a charter member of the New Theatre of Philadelphia, where he acted, directed, and had several of his skits produced.²² The New Theatre League was “for a mass development of the American theatre to its highest artistic and social level; for a theater dedicated to the struggle against war, fascism and censorship.”²³ Glandbard soon moved to New York City and directed for the Brooklyn Labor Players. He was on the staff of the Living Newspaper group for the Federal Theatre Project, working on *One Third of a Nation*, *Milk*, and other projects in 1938.²⁴ Glandbard arrived in Winnipeg, Canada, in November 1939, as the newly appointed director of the Winnipeg New Theatre, where he trained actors and directed plays in 1940.²⁵

A staff sergeant during World War II, Glandbard served as the crew chief on a B-24 Liberator in North Africa. A motorcycle accident sent him back to the United States, where he wrote a weekly radio show for Glenn Miller. While working at Wright Field in Dayton, he helped found a community theater group, which became the Dayton Theatre Guild. After directing its first several productions, he moved back to New York and joined Union Films.²⁶ Glandbard’s involvement with Union Films came to an end about the time his son Eric was born (1949). To his surprise, he avoided being blacklisted and subsequently worked for Filmwright Productions in the 1950s.²⁷ He was later credited as production manager on *Patterns* (1956), directed by Fielder Cook and starring Van Heflin and

Everett Sloane, and writer/second-unit director on *Hell Canyon Outlaws* (1957). In 1961, he joined North Advertising, Inc., as a television producer-writer.²⁸ In March 1963, at the off-Broadway Master Theater, he directed *Darkness at Noon*.²⁹ After recovering from a stroke, he worked for ABC in New York City as a film editor, gaining recognition for editing the Sunday morning, Emmy award-winning television series *Animals, Animals, Animals* (1976–81), among other programs. He retired and remained active in local theater groups until his death.

Victor Komow worked for the Barnard college radio station CURC in New York City in the early 1940s as its drama director, working with the CURC Radio Players.³⁰ Only a few of Komow's post-Union Films credits appear on the Internet Movie Database and not surprisingly these are fragmentary. He was cameraman on the animated short *Showdown at Ulcer Gulch* (1956). He also directed *Death Tide* (1958). He died in 1967.³¹ After his wife, Josephine Komow, a school librarian, died in 2005, the school's newsletter remarked:

A self-described, active leftist, Komow spent many of her years as a young woman fighting for workers' rights. Her husband, Victor Komow, was a videographer [*sic*] who made documentaries particularly on the formation of unions and other aspects of the labor movement.

It was his work that sparked Komow's interest in the topic, and her work led to many exciting adventures. A particularly exciting day was during the height of her union work, when Komow answered the door of her apartment to find herself face-to-face with none other than singer Paul Robeson. Robeson had arrived to attend a meeting on the formation of worker unions. Although she did not pursue a career in the area, she remained an ardent supporter of workers throughout her life.³²

Victor Komow is one of many forgotten figures in the documentary tradition.

Andy Cusick's career has been harder to trace. His role in the collective is also complicated by the fact that Richard Patton was the only soundman credited on surviving prints of Union Films productions (although the majority of these do not provide credits). Cusick, for instance, might have been a sound mixer at the 88th Street studio.

Edith (Eisner) Marzani had acted in the theater using the stage name Edith Emerson. She graduated from the Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1934 and was soon on tour with a George M. Cohan production of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness*.³³ Other roles followed sporadically both in the United States and England (2:182, 188; 3:53). Later she took jobs where income was more steady—and the chance for union organizing greater (4:42–43). She worked as business manager and was in charge of distribution for Union Films well into

the 1950s. While not apparently involved in the creative side, her management skills and hard work were crucial to the business in the face of her husband's many legal difficulties. She did this as well as raised a family while struggling with multiple sclerosis, which first emerged in the mid-1940s. By 1957, she was confined to a wheelchair.

All the key members of Union Films had substantial experience in the theater, including Carl Marzani. He had written and directed plays in college and worked as a stage manager for summer stock, ultimately stepping in as co-producer and taking that company on the road with a staging of Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (2:186-90). His involvement continued intermittently after his move to England.

CARL MARZANI: FROM LEAVING FASCIST ITALY TO JOINING THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

Carl Marzani was born in Rome in 1912. His father was a socialist; and by the time he was ten, Carl found himself in street fights with members of fascist youth groups (1:121). In 1924, after Mussolini came to power, the Marzanis emigrated to America. Carl's father worked as a coal miner and his mother as a seamstress in Scranton, Pa. (Here the parallels with Max Glandbard's early life are worth noting.) Their precocious son went to Williams College on scholarship, and graduated in 1935 at the top of his class. Awarded a fellowship to Oxford University, he went to England and then to Spain, where he fought briefly for the Republicans. Back in England, after meeting Paul Robeson and members of the left-wing Unity Theater in London, he also wrote a play based on his experiences in Spain, but it went unproduced (2:111; 3:102-4). While still at Oxford, he and Edith joined the British Communist Party.³⁴

When they returned to New York, the Marzanis shifted their membership to the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and Carl became an organizer in the Lower East Side ("a Section Education Director"). "Two years inside the Communist party was just about right for my temperament," he later wrote. "That was long enough to learn a great deal of its virtues and its faults and not so long as to be conditioned by it. I learned to look at society as it was, not as the media told me it was" (4:3). In the 1930s and 1940s, the Lower East Side sent hundreds of American Labor Party and Communist Party volunteers to work for U.S. Congressman Vito Marcantonio—whom Marzani called "our congressional hero"—at election time (4:30). Marzani's connection with Marcantonio, at first political and later personal, began during the 1940 election (4:152).

On March 2, 1942, 6 months after leaving the CPUSA, Marzani joined the office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), hired by Hubert Barton (4:80). The COI, headed

by Gen. William J. Donovan, soon became the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Although Donovan was a conservative Republican, he was prepared to hire Marzani on a “don’t ask, don’t tell” basis when it came to his communist past. Marzani moved to Washington, and as deputy chief, he helped to shape the Visual Presentation Branch of the OSS, headed by Barton. There he worked closely with Donal McLaughlin (b. 1908), who was head of the graphic section, and David Zablodowsky (1903–85), head of the editorial section. At the OSS Marzani became involved in filmmaking. Initially these were for presentations within the U.S. government, but in the fall of 1943, they made *War Department Report*, a 47-minute documentary for public exhibition. It was designed to re-motivate the home front, which had become overly confident and complacent as to an Allied victory. The film was narrated by Walter Huston, while Marzani acted as producer, Oliver Lundquist as director, David Zablodowsky as writer, and Richard Lyford as editor. The Signal Corps cameramen went unnamed; but many of the sequences were constructed out of captured enemy footage. McLaughlin, who created the graphics and some of the animation, remembers Marzani as “a live wire, a real producer.”³⁵

On the second anniversary of Pearl Harbor, *War Department Report* had a double premiere before select audiences in Washington, D.C. (at the National Press Club) and New York City (at the War Department Projection Room, 729 Seventh Avenue). The press was enthusiastic.³⁶ A reporter for the *Washington Post* concluded: “Men and women in war plants will get better appreciation from this War Department report of how indispensable their work is to victory. It should give a healthy prod to production. But it would be an incentive to the rest of the public as well.”³⁷ The War Department was delighted with the film (4:122), which subsequently received an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary Feature. Marzani and the OSS Visual Presentation Unit went on to produce other documentaries for public exhibition, including *Air Force Report* (1945).

After the war, the Presentation Branch was reassigned to the State Department. Its future bleak, key members of the Presentation Branch—Barton, Marzani, Lundquist, McLaughlin, Zablodowsky, and former Orson Welles associate Richard Wilson—began to look toward a return to civilian life and formed Presentation Associates in September 1945. This private company would perform audio-visual work for corporate, government, and civic organizations. Most of the team worked for the company after hours and on weekends. As President Truman replaced New Deal liberals and launched the Cold War, Marzani was particularly aware that his days in the State Department were numbered.³⁸ Meanwhile, Marzani had developed ties with labor groups, including the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (more often called “the UE”), which claimed over 600,000 members in the 1940s.³⁹ It was and remains one of the most progressive unions in the American labor movement.

THE EMERGENCE OF UNION FILMS

With the death of FDR and the end of the war, American labor unions faced changing circumstances as the struggle between unionized labor and large corporations entered a new phase. As Lee Pressman, general counsel for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), explained it in 1947, “There is a determined effort in our country today to draw our people into a crusade against labor. Propaganda flows in a steady stream from the press and from most radio commentators and newspaper columnists for legislation to shackle labor. It is a campaign based upon misrepresentation and deceit.”⁴⁰ The UE, which was a member union of the CIO, had been at the forefront of a wave of successful labor strikes in the first months of 1946. Eager to produce a documentary film about these strikes and the current economic situation as it looked toward the November 1946 election, the media-savvy UE approached Marzani (and thus Presentation Associates), who was still employed by the State Department.

Marzani and the UE commenced what proved to be an 8-year association that would result in at least ten films. Given the UE’s radical credentials, Marzani decided to produce the documentary under the rubric of “Union Films,” to protect Presentation Associates, which was also soliciting work from more mainstream clients (including the Federal Reserve Board of Governors). The resulting *Deadline for Action* (1946) is a forty-minute documentary that combines extensive voice-over with sync-sound statements by Franklin Roosevelt and an interview with UE president Albert Fitzgerald.⁴¹ The film is built around a “representative” but fictive UE worker: the pipe-smoking Bill Turner (played by Ivan Spear, an artist in the Graphic Section of the OSS Visual Presentation Branch), who faces a reduced paycheck in the aftermath of World War II.

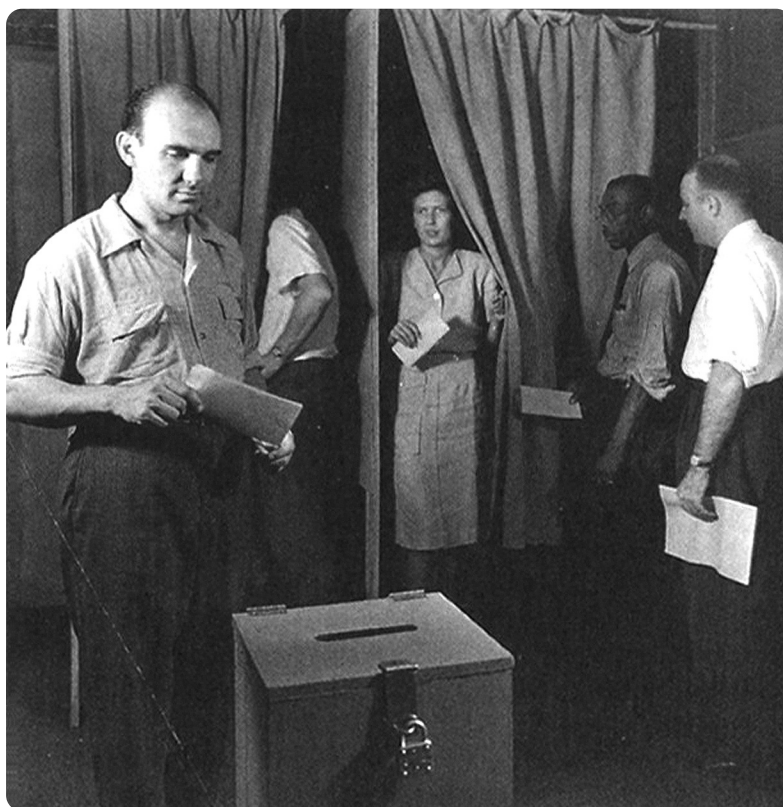
The UE not only unveiled *Deadline for Action* at its annual convention in September, it hosted a “Broadway premiere” the following month—one attended by movie critics, producers, educators, churchmen, and labor leaders. After the screening, author and labor educator Leo Huberman declared, “I think it’s the best educational weapon that labor has ever gotten out. It’s the first time labor has made the Big League in films.” Leo Hurwitz, who was then having difficulties making a film adaptation of the novel *Freedom Road*, offered a more restrained comment: “As a film it’s interesting and has a lot of energy.”⁴² In building its story around a type—a “representative” union member, *Deadline for Action* took some of its cues from segments of Hurwitz and Strand’s *Native Land* (1942). One significant new element, however, was its heavy use of animation—something rarely seen in previous documentaries on the left.

Deadline for Action was a controversial documentary that severely criticized powerful corporations such as General Electric and Westinghouse, whose workers the

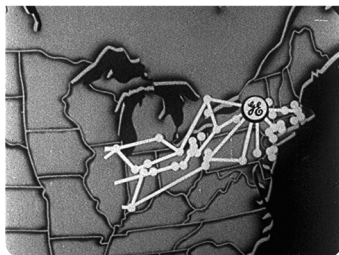
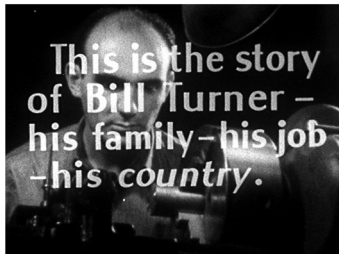
UE had organized. Angered by the attack, corporate executives at General Electric planted or cultivated negative newspaper coverage. Thus, a week before the 1946 elections, the *New York World-Telegram* condemned the film under the headline “Deadline Wins Oscar in Moscow.”⁴³ Marzani later learned that General Electric bought eleven copies of *Deadline for Action* and showed them at churches, public libraries, and American Legion posts with a speaker who would introduce the documentary critically—as a piece of Communist propaganda (4:214). It also funded a rival documentary: the thirty-one-minute *Crossroads for America* (1947), produced by Academy Films for Leo Cherne’s Research Institute of America. Instead of Bill Turner, there is Dave Nelson, a well-intentioned worker who is tricked into leading a strike by Communists, before seeing the errors of his way.⁴⁴

General Electric also approached the federal government about doing something about Marzani and subsequently claimed credit for getting him indicted as a Communist (4:214-215). In mid-January 1947, Marzani

Deadline for Action (1946) proved a highly controversial film and would ultimately lead to producer Carl Marzani serving a three-year prison term. In this production still from the set of *Deadline for Action*, Bill Turner (played by Ivan Spear) casts his vote. Marzani (far right) and a staff photographer for the Visual Presentation Branch of the OSS are the extras standing in line to vote. Exiting the booth is Marie Grammer, also a branch colleague. Courtesy of Charlotte Marzani.



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Frames from *Deadline for Action* (1946). The emphasis is on voting and the ballot box. Bill Turner (Ivan Spear) at work and at home. UE President Albert Fitzgerald is interviewed on camera. Narration and animations focus the film's attack on General Electric. Courtesy of Prelinger Archives.

was indicted on eleven counts of perjury, all related to the fact that he had not revealed his former affiliation with the Communist Party, both when he was hired and during his exit interview from the State Department.⁴⁵ Tried and convicted in May, he was sentenced in June.⁴⁶ Marzani appealed his case; and in the course of judicial review, nine of the counts were thrown out. His case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court (twice), where a deadlocked court finally left his conviction on the remaining two counts in place.⁴⁷ This process of appeal would not be completed until March 1949, but at each stage of the appeal process, he was initially denied bail and spent a total of five months of this period in jail.⁴⁸ When not incarcerated or preoccupied with his legal battles, Marzani focused on filmmaking.

In the postwar era, American labor unions were increasingly using the media for promoting their assessments of social, political, and economic matters.

Following the success of *Deadline for Action*, Marzani and Union Films produced another film for a CIO union, *The Case of the Fishermen*, which was finished in late February 1947. Made with the collaboration of the Los Angeles-based H. Arthur Klein, the film defended and publicized the circumstances of San Pedro, Calif., fishermen, who were being accused of monopolistic practices and price fixing.⁴⁹ According to *CIO News*, “A new film, ‘The Case of the Fishermen,’ showing the hard grinding toll of the workers of the sea, will be introduced in whole or in part as evidence on behalf of the CIO Fishermen & Allied Workers of America at the anti-trust trial against the union, which opened Feb. 18, in Los Angeles.”⁵⁰ After an eleven-week trial, despite these efforts, the fishermen lost their case and were fined over \$12,000.⁵¹

Although Union Films initially benefited from the rapid expansion in film use by the CIO unions, other developments soon strained relations with the umbrella organization. First, the CIO, under the leadership of President Philip Murray, gradually yielded to demands that it purge itself of “Communist influence.” In 1946 Murray attended the UE’s national convention, and praised the union’s leadership as well as its rank and file—clearly resisting calls to fracture the labor movement along political lines.⁵² Two years later Murray would declare “that under no circumstances am I going to permit . . . Communist infiltration into the national CIO movement.”⁵³ Exacerbating this tension, the CIO favored President Harry Truman in the 1948 election and opposed the third-party candidacy of Henry Wallace, whom it depicted as a stalking horse for the Communist Party. The UE, in contrast, refused to engage in “red baiting” and favored Wallace over Truman. When the CIO Executive Board voted to endorse Truman in 1948, the UE and other radical unions in the organization opposed the decision.⁵⁴ As relations between the CIO and the UE deteriorated, UE’s

01 activities were no longer covered in the *CIO News*. The CIO would finally expel the UE and
02 nine other left-wing unions, including the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of
03 America in fall 1949.⁵⁵ With the U.S. government having convicted Marzani as a Communist,
04 Union Films was in an impossible situation so far as the CIO was concerned. After *Case of*
05 *the Fishermen*, its films went unmentioned in the *CIO News* and similar publications.

06 The UE's next documentary, the twenty-three-minute *Our Union*, premiered at
07 the union's 12th annual national convention in Boston. (Henry Wallace rather than Philip
08 Murray was the featured speaker at this September 1947 event.⁵⁶) The film presented
09 "the history of the UE from its birth in depression days to its present strength. Shows
10 how UE grew in the struggle to bring security to its membership and to the people of the
11 nation as a whole."⁵⁷ At the same time it has a semi-fictional story as "Tragedy strikes the
12 home of this family when a company spy shoots down the worker who tries to organize
13 his shop. The blacklist, the spy, the violence used in the early days of the UE and the CIO
14 are vividly presented by 'Our Union,' which stresses that today there are groups trying to
15 bring back the conditions of the early 1930s."⁵⁸ Although Union Films made *Our Union*,⁵⁹
16 its role went unmentioned on prints and in the press.

17 If Washington, D.C., is a company town and that company is the U.S. govern-
18 ment, Carl Marzani must have found it almost impossible to work there as a "convicted
19 red." Certainly it was impossible for him to keep working for Presentation Associates
20 given its potential clientele. Union Films thus split off and became an independent com-
21 pany. In late February 1948, the *Washington Post* published a news story on Marzani,
22 indicating that Union Films was now located at 508 North Fillmore in Arlington, Va. (the
23 Marzani home). It also reported that Marzani and Union Films "will shortly complete a
24 three-reeler, 'The Great Swindle.'"⁶⁰ Marzani was responsible for the script and for
25 sketching out the animations that were still handled by McLaughlin at Presentation Asso-
26 ciates—as part of their separation agreement.⁶¹

27 *The Great Swindle*, which is currently available on the Web courtesy of the
28 Prelinger Archives, focuses on the postwar surge in inflation, which reduced the buying
29 power of ordinary Americans, and the reasons for it.⁶² It disputed the explanations of the
30 National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), which was arguing that the increase in
31 wages had caused inflation. Rather, greedy corporations were the real cause; and prices
32 needed to be controlled by the government (as they had been until recently by the Office of
33 Price Administration, OPA). But more immediately, workers had to strike for a living wage.
34 The film is built around "an ordinary confused American," Tom Grey, a pipe-smoking
35S everyman. Tom is confused by the arguments being made by all sides about the economy.
36NO
37L

His better-informed brother-in-law takes Tom to a union meeting where they watch a documentary, *The Big Squeeze*. This film within a film, the bulk of *The Great Swindle*, is a modernized version of the illustrated lecture, composed exclusively of animations that visualize its arguments. With the film's end, Tom and the film's union-hall audience quickly give way to the mass of working people they are meant to represent.

In structure and style, *The Great Swindle* continues much of the thinking about documentary that had been developed in the previous decade. In their 1935 article, "A New Approach to Filmmaking," Ralph Steiner and Leo Hurwitz had concluded that "even in a documentary film it is still necessary to use theatrical means of affecting an audience." They continued, "the making of a film involves not merely (1) knowing what you want to say, (2) a scenario, and (3) shooting and cutting it, but the intermediate steps of theatricalizing the events through the invention of circumstances and activities which transform concepts, relationships, and feelings into three-dimensional happenings that are plausible, effective and rich in significance."⁶³ *The Great Swindle* also shows a significant Soviet influence: its use of "types" as advocated by various Soviet filmmakers and literary theorists, the aggressive montage of Eisenstein, and the film within a film being not unlike Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (the union hall almost serves as a workers' club). The documentary's heavy reliance on animations, however, comes out of Marzani's wartime work at the Presentation Branch. The film is particularly impressive given its complete absence of synchronous recorded sound.

Deadline for Action, *Our Union*, *The Great Swindle*, and *The Case of the Fishermen* suggest ways in which left-wing documentary had changed since the 1930s. Marzani had fully embraced the 16mm sound format for production and exhibition, gearing its films for nontheatrical exhibition. Union Films worked closely with (and for) union organizations, which had flourished under the Roosevelt administration. Indeed, they were at their apex as World War II ended. The films were more polished and carefully structured than most left-wing films of the previous decade. Although the legacy of the red scare is crucial for understanding why these films were initially excluded from histories of film and documentary, these films continued to be marginalized because they did not easily fit within a documentary teleology that culminated in the achievement of cinema verité in the 1960s. They were thus doubly damned: first politically and then as the effects of the red scare abated, epistemologically (and aesthetically). At present, as theorists and historians have developed less prescriptive ideas in regard to the representational methods appropriate for documentary, scholars can readily reincorporate these Union Films productions back into the documentary tradition.

CAMPAIGN FILMS FOR WALLACE

As Jay Leyda so astutely noted some 20 years ago, the campaign film has been an underexamined and underappreciated genre. Its long history begins with the American Mutoscope's showing of *McKinley at Home* (1896) on its biograph projector. While McKinley was conducting his front-porch campaign from his home in Canton, Ohio, his virtual self appeared in New York's leading theaters. This bodily display—obviously he did not speak—induced enthusiastic demonstrations from spectators and functioned as a catalyst for “spontaneous” political rallies. The cinema provided a new kind of surrogate for the candidate.⁶⁴

Although the 1948 presidential election was the last one before television became a pervasive reality of campaigning, it too had innovative features. Joanne Morreale and others have written about the 35mm campaign films of President Harry Truman and Republican candidate Thomas E. Dewey, which were shown in movie theaters across the country, but pay no attention to the Wallace campaign. Although campaign films in 35mm had been used in presidential campaigns for decades, the venues for such films were unlikely to be available to Henry Wallace. He needed a different strategy.

In this respect, Carl Marzani seems to have understood that the increased 16mm infrastructure, which had been spurred by the use of 16mm equipment during World War II, created the opportunity to make relatively inexpensive campaign films and show them nontheatrically.

Wallace's campaign on the Progressive Party ticket became a rallying point for many Americans on the left side of the political spectrum in 1948. They sought a renewal of the New Deal from a Popular Front, left-Rooseveltian political perspective. Henry A. Wallace had the credibility and political resume to be a viable presidential candidate. He served as secretary of agriculture during FDR's first two terms, vice president in the third, and commerce secretary in the fourth. Known for his idealism, internationalist outlook, intellect, and advocacy for “the century of the common man,” Wallace appealed to most progressives.⁶⁵ The UE had close ties to the Wallace campaign.⁶⁶ UE president Albert J. Fitzgerald was a co-chair of the National Wallace for President Committee and became the convention chairman when the Progressive Party met in Philadelphia.⁶⁷ Likewise Paul Robeson was one of five co-chairs of the National Wallace for President Committee and a member of the executive committee of the Progressive Party.⁶⁸ His wife Eslanda ran for Secretary of State in Connecticut on the Progressive ticket. Congressman Vito Marcantonio was chairman of the Rules Committee for the Progressive Party. The most prominent leader in the American Labor Party (one of New York State's third parties), Marcantonio also made sure that Wallace ran in New York State as the American Labor Party candidate.⁶⁹



Henry Wallace, Vito Marcantonio, and Paul Robeson, published in *The Daily Worker*, October 25, 1949. Communist Party of the United States Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University.

Many artists, songsters, writers, and filmmakers embraced the Wallace campaign, forming a cultural front for the electoral battle. Marzani and his old colleagues at Presentation Associates were deeply committed to the Progressive Party. As Donal McLaughlin remarked, “We were very strong Wallace followers.”⁷⁰

Early in 1948, after the Court of Appeals had thrown out nine of the counts against Carl Marzani, the Marzanis moved from Washington, D.C., to New York City, buying their 88th Street brownstone for \$18,000. Although this move coincided with the launching of the Wallace campaign, Union Films was distributing *Time to Act*, a ten-minute film boosting Wallace’s run, even before they left Washington. As Edith Marzani rather discretely told a *Washington Post* reporter, the film “was produced by a group of Wallace admirers and is built around a speech made by the former Vice President before a meeting of the Progressive Citizens of America in Chicago, in which he indicated the need for a third party.”⁷¹ Wallace delivered this on January 17, 1948, at the Knickerbocker Hotel.

The Film Division of the National Council for the Arts, Sciences, and Professions described *Time to Act*:

Here is a film showing the American tradition and Henry Wallace as its present-day defender. The great enthusiasm of the Wallace rallies is shown. In his

speech, Wallace spotlights the Administration's failures in domestic and foreign policy, and presents his alternatives for a peaceful solution to world crisis. In spite of some minor technical weaknesses it is one of the few films now available on Wallace, and as such has usefulness. A highlight is Paul Robeson singing "Joe Hill" at one of the Wallace rallies. (*Films for '48*, 16)

The opening title for *Time to Act* reads "The Committee for Wallace presents," but there is no indication regarding who made this relatively complex and quite interesting campaign film. However, some of the shots that conclude the film are recycled from *Deadline for Action* (two shots of "Bill Turner") and provide an implicit sign of authorship. Carl Marzani, doing business as Union Films, was not just the distributor of the film; he was almost certainly its producer.

If Wallace campaigned for the unfinished agenda of Roosevelt's New Deal, then *Time to Act* begins by purposely evoking the well-known documentaries of the New Deal period: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936), *The River* (1938), *The City* (1939) and perhaps Joris Ivens's *Power and the Land* (1940). The opening narration is presented over images of a proud, bountiful nation.

This is our country. America. Our fields. Our roads. Our towns. We, the people built this. We tilled the soil. We scooped the earth. We raised the factories. Across the continent we worked. Men and women of all nations, all races, all creeds. We fled from kings and bigots and built our country free. Built it great. Build it under great leaders. Men of vision. Men of courage. Men of the new world. Jefferson. Lincoln. Roosevelt. Today as reaction threatens our great heritage, we the people have our spokesman.

As the narration continues "a man of vision, of courage, of wisdom. Henry Wallace, spokesman for the common man. Henry Wallace, American," the scene shifts to a darkened auditorium, and a panning camera finds Henry Wallace working his way to the speaker's stand. But before Wallace speaks, Robeson jumps on stage and goes to the microphone. Shown in profile (a medium close-up) and with only a single brief cut-away, he sings "Joe Hill," the now-legendary 1936 song with words by Alfred Hayes and music by Earl Robinson. Again the Roosevelt era is evoked even as the song offers a clear message.

Wallace is shot from different camera positions, as his longer speech is condensed and pieced together. This consists primarily of synchronous sound footage although some shots were taken with a silent camera, and sync later cheated in the editing

process. Wallace calls “for a lasting peace” and “an economic bill of rights.” These had been defeated by “another spirit in America—a spirit of meanness, a spirit of selfishness, a spirit of shortsightedness and fear.” Moreover, this spirit “has struck at civil liberties. It has smeared men of the highest integrity who are willing to accept public office.” At two different points, the filmmakers cut away to sequences of images that illuminate the speech. (One wonders if *La Vie est a Nous*, the campaign film made by Jean Renoir and others for the French Communist Party in 1936, served as a model for *Time to Act*. After all, it had been released in the United States as *The People of France* in December 1937.⁷²) After Wallace decries the Truman Doctrine, a succession of shots showing files marked “secret” and then the mushrooming atomic bomb play under the candidate’s words, “What the next steps are, have not been disclosed to us. Where it will all end is left to us to guess. And the guess is not pleasant to contemplate.” What Wallace alludes to the camera makes concrete.

Time to Act concludes with a plea to viewers: “Organize ourselves, our families, our friends, our shops, our neighbors. From house to house, and door to door, carry the progressive platform to every precinct, every ward. This is the way to secure a peaceful and prosperous America.” The final plea, that “We must organize,” echoes the lyrics that Robeson sings earlier in the film: “And standing there as big as life/And smiling with his eyes/Joe says, ‘What they forgot to kill/Went on to organize/Went on to organize.’” It is in this final section we briefly see Bill Turner of *Deadline for Action*. At this moment, the savvy viewer might recognize that the campaign film’s title, *Time to Act*, resonates with the title of that first Union Films production, *Deadline for Action*.

Time to Act demonstrates that Union Films’ approach to filmmaking could be quite different when freed from the didactic expectations of the UE. Financial factors, subject matter, and the urgency of a campaign moved Union Films away from a reliance on graphics and toward location shooting with a combination of sync-sound camera on a tripod and silent footage captured with a handheld camera. This was possible in that the filmmakers were covering a planned event. Likewise “the intermediate steps of theatricalizing the events,” which Steiner and Hurwitz outlined, were not used, perhaps because the film is organized around an event in which two experienced and famous performers are already playing their parts. While such an approach points toward later cinema verité production methods, the way this material was shaped in the process of postproduction—particularly the prologue and the extensive use of illustrative imagery—curtails the construction of a straightforward genealogy.

In returning to New York City, Marzani was returning to the center of documentary filmmaking in the United States—and to a familiar center of progressive politics and culture. Shortly after this move, he became involved in the publication of *Films for*

'48: *A Guide to Progressive Films and Their Use*, which was "prepared by the Film Division of the National Council for the Arts, Sciences, and Professions for the National Wallace for President Committee." This remarkable 30-page catalog demonstrates that left-wing documentary was flourishing during the late 1940s and that many of its practitioners aligned with Wallace. It argued that "Films can win elections!"⁷³ and listed more than 100 documentary titles, including *People of the Cumberland* (1937), *The City* (1939), *Prelude to War* (1942), *Native Land* (1942), *Strange Victory* (1948), and a variety of lesser-known efforts. Many, such as the Joris Ivens production *Indonesia Calling* (1946), were sponsored by the IWO (International Workers' Organization) and distributed by Brandon Films. These were categorized under areas of interest such as "Democracy and Politics," "Housing," and "International Understanding." Although Brandon Films had a hand in this catalog, Union Films was also listed among the "recommended distributors," with its new 111 West 88th Street address. *Deadline for Action* (1946) and *The Great Swindle* (1948) were included in the catalog, but not identified as Union Films productions.

Films for '48 lists twelve titles under the heading "Films for Wallace," including *Time to Act*. It also includes *Freedom Rally*, which again shows Robeson and Wallace together at another campaign rally (an occurrence so common that some speculated that Robeson would become Wallace's choice for vice president). Although Robeson, Marcantonio, and Rev. Benjamin A. Richardson, an assistant pastor at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, spoke at this ballyhooed February 15 rally in Harlem, their speeches are not covered in the film. Robeson is shown several times, often seated next to Marcantonio, either listening to or applauding Wallace's speech. The seventeen-minute campaign film was described as follows:

This is the dramatic record of Wallace's reception by the people of Harlem. Against the background of the thousands of friendly faces who overflowed New York's Golden Gate Ballroom, and lined the streets outside to listen, the voice of Henry Wallace tells the tragedy of Jim Crow. His appeal to join him in a New Party finds expression in the voice of Paul Robeson, who sings "We'll All Join Gideon's Army." (*Films for '48*, 16)

Freedom Rally powerfully conveys the enthusiasm with which many African Americans embraced the Wallace campaign. The film can be broken down into three sections. The first relies on narration and documents the support that Harlem residents were providing the campaign. This section operates on a rhetorical principle that Jonathan Kahana has found characteristic of many documentaries of the 1930s and 1940s. These films utilize

allegorical structures in which there is a creative tension between the singular and the universal that “allows the local or particular to retain its specificity and authenticity while serving as the medium for a lesson of general significance for others.”⁷⁴ Close-ups of individual African Americans outside the Golden Gate Ballroom stand in for the 15,000 who attended the Harlem rally and more generally for African Americans across the country. Their troubles and concerns also stand in for those of the larger electorate. (While those at the rally are overwhelming black, the audience is also clearly shown to be racially integrated.)

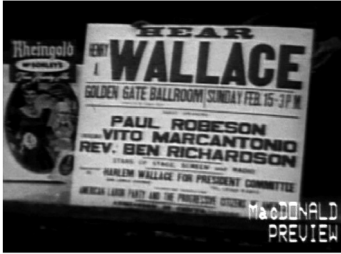
The second section of *Freedom Rally* relies on synchronous sound as Wallace delivers a speech calling for economic democracy and focusing on the health and welfare of African Americans whose life expectancy was then 10 years less than that of other Americans. He concludes,

We are building a party of Americans devoted to fundamental American principles and believing unreservedly in the future of the nation which must be as strong in its adherence to principles as it is in its material wealth. Our party is a party of workers and farmers, independent businessmen and professionals. It is a party of all races, religious faiths and national origins, dedicated to overcoming the problems of differences, not to perpetuating those differences. I invite you to join us in this fight for justice, for peace, for abundance.

Robeson’s singing provides the soundtrack over the final section as people are shown applauding Wallace’s speech and the candidate moves through the enthusiastic crowd. The song, however, is not “We’ll All Join Gideon’s Army,” as the catalog states, but “Battle Hymn of ’48,” sung to the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Robeson had made popular this version of the song, written by Bryant M. French, when he first sang it in Cleveland. The first verse and chorus are:

There’s a fresh breeze blowing all across this mighty land,
And it sings of peace and progress and prosperity at hand
With security and plenty for the people to command.
Glory, Glory Hallelujah . . . For the People’s March is on.⁷⁵

Not unlike his previous reworking of the lyrics to “Ol’ Man River” during the Spanish Civil War, Robeson used revised wordings to resituate and repoliticize a well-known song. The filmmakers, the Wallace campaign, and most of all Robeson’s abilities as a performer



Scenes from *Freedom Rally* (1948), built around Henry Wallace's speech to an overflow crowd at the Golden Gate Ballroom in Harlem on February 15, 1948. Courtesy of MacDonald & Associates.

gave this song an emotional punch that framed the '48 election as another crusade. Wallace—having claimed the mantle of Lincoln, Jefferson, and Roosevelt—is shown stepping down from the speaker's platform and moving through the crowded aisles of supporters. He is surrounded by members of "Gideon's Army" (as Wallace supporters were often called).

Freedom Rally begins with the title "The National Wallace for President Committee presents" and concludes with "Produced by The Films for Wallace Committee." The National Wallace for President Committee, which UE president Albert Fitzgerald co-chaired, also published the *Films of '48* catalog. There is no indication of who did the production, but Marzani's company was probably responsible. In his three-volume study of the Progressive Party and the Wallace campaign, Curtis MacDougall reported:

Marzani told me that the people around Wallace had been very reluctant to use his services, "the more left, the more reluctant"; it had been Beanie Baldwin [Wallace's campaign manager] who had overruled everyone and provided the \$800. He had approved the scripts and made Wallace available for sequences, to be filmed both at the studio and at HAW [Henry A. Wallace]'s Salem, N.Y. farm. Wallace had been extremely friendly, cooperative and pleased with the films, and the only coolness Marzani had observed had been on the part of Mrs. Wallace at the farm.⁷⁶

The official authors of campaign films are, of course, the candidates and their campaigns. But Marzani's status as a "convicted red" continued to mean soft-pedaling the Union Films association while Marzani kept a low profile—at least initially. Although *Films of '48* fails to mention the makers of yet another campaign film—*Wallace at York*—the 1948 *Educational Film Guide* identifies it as a Union Films production.⁷⁷ Indeed, a fringe-right detractor of the Progressive Party (who tried to link it to Barack Obama's presidential campaign!) has asserted that Marzani was "the official film maker for the Progressive Party."⁷⁸ The Films for Wallace Committee likely had Marzani as its driving force.

The ten-minute *Wallace at York* was shot at the organizing convention of the new Progressive Party, on March 7.

Henry Wallace came to York, Pennsylvania, to address the organizing convention of the new Progressive Party and 3,000 delegates jammed a local high school auditorium to give him a royal cheer-ringing welcome! Beginning with

informal shots of the representative state leaders for Wallace who made up the Wallace party on board the train as it pulled into York, the film follows them behind the big brass band that leads the parade through the town and into the convention hall. Here Wallace talks about the steel industry and animation is used to illustrate how three steel companies, by monopolistic price fixing agreements, have tripled their profits since 1939 while steelworkers wage increases have amounted to but a tiny fraction of that proportion. Finally, led by the famous baritone, Kenneth Spencer, the entire convention joins in the singing of the new Wallace version of Battle Hymn of the Republic, and when the words appear on the screen, the film audience joins in too—to bring the film to a stirring conclusion. (*Films for '48*, 17)

Robeson is absent from this film, but singer-actor Kenneth Spencer takes up his role, singing a song that Robeson had popularized.⁷⁹ Indeed, Spencer was a suitable Robeson stand-in: he had recently performed the role of Joe for the 1946 Broadway revival of *Show Boat*.⁸⁰ One notable aspect of *Wallace at York* is that it turns into a sing-along film, one of the many ways song and politics were combined in these Wallace campaign productions.

Marzani's statement that Wallace visited the 88th Street studio and approved the scripts suggests that Union Films made several other campaign films in the *Films for '48* catalog, such as *Wallace Speaks*.

This is more a personal visit with Henry Wallace than a film in the accepted sense. In this effective short, Wallace speaks of the motives that impelled him to run. He defines the reasons behind inflation, the forces that are pushing toward war, and voices many of the important reasons for the founding of the New Party.

Although the visual material is mainly a close-up of Wallace, it has much appeal as a "direct message from Henry Wallace to you." His great sincerity and obvious integrity come through very strongly in the film. (*Films for '48*, 17)

Four Wallace Trailers, in which Wallace spoke on important election topics, were either recorded in the Union Films studio or excerpted from the longer campaign films.

Four trailers, 1 1/2 minutes each, of Wallace speaking on four important election topics. These are meant to be shown singly with other films dealing with

similar issues. They can be a dramatic means of bringing existing films up-to-date in the campaign and tying them directly to the Wallace program.

(1) *Ten Extra Years*

Wallace explains that the life expectancy of the Negro child is ten years less than that of the white child. He makes it plain that he will fight for those ten extra years. He also presents his position on FEPC, federal Anti-Lynch Law, and the fight against racial discrimination.

(2) *It's Up to You*

Wallace urges people to be unafraid, and to build the New Party by volunteering, canvassing, joining, contributing, registering, and voting.

(3) *Message for Labor*

Wallace states his position on the Taft-Hartley Law, and speaks of the differences between his labor policy and the policy of the parties of monopoly.

(4) *Let's Be Practical*

Wallace points to the audience the factors causing inflation such as the war-economy budget, monopoly price practices, scuttling of OPA, etc. He sets forth a militant program for increasing wages and rolling-back and holding back prices to bring down the high cost of living. (*Films for '48*, 15)

Union Films had made campaign trailers to go with *Deadline for Action*, and these pieces were a continuation of that practice. They could be bought as a package for \$17.50 or borrowed gratis when renting other films.

Of the twelve films listed in the "Films for Wallace" section, only one is attributed to a company other than Union Films: the 22-minute *Open Letter*, filmed at Madison Square Garden on May 11, 1948, by Hollywood Picture Productions (*Films for '48*, 16). Whether or not this group actually had a Hollywood affiliation, or even a Marzani affiliation, remains unknown.

MOVING BEYOND THE CANDIDATE

The ten films discussed above were more or less built around Henry Wallace delivering campaign speeches. They relied on synchronous sound and enabled viewers to see and hear Wallace (or rather his virtual self) in action discussing the ideas behind his campaign. Union Films continued to make election-related documentaries, but these subsequent efforts had other focuses and approaches. The *Films for '48* catalog, published in June, lists three Union Films projects that were then in production. The first, though

01 listed as one of the “Films for Wallace,” is a campaign film only in the broadest sense.
02 While the issues it engages concerned Wallace, the film never mentions his name.

03 *The Investigators* was presented by the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), which had
04 been founded in April 1946 and took on a broad range of court cases. Indeed, one of its
05 earliest cases was that of Carl Marzani.⁸¹

06 *The Investigators* Union Films—11 min. \$2.50

07 One reel satire, musical, on the Un-American Activities Committee. Three weird
08 demons investigate the common man, produce their idea of “the perfect citi-
09 zen” (a robot) and laud their idiot sleuth—all in song. Ready by July 1. (*Films for*
10 *'48, 16*)

11
12 *The Investigators* is a form of filmed theater (which has many affinities with documen-
13 tary), shot presumably in the Union Films studio. It is the first Union Films picture to pro-
14 vide credits, and these prove quite interesting. It was directed by Max Glandbard while
15 Victor Komow was the cinematographer and Richard Patton—not Andy Cusick—was cred-
16 ited for the sound. Marzani’s name is not listed; and so far as I can ascertain, it never
17 appeared on a single film. Although this practice started while he was with the OSS (the
18 War Department seldom credited individuals on its pictures), Marzani continued the
19 practice due in part to his embattled status as a former Communist. (He might have
20 found some comfort in Irving Thalberg’s handling of credits: Thalberg’s name
21 never appeared in the credits for the many films in which he played a crucial creative
22 role.)

23 The script was written by Lewis Allan, a pseudonym for Abel Meeropol.
24 Allan/Meeropol had written a six-page playscript entitled *The Investigators*, dated June
25 1948, for the Chicago Arts Committee for Wallace, Theater Section.⁸² This was then put to
26 music by composer Serge Hovey (1920–89), who had studied composition with Arnold
27 Schoenberg and Hanns Eisler. Hovey had been musical director of Bertolt Brecht’s
28 *Galileo in Hollywood* (1947).⁸³

29 *The Investigators* used five actors and was “performed by the John Lenthier
30 Group.” The John Lenthier Troupe had been known as “Let Freedom Ring” Company until
31 one of its members (Lenthier) was killed while fighting for the Republicans in Spain and
32 the troupe adopted his name.⁸⁴ *New Theatre News* reported that the group was visiting
33 migrant labor camps on its fifth summer tour in 1939 and was known for performing short
34 ballads and sketches.⁸⁵ According to one commentator, “With this troupe the radical the-
35 ater seemed to have come full circle” from the days of the New York–based Workers
36
37

Laboratory Theater in the late 1920s.⁸⁶ The Lenthier Troupe had included Will Geer and his wife Horta Ware, but they had moved to California in the early 1940s and do not appear to be in the film. The male investigator is apparently the young Herschel Bernardi, who was subsequently blacklisted (like Geer).

The Investigators is fun and snappy, lampooning the unfunny House Un-American Activities Committee. On their mini-stage the three investigators (Bernardi and two white actresses) interrogate a black man. They begin by singing “We are the Investigators/By position—/Members of the Inquisition/At present small potatoes/But hoping some day/In our own way/To become shall we say—/Dictators!” At the piece’s end, they have found “a perfect citizen”—a robot, who does everything they demand. This ending, however, differs from the Allan/Meeropol script in which the robot appears and says “Wa-Wa—Wallace in ’48,” which sends the investigators fleeing from the stage.⁸⁷ In a way that the film is not, the playscript’s original ending was at the service of the Wallace campaign. Perhaps the fact that the film dealt with a topic that would continue to be of urgency after the election, and the film itself could not subsequently be updated, encouraged this change in endings.

Although a sound film, *The Investigators* was in the tradition of *Pie in the Sky* (Ralph Steiner, 1935), a short silent film that satirized the inability of the church and welfare authorities to cope with people’s hunger and desperation during the Depression.⁸⁸ In this instance, *The Investigators* was a means of directing satirical anger at a government group that was doing everything it could to destroy the left. Likewise, the Lenthier troupe had much in common with the Theater of Social Action, which had provided actors such as Elia Kazan for *Pie in the Sky*. The films share a style and sensibility that Michael Denning has aptly called the “proletarian grotesque.”⁸⁹

In an effort to make the 1948 film relevant for the campaign, it concludes with three title cards: “Don’t Just Laugh!” “Stop Them!” “Vote for Progressive Candidates.” Certainly this topical piece echoed Wallace’s opposition to the way Congress “has struck at civil liberties” and “smeared men of the highest integrity who are willing to accept public office.” Not only was the theme particularly close to Carl Marzani’s heart, it was his son Tony’s favorite Union Films production as he was growing up.

The *Films for ’48* catalog urged potential film users to consider “whether you want a short cartoon or singing movie added to the films to round out the program” (*Films for ’48*, 9). Clearly *The Investigators* was one such film. Another was *The Elephant Who Never Remembered and the Donkey Who Forgot* (aka *The Donkey and the Elephant*), which was ready by the time the catalog was published. Although the cartoon was done

by outside animators, Edith Marzani supervised the addition of a soundtrack and narration (4:25). One of the “Films for Wallace,” it was described as:

A hilarious cartoon sound and music 16mm motion picture satirizing the Republocrat-Demopublican love fest, produced by America’s top animation artists just for the Wallace-Taylor campaign. This is a really topical and biting yet very amusing satire, which will appeal to all audiences. About 8 minutes long. Film ends with the People stating in no uncertain terms. “We don’t want a donkey—we don’t want an elephant—we want a MAN—we want WALLACE!” (*Films for ’48*, 15)⁹⁰

Were some of the animators from Presentation Associates responsible? *Films for ’48* asserted that these “entertaining as well as educational and catalytic films” when shown with others listed in the catalog “can help to win the presidency of the United States from Tweedledewey and his twin on the limping donkey, while restoring the Congress to the American people by assuring the victory of the New Party and other progressive candidates” (*Films for ’48*, 19).

In *Films for ’48*, Union Films also announced its pending production of two additional films that would contribute to the campaign.

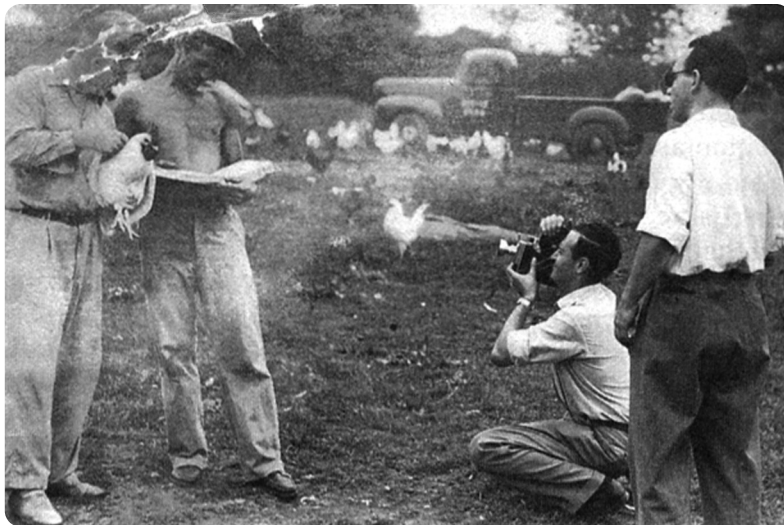
Since FDR Union Films—In Production

Two reels. Distributed by Brandon Films. A serious contrast between the Wallace program and the administration foreign policy. Emphasis on the rebuilding of Germany as the heart of the Marshall Plan. Contrast of the tremendous funds thus expended with the moneys allocated for social services, health, housing, etc. Animation and live shots. Ready September 1. (*Films for ’48*, 16)

We Hold These Truths Union Films—In Production

Three reels. An historical survey of the people’s fight for liberty and freedom of thought. Detailed study of the alien and sedition laws, the Molly Macquires (anti-Catholicism), the Ku Klux Klan and the present-day attacks on civil liberties. Present plans call for re-enactment of the historical periods. Ready October 1. (*Films for ’48*, 14)

Neither was made. Perhaps the Wallace campaign and Beanie Baldwin pushed Union Films in somewhat different directions—among these to document the activities of the



Henry Wallace (far left) and an assistant at his farm in Salem, New York, in June 1948, being filmed by Victor Komow for *Dollar Patriots*, with Max Glandbard directing. Courtesy of Charlotte Marzani.

Progressive Party. Or, it may be that Union Films had recognized that a different kind of film was needed.⁹¹ After completing *The Investigators*, Union Films made four “major” documentaries for the Progressive Party: *Dollar Patriots*, *A People’s Convention*, *Young People’s Convention* (aka *The Young People Meet*), and *People’s Congressman* (aka *The Marcantonio Story*).

Dollar Patriots went into production in June. Carl Marzani considered it to be the most ambitious of the four. Wallace and his running mate, Idaho senator Glen H. Taylor, came to the 88th Street studio. The crew also shot footage of Wallace at his farm in New Salem, New York. Marzani remembered,

I never asked about anyone’s political position, but we could not have functioned without assorted Communists, fellow travelers and what I call nonparty Bolsheviks. On *Dollar Patriots*, more than thirty people were involved, and I doubt that one third, if that, were party members. Max Glandbard did the editing, Vic Komow the shooting, Sam Wanamaker the narration, Irma Jurist composed an original score, and Hershy Kay did the arranging and conducting. Kay picked about twenty left-wingers from three orchestras: the Philharmonic, Toscanini’s NBC orchestra, and the New York City Center orchestra. They rehearsed and cut a platter in one hour. As customary, pay had to be deposited beforehand with the union, which took five percent and paid the musicians. Every penny (except the 5 percent) was returned to Union Films by the artists! (4:250)⁹²

01 Unfortunately *Dollar Patriots* and *Young People's Convention* are currently unavailable
02 for viewing.

03 *A People's Convention*, however, is somewhat easier to see.⁹³ This fifteen-
04 minute documentary provides an invaluable record of the Progressive Party's gathering
05 in Philadelphia in late July even as it combines "people's songs" with film in an innova-
06 tive, almost experimental manner. As with several earlier Union Films productions, there
07 is some effort to theatricalize events. *A People's Convention* has a protagonist, "Joe,"
08 who is attending the convention and is shown in both the introductory and final shot,
09 while making several appearances over the course of the picture. His presence, however,
10 is quickly subsumed by the desire to document the convention, which was all the more
11 urgent given the distortions that were being generated by the news media.

12 The soundtrack is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *A People's Conven-*
13 *tion*. It weaves together a song performed by the American People's Chorus and soloist
14 Ernie Lieberman with narration delivered by Herman Land.⁹⁴ Serge Hovey is again cred-
15 ited with composing the music. This concoction, which might tentatively be assigned
16 either the title "The New Party Convention" or "Ballad for The New Party Convention,"
17 had lyrics by Milton Ost and Irving Block. Where song ends and narration begins is
18 unclear: this mixture and the piece's overall style evokes "Ballad for Americans," which
19 Paul Robeson had made famous. Certainly this soundtrack evokes the spirit of Robeson,
20 who spoke twice and sang at the Progressive Party convention and has a brief on-camera
21 appearance in this documentary as well.

22 As Union Films productions make evident, song played a particularly important
23 role in the Progressive movement. At political rallies, Robeson alternated between
24 singing and political speech—an alternation that is also evident in three previously dis-
25 cussed Wallace campaign films.⁹⁵ As Robbie Lieberman has noted,

26 Songs were an integral part of the Wallace campaign. Sound trucks and cara-
27 vans featured shows and music, and mass singing was part of every function.
28 The Wallace campaign was often compared to a religious revival and singing
29 played a large part in creating such an impression. The Progressive party and
30 the People's Songs [Inc.] shared a belief in the power of song.⁹⁶

31
32 The short-lived but influential People's Songs, Inc. (1946–49), directed by Pete
33 Seeger, backed the Wallace–Taylor ticket. Its members led mass singing at rallies.
34 The Wallace campaign thus used Popular Front song as a weapon for Popular Front
35 politics.⁹⁷

36NO Head credits for *A People's Convention* list Max Glandbard as director while Vic
37L Komow shares camera credit with Jack Gottlieb and Leroy Sylverst.⁹⁸ Richard Patton is again

credited with sound. *A People's Convention* is an inspiring effort, showing an energized political convention that anticipates the Democratic Party conventions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in that it was fully multiracial and youthful. The biggest difference is the notable absence of women on the speaker's platform. Albert Fitzgerald, Vito Marcantonio, and Paul Robeson are among those shown speaking. The Philadelphia convention ends with a rally in the local sports stadium as Henry Wallace makes his appearance.

CAMPAIGNING IN THE STREETS WITH THE PEOPLE'S CONGRESSMAN

People's Congressman (aka *The Marcantonio Story*) was the fourth major campaign film that Union Films produced in the summer and early fall of 1948. It is hardly surprising that Robeson narrated this film given his commitment to Progressive Party politics and his involvement in earlier campaign films. Moreover, Robeson and Marcantonio were both New York–based national political figures who shared a variety of causes. Likewise, Union Films was not just the principal filmmaking arm of the Progressive Party; Marzani had been in touch with Marcantonio in Washington, D.C., during the war. (His family mischievously named their dog Marc after Marcantonio—a gesture the congressman viewed with mock concern.) The key people in the film and behind the camera knew each other and had often worked together.

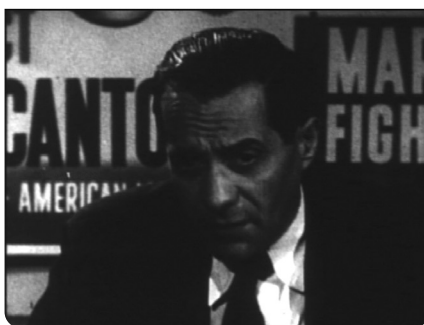
People's Congressman utilized many of the practices that Union Films had developed over the course of 1948. Marcantonio is not only a specific individual but a type, bearing some resemblance to “Joe,” the generic delegate in *A People's Convention*. However, like *Time to Act* and *Freedom Rally*, the film relies exclusively on social actors (people playing themselves) and—except for Marcantonio's studio-bound political statement to the camera—location shooting. Most of *People's Congressman* was shot with a silent, handheld camera in a proto-cinema vérité style. (For whatever reasons, the surviving print is “dupey,” of lower quality than copies of other Union Films productions.) Some scenes involved a collaborative interplay between the filmmaking team and their subject (e.g., shots of Marcantonio walking down the street), while others were filmed with a newsreel approach. *People's Congressman* includes footage of a union rally in Philadelphia on July 23, as the Progressive Party convention was beginning, and concludes with Robeson and Marcantonio at a Wallace rally on September 11, 1948. Fifty thousand gathered in Yankee Stadium. The campaign film was probably finished shortly thereafter. Marzani remembered that it “was put together in one night by Joe Kohn, a professional director; he did the film editing, and I wrote the words for his scenes. Paul Robeson did the narration” (4:250).⁹⁹

People's Congressman is more than a campaign film. Like *Time to Act*, it evokes documentaries of the 1930s, functioning here as a minor but significant work in the city symphony genre. Its images have a specificity—and an immediacy—that distinguishes the film from Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke's *The City* (1939), and this variance coincides with its different political perspective.

***People's Congressman* can be broken down into six sections. The first consists of street scenes shot in Marcantonio's congressional district, where he grew up. In some shots he is shown greeting constituents; in others we see evidence of his accomplishments in improving life in the community. This opening section, in particular, takes jabs at *The City*: its alternative vision of an urban future does not involve a flight to greenbelt villages (the earlier film's imaginary solution to urban problems which, in fact, became the suburbs of postwar America).**

It involves low-cost government housing, like the James Weldon Johnson Houses in the 18th district. *The City* contrasts a "bad" baseball game, which is played on city streets and results in a broken window, with a "good" game in the bucolic town built by city planners. Both differ from the baseball game in this film. In *People's Congressman*, baseball is played in urban playgrounds built by a socially responsible and responsive government. Children do not need to leave the city "to splash, to play, to grow up healthy and strong. To grow up safe from the hazards of the city streets." Progressive government builds the needed playgrounds and swimming pools close at hand. The future for these average Americans is *in* the city, where they—like Marcantonio—were born and raised. The challenge is that such resources "should be common place in our rich country but they are scarce."

The second sequence is set in Marcantonio's 18th district office where the congressman meets with his constituents. By 1948, his East Harlem neighborhood had increasing numbers of Puerto Rican and African-American residents alongside the traditional Italian-American constituency. These interior scenes combine establishing shots of a crowded office with close-ups of individuals as people wait, then discuss their problems with Marcantonio and his aides. (Marcantonio would regularly see three to four hundred constituents each weekend, so this scene was not necessarily packed especially for the film.) Robeson's narration declares, he is "five days a week in Washington fighting in the legislative halls, two days a week in his district, working in his office, every week, every Saturday, every Sunday." It is here that "democracy works. Here are men who can solve problems."



Images from *People's Congressmen* (1948), a campaign film for Vito Marcantonio (bottom). Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

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This interaction between citizens and their representatives, in which Marcantonio engages his constituency up close, is the modern form of the New England town meeting that was shown in a highly romanticized, isolated, and abstracted form in the opening scenes of *The City*. Some of the shots resonate with the close-ups of weathered faces shown in Pare Lorentz's *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River* as well as photo books such as Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White's *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) and Farm Security Administration photographs. Although their faces seem to tell similar tales of hardship, these are the urban working poor rather than rural poor. Robeson's voice-over narration emphasizes this point: "Here are the men and women who work for a living. Work hard. Day in and day out. Each day a struggle to work decently. America, in the richest country on earth. These are their faces. A bitter indictment of our society. Pushed around by high prices. Worried about jobs, health, and old age. Angry and depressed."

However, Marcantonio's constituents are not beaten down into passive victimhood. They are active, seeking solutions as their congressman addresses their needs on a micro- and a macro-level.

As already noted, it was common for Robeson to both sing and speak in his films and at political rallies. *People's Congressman* might be said to provide the speaking that balances the singing he did in the earlier campaign films. Nevertheless, for many viewers, these opening sequences would have evoked two songs that Paul Robeson helped popularize: "Ballad for Americans" (1939) and "The House I Live In" (1942). The core lyrics for "Ballad for Americans" might be reduced to:

What's your name, buddy? Where you goin'? Who are you?

"Well, I'm the everybody who's nobody / I'm the nobody who's everybody."

. . . Who are you? / "America!"¹⁰⁰

"The House I Live In" asks: "What is America to me?"

A plot of earth, a street / the grocer and the butcher / or the people that I meet

The children in the playground / the faces that I see / all races and religions

That's America to me.

. . .

The little town, the city / Where my people lived and died / The howdy and the handshake / The air of feeling free / And the right to speak your mind out /

That's America to me.¹⁰¹

The spirit of these songs permeates *People's Congressman*. Over scenes in Marcantonio's office, Robeson proclaims, "Here in this room is America. You and I." The narration, written by Marzani and spoken by Robeson, echoes both songs' broad embrace of what constitutes American citizenry. The America in Marcantonio's office is multiracial—Italian, Jewish, African American, and Hispanic. Some are elderly. Some come as families. An African American man on crutches and missing a leg represents war veterans. Leadership in this film is likewise multiracial—Marcantonio (Italian), Robeson (African American), Wallace (WASP), and Manuel Medina (Hispanic)—even as it is gendered as male.

As with *Freedom Rally*, *People's Congressman* presents instances of the local—a particular housing project, a playground, or an anxious family seeking help from their congressman—but uses these to further an argument for a government that is responsive to the needs of its citizens. While the second sequence emphasizes the close relationship between Marcantonio and his constituency, the narration also generalizes to emphasize the class basis of these people's struggles. Robeson declares, "Marc is hated by Wall Street and big business. They attack him constantly through their press and their radio. They call him a Communist." The campaign film refuses to accept or deny such characterizations but simply calls him "an American." The struggle in New York City is to tame Wall Street, not the Mississippi, and to solve problems of the urban rather than the rural poor. Marcantonio's constituency needs and expects their congressman to be a man of action. "To represent these people takes a real man, a man with vision. A man with courage. A man with a heart. A man who never stops. Always on the job. Democracy in action."

The third sequence is a single shot: a lengthy medium close-up of Marcantonio as the "people's congressman" speaks directly to the camera. He makes explicit the relationship between the particular and the more abstract and universal:

My friends, you can see I am trying to do my level best to help you. However, even when it comes to your small problems, the only fundamental way they can be resolved is for us to have a government that will really be in the service of the people. We must personally restore this government away from Wall Street back to the American people. As you know, I have been fighting to attain decent homes. I am fighting to cut down prices. I am fighting to save your boys from militarism and attain for them jobs and educational opportunities. I am fighting for freedom versus fear, peace versus war, for abundance versus scarcity. If this be Communism, let my opponents make the most of it. As for me I pledge to continue to fight for you.

01 Having previously shown Marcantonio interacting with his constituents—people who
02 know him and what he represents, people who will presumably vote for him—he now
03 addresses a larger and more variable group of citizens. Like FDR, he addresses them as
04 “my friends.”

05 The nature of these friends becomes clear in the concluding sections, which
06 construct the film’s hypothetical viewers as a series of concentric circles radiating out-
07 wards from Marcantonio. Neighborhood acquaintances and 18th district voters are shown
08 in the opening sequences, while the fourth and fifth sequences evoke New Yorkers and
09 Americans more generally. These are much shorter than the opening two and connect
10 Marcantonio to a larger, more far-reaching political movement: “Millions and millions of
11 people can testify to this pledge [i.e., his pledge ‘to fight for you’]. Not only his district but
12 all of New York City. Yes, and all of America has benefited by Marc’s fight against reaction
13 and greed.”

14 The fourth sequence consists of scenes from Philadelphia where the Progress-
15 sive Party had its July convention. It begins with a rally of union members—furriers whose
16 leader Irving Potash of the CIO Furriers Joint Council had just surrendered to federal
17 authorities to answer charges of a conspiracy to overthrow the government.¹⁰² “Fighting
18 with them is Marc. Fighting the slave Taft-Hartley [Act of 1947], custom built by both the
19 Republicans and the Democrats.”¹⁰³ The setting then shifts to the convention of the Pro-
20 gressive Party. Again “Vito Marcantonio is here, helping to build the new Progressive
21 Party.” The fifth section documents a party rally.

22
23 The time is now. The place is New York City. 50,000 people at Yankee Stadium.
24 Marc tells them. “Fight back against reaction.” Marc tells America, “We want
25 peace. We will fight for peace. Together we fight for our American birthright.
26 The right of free men to think as we please. To talk as we please. To vote as we
27 please.”

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29 As the film ends, Marcantonio is joined on the speaker’s platform by Robeson himself
30 and then Wallace, as Robeson intones: “Vito Marcantonio, Congressman of the 18th Dis-
31 trict. Building a better America. Shoulder to shoulder with men like Paul Robeson. Shoul-
32 der to shoulder with men like Henry Wallace.” Robeson moves from the audio track onto
33 the screen, a shift that suggests a move from thought to action. Uniting sound and
34 image, it creates a self-reflexive convergence that is knowingly wry.

35S The final section is a two-shot coda. We first see a campaign poster showing Mar-
36NO cantonio surrounded by Roosevelt, Fiorello La Guardia, and Wallace. It is an image with
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VITO ANTHONY MARCANTONIO (1902–54)

He was born in East Harlem, the son of Italian immigrants. Despite his poor background, he graduated from New York University Law School (1925) and served as Assistant U.S. Attorney (1930–31). In 1933, he played an important role in Fiorello La Guardia's election as mayor of New York City. Marcantonio was elected to Congress in 1934 as a Republican, representing La Guardia's district.

Outspoken about his left-wing views, Marcantonio was defeated in his first bid for reelection. In 1937, as president of International Labor Defense, he authored the pamphlets *Labor's Martyrs* and *We Accuse! [The Story of Tom Mooney]*. In 1938, he won back his congressional seat as the American Labor Party (and Republican) candidate, holding the seat for 12 years. Marcantonio was also an outspoken supporter of civil rights and civil liberties. He was among the strongest opponents of the abuses of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The mainstream press viciously attacked him. Before the 1946 election, the November 4 issue of *Time* magazine published the article "Veto Vito?". It began:

The core of Manhattan's sprawling 18th Congressional District is a verminous, crime-ridden slum called East Harlem. Its hordes of Italians, Puerto Ricans, Jews and Negroes have traditionally voted Republican. But in the last decade a new force came into power: the patchwork patronage machine of shrill, stooped, angry-eyed, pro-Communist Representative Vito Marcantonio. The little padrone was the passionate 18th's new-style ward boss and idol.

But "Marc" won again. In 1948, running as both the American Labor Party and Progressive Party candidate, he defeated Democratic and Republican rivals in a close race.

Marcantonio ran for mayor of New York City in 1949 and lost. Repeatedly denounced as a secret supporter of the Communist Party, he finally lost his congressional seat in the 1950 election. In 1951 he successfully defended W. E. B. Du Bois against charges that he had not registered as a foreign agent while petitioning for nuclear disarmament. The "people's congressman" announced he would run for a House seat again in 1954, but died of a heart attack that summer. His August 10 *New*

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York Times obituary concluded, “He was a flamboyant, aggressive, inexhaustible speaker—and he won the fanatic loyalty of thousands of many races in Harlem who mourned him last night.”

Sources: Vito Marcantonio, *I Vote My Conscience: Debates, Speeches and Writings of Vito Marcantonio, 1935–1950*, ed. Annette T. Rubinstein (New York: Vito Marcantonio Memorial, 1956; reprinted by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College CUNY, 2002, www.Marcantonio.org); Salvatore La Gumina, *Vito Marcantonio: The People’s Politician* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1969); and Alan Schaffer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical in Congress* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1966). See also Richard Salvato, *Guide to the Vito Marcantonio Papers, 1935–1953* (New York Public Library, 1986).

religious resonance, the saints of progressive democracy hovering above Marcantonio, bestowing their blessing. A final static shot shows a handbill telling New York City voters to “Vote Row ‘C’ American Labor Party.”

People’s Congressman evokes key New Deal documentaries as well as (more obliquely) those of World War II. These social issue documentaries of the 1930s and 1940s offer, as Jonathan Kahana suggests, “a cinematic social pedagogy addressed by an individual or corporate author to the citizen of the modern industrial state.” They proffer a voice that embodies and projects the authority of state power.¹⁰⁴ This vision of an enlightened state is challenged by the use of Robeson’s recognizable voice, at once more personal and insurgent. Robeson’s is not an authoritative “voice of God” but the voice of a specifically constructed persona (a black leader and popular front artist) who is at the same time the voice of “the people” and of “America.” Marzani’s film implicitly compares this voice to that provided by New Deal documentaries: a comparison which reverberates with the comparisons of images (of baseball games, of faces). Moreover, Robeson’s is a voice for which the corresponding body is, in the end, revealed. And it is a voice that complements the direct, synchronous-sound political appeal of Marcantonio himself. The dialogic interplay between these two voices and between speech and images creates a voice of Progressivism that opposes the voice of state power shaped by a Republican Congress and a Democratic president.

Fittingly, the street-level realism and focus on working-class life found in *People’s Congressman* recalls Jay Leyda’s *A Bronx Morning* (1931). No wonder Jay had a special affection for this film. Its brevity and modesty masks its heartfelt ambitions. Likewise, its sense of optimistic struggle and open advocacy distinguishes this film from contemporaneous efforts such as Helen Levitt’s *In the Street* (1948/1952)—a documentary that finds wonder and mystery in the streets of East Harlem, where Marcantonio and



Poster for Vito Marcantonio's 1948 campaign for reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives. The faces of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fiorello LaGuardia, and Henry Wallace appear above Marcantonio's. Poster #US 99.0-5, Tamiment/Wagner Poster and Broadside Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University.

Marzani find a need for social change. (A Marcantonio poster can even be briefly seen in Levitt's film!) *People's Congressman* offers a gritty New York, one fighting for its political future. According to Carl Marzani, *People's Congressman* "was shown on street corners by portable projectors mounted on cars" (4:250). *Films for '48* instructed users thus:

1. Rent an open-air sound truck and show films to people on the streets.
2. With a lightweight sound projector, a member of your organization can show films against the wall of a house.
3. Distribute leaflets among the crowds on the sidewalks, correlating the film's content with the election campaign. (10)

Given the closely contested nature of this congressional election, might *People's Congressman* have made a difference? At the very least, it was part of a multipronged strategy that led to Marcantonio's final reelection.

01 Campaign films clearly did make a difference in some 1948 electoral contests,
02 particularly the one for president in which Truman unexpectedly triumphed. Louis de
03 Rochemont had produced *The Dewey Story* using reenactments and staged scenes with
04 actors in the tradition of his series *The March of Time*. It ran in the nation's movie the-
05 aters for a week. Truman was outraged at Hollywood's support for his Republican rival
06 and threatened to have people picket theaters and Congress investigate. To mollify the
07 president, who seemed certain to lose, Universal-International Films quickly put together
08 a counterpart, *The Truman Story*, using newsreel footage from its archives. The ten-
09 minute compilation was shown in the nation's movie houses in the week before the elec-
10 tion. Not only was the timing perfect but the Truman film was deemed more personable
11 and successful than the one of Dewey. Jack Redding, publicity director for the Democratic
12 National Committee, "considered it the most important publicity break of the campaign,"
13 while historians often see it as a key factor in Truman's upset victory.¹⁰⁵

14 Although the Wallace campaign films were not given access to commercial
15 movie houses, Marzani's films had been designed for an insurgent effort from the outset.
16 Between January and September 1948, Marzani and Union Films produced more than a
17 dozen campaign films for Progressive Party candidates Henry Wallace and Vito Marcanto-
18 nio. These exploited the 16mm format, which enabled them to be shown in a wide range
19 of nontheatrical and nontraditional venues. Because the cost of such productions was
20 also substantially lower than with 35mm (likewise the prints), Unions Films could make
21 more films and engage in more experimentation. Although they obviously did not change
22 the outcome of the presidential election, Union Films provided the Progressive Party with
23 a media profile that was important to its claims of viability. (Wallace received just over
24 8 percent of the vote in New York State.) These films provided Wallace with a means to
25 present his message directly to portions of the American electorate when the press was
26 extraordinarily hostile. Moreover, these films gave prominence to an African American
27 figure in a way that no presidential campaign would match for a generation.

28 These campaign films also provide a new perspective on Paul Robeson. Martin
29 Duberman's biography of Robeson pays almost no attention to Robeson as an artist and
30 cultural contributor in the later 1940s. After his Broadway performance of *Othello*, he is
31 depicted primarily as a political figure increasingly under assault from the right. His work
32 on *People's Congressman*, unmentioned in previous biographies, was only part of his
33 larger contribution to Popular Front culture. As he often had, Robeson worked in "low"
34 genres—the campaign song and the campaign film—but imbued them with a sense of
35 fresh possibility. Moreover, such efforts stood in calculated relation to his continued
36 work as a concert singer and recent triumph as a Shakespearean actor. Robeson's
37

involvement in these campaign films should also be understood as a continuation of his film career by other means and for different purposes.

AFTER THE 1948 ELECTION

Of all those running on the Progressive Party platform, Marcantonio was the only one who achieved an electoral victory on the national level. Wallace suffered a disappointing defeat. He received only 1.15 million votes when 5 million seemed possible, finishing fourth, slightly behind the segregationist States' Rights Democratic Party candidate, Strom Thurmond. Truman's victory and the mounting anti-Communist witchhunt put further pressure on progressive politics and culture. Carl Marzani, after losing his appeal in the Supreme Court, went to prison on March 22, 1949 (5:3). That same month People's Song, Inc., folded for lack of funds, but Union Films remained viable.¹⁰⁶

On August 25, 1949, Union Films copyrighted four 10-minute, 16mm films written and narrated by UE radio personality Arthur Gaeth.¹⁰⁷ *Failure in Germany* asks: "Will the monopolists who supported Hitler be allowed to seize power again?" *Rome Divided* "dramatically highlights the battle of the Italian people for political and economic freedom." *Eyewitness in Athens* "deals with [the] tragic fate of Greek people, pawns in power politics." *Israel Is Labor* "describes the struggles to build a new nation and the role that labor is playing."¹⁰⁸ In this last film, Gaeth expresses his confidence about the ability of Jews and Palestinians to work together peacefully, particularly through the coordinated efforts of their respective labor unions. These films examined the postwar political landscape overseas in the wake of the Marshall Plan. The UE considered their short sponsored documentaries to be "effective weapons in combating Big business propaganda." In this respect, they supplemented the 15-minute weekly news commentaries (by Gaeth and others) that the union sponsored on the Mutual and ABC radio networks starting in 1947. Gaeth was filmed in the Union Films studio, giving an on-camera introduction to the body of each film, which combined footage with studio-recorded narration. He was the guest speaker at the UE's 14th annual convention in Cleveland (September 1949). As a broadcaster he was known for his support of the Wallace campaign and for critiques of discrimination against African Americans. Gaeth had interviewed, for example, Robeson and other civil rights champions, including Lena Horne and W. E. B. DuBois. Four months later, in January 1950, he was forced from the airwaves.¹⁰⁹

Not to be deterred by the incarceration of Union Films' producer, Glandbard and Komow went on to make *Industry's Disinherited*, a twenty-minute documentary for the UE. Completed in August 1949, it premiered at the UE's Cleveland convention in



Israel Is Labor (1949) was a politically progressive travelogue feature, narrated by UE radio personality Arthur Gaeth, who was recorded in the Union Films studio at 111 West 88th. Courtesy of MacDonald & Associates.

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September. The documentary focused on the fate of workers in old age. According to *UE News*,

Union Films sent its cameraman to Bridgeport and Schenectady to “shoot” pictures of retired UE workers. The artful camera work takes the audience right into the problems of the old folks whose faces offer dramatic testimony about the hard times that they are suffering.

By smooth-running commentary and use of occasional animated cartoons and charts, “Industry’s Disinherited” develops the story of the five million people over 65 years of age who have to depend on some form of charity to make ends meet.¹¹⁰

In 1950 Union Films produced another 10-minute documentary, *Solidarity*, “sponsored by the United Labor Committee to defeat Taft-Hartley.” According to the *Educational Film Guide*, it was “The story of the industry-wide strike of the United Mine Workers Union in January 1950. Shows poor living conditions in company towns, conditions in the mines, the actual strike, and the food, clothing and medical supplies received by the strikers and their families from other unions.”¹¹¹ The film was likely finished by spring.

Meanwhile, corporations and the U.S. government continued to put intense pressure on the UE. On August 10th and 11th, 1950, Congress held seven UE leaders in contempt at the instigation of the House Un-American Activities Committee.¹¹² Two—UE Secretary-Treasurer Julius Emspak and head of the UE Legislative Committee Tom Quinn—received 6-month prison sentences and \$500 fines.¹¹³ Finally, the *UE News* publicly protested the treatment of Carl Marzani, who was in solitary confinement at Danbury State Prison for trying to smuggle a manuscript out of prison (in fact, he was soon transferred to Lewisburg Penitentiary and placed in isolation for 6 months). The headline for one of the two *UE News* articles was “Protests Mount as Marzani, Framed for Making Labor Films, Still Held in Prison.”¹¹⁴

Shortly after his release in July 1951, the UE created a position for Marzani in its home office, as editor of a new journal, the *UE Steward*. As he later reminisced, “My stay at the UE was one of the seminal experiences of my life. During two and a half years I enjoyed an atmosphere of affection and brotherhood working for a common purpose” (5:24). In September 1952, the UE once again showed a sponsored film at its annual convention: *A Time for Greatness*, produced by the American Friends Service Committee. The film was “a moving appeal for the settlement of international differences by negotiation rather than war” and “was warmly received and highly praised by the delegates.”¹¹⁵ During the same convention, delegates also learned that William Sentner, “one of the

most respected leaders of the UE,” had been arrested under the Smith Act, the federal law used to prosecute many of the era’s leftist leaders.¹¹⁶ Convention delegates passed a resolution denouncing his arrest. This incident led to the final Union Films production for UE: *The Sentner Story*, completed and released in March 1953. In “New Movie Tells Story of Sentner,” the March 30 *UE News* announced,

A new exciting film is out telling the story of Tonie and Bill Sentner, a veteran union family which has been under severe attack by Big Business politicians. . . . Many months ago, employers tried to intimidate Sentner by persecuting his wife, Tonie. Mrs. Sentner, too, has a long union history helping to organize the Packinghouse Workers in St. Louis. She came to this country when she was nine years old. After a lifetime of work in America, including raising three children, Tonie suddenly found herself held for deportation (11).

The Sentner Story would prove to be Marzani’s last effort at documentary filmmaking.

Two weeks before *The Sentner Story* was released, *UE News* headlined “Smelter Workers Union Completes Motion Picture Despite Attacks.” “Built around a fictional story,” it reported, “the movie tells of the miners and their union.”¹¹⁷ That film was the now-fabled *Salt of the Earth* (1954). *The Sentner Story* and *Salt of the Earth* might be seen as parallel efforts to make motion pictures that tell stories of union struggle from a left viewpoint, one in documentary and the other in neorealist fiction. *Salt of the Earth* has been much discussed, while *The Sentner Story* has been all but forgotten. These films were among the final efforts at postwar, left-wing filmmaking in the United States.

THE UNION FILMS LEGACY

Union Films was the most productive and dynamic left-wing organization making documentaries in the immediate post–World War II era. It produced at least eight documentaries on labor-related topics for American unions, more than a dozen campaign films for Progressive Party candidates, and four leftist travel films featuring Arthur Gaeth. Doubtless there were other pictures. All of this was achieved despite the fact that its impresario spent 5 years immersed in serious legal battles and almost 3 years in prison.

Moreover, Union Films was not an isolated phenomenon: its struggles and achievements should be situated in relation to similar efforts in post–World War II America.



Carl Marzani at his New York City office (ca. 1952). Courtesy of the Carl Marzani Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University.

In October 1946, barely a month after the premiere of Union Films' *Deadline for Action*, it was announced that four well-established left-wing filmmakers—Leo Hurwitz, Paul Strand, Irving Lerner, and Sydney Meyers—had joined the faculty of The New Institute in Brooklyn in an obvious effort to train aspiring filmmakers of a progressive persuasion.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, three West Coast unionists started a small filmmaking collective, Labor Films, and announced their first release in January 1947: *The Redwood Story*. According to the *CIO News*, it “shows working conditions in the lumber industry” and “pictures the lumber strike which was climaxed by CIO-AFL demonstrations of unity at Fort Bragg, N.C.”¹¹⁹ H. Arthur Klein, who had collaborated with Marzani on *Case of the Fishermen*, subsequently made the 23-minute *A People's Program* for the Los Angeles CIO Council.¹²⁰ Although Leo Hurwitz was unable to make a film of Howard Fast's *Freedom Road* (1944), about blacks and whites working together in the period of Reconstruction, he went on to make the feature-length documentary *Strange Victory* (1948), which looks at racism at home just after the United States had defeated racist ideologies overseas.¹²¹ Sidney Meyers's *The Quiet One* (1948), with Janice Loeb as producer and important creative contributions by James Agee and Helen Levitt, actually received Academy Award nominations for Best Documentary and Best Script.

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01 By April 1947, Brandon Films was advertising “Films for Labor” in the *CIO News*
02 on such topics as civil liberties, co-ops, discrimination, housing, world peace, and
03 farmer–labor unity.¹²² Likewise, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers started a film service
04 in 1948, headed by Albert Hemsing, former director of the Overseas 16mm film program
05 for the Office of War Information.¹²³ Meanwhile many unions were buying 16mm projec-
06 tors and building up nontheatrical exhibition networks.

07 Because the activities of Union Films and similar groups have been overlooked
08 or ignored, historians have generally seen left-wing documentary in the United States as
09 effectively imploding with Hurwitz and Strand’s ill-timed *Native Land* (1942). Russell
10 Campbell concludes *Cinema Strikes Back* with the assessment that “the decision to make
11 a feature film [*Native Land*] . . . must be considered a mistake.”¹²⁴ He approvingly quotes
12 George Jackson, a one-time member of Frontier Films, who declared “Frontier should have
13 gone on making short films until they reached a point where they could finance, really
14 finance a feature on a social subject.”¹²⁵ This assessment suggests that excessive ambi-
15 tion and political miscalculation by a small coterie of left-wing filmmakers undermined
16 their cause: in the process, it gives tremendous importance to Hurwitz and Frontier Films
17 as a force on the left. Union Films clearly demonstrates that neither characterization is
18 appropriate.

19 The left did not self-destruct but, starting immediately after World War II, gener-
20 ated significant quantities of accomplished documentary work. It would thus seem inap-
21 propriate to consider *Native Land* “a mistake,” when Marzani and his colleagues
22 subsequently made numerous short documentaries that engaged the political moment.
23 Rather there is an irony and contradiction here. Critics have condemned *Native Land*
24 because it was a feature and so felt to be an expensive, tactically problematic luxury.
25 And yet because it was a feature, it garnered attention—both at the time of its release and
26 by these later critics. Meanwhile these same critics overlooked Union Films and similar
27 groups who were operating in a “politically correct” manner, ignoring them because
28 they were only making short nontheatrical films that did not receive the kind of reviews
29 that theatrical features often receive. As a result they have been deemed relatively incon-
30 sequential. Hopefully this study has begun to change this assessment. Postwar left-wing
31 filmmakers recognized that documentary, as Michael Chanan puts it, “is one of the forms
32 through which new attitudes enter wider circulation.”¹²⁶ And for this reason they were
33 viciously attacked by corporations and the political right. It should not surprise us that
34 these determined cineastes did not surrender quietly to McCarthy-era darkness.

35 The red scare ended, curtailed, or redirected the most determined efforts of
36 left-wing documentary filmmakers.¹²⁷ Marzani departed filmmaking for publishing. So
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did Barney Rosset, who like Marzani had briefly been a Communist in his youth and became involved in filmmaking during the war, as a member of the Signal Corps.¹²⁸ He purchased Grove Press in 1951 and started *Evergreen Review* (1957–73) after his commercially unsuccessful venture, Target Films, produced *Strange Victory*. H. Arthur Klein became best known for books on science and art. He also coauthored children's books with his wife. Labor Films' ambitious production schedule also went unrealized.

Although Robeson remained in the United States between 1950 and 1958 (having been deprived of his passport), his rare post-1948 film credits were for foreign productions. He sang the Bertolt Brecht lyrics that threaded through Joris Ivens' epic documentary *Song of the Rivers* (1954) and produced and starred in *Bridge Over the Ocean* (1958), a bare-bones concert film that was shot in a tiny New York City studio with Earl Robinson.¹²⁹ These were clandestine affairs, funded by the East German government and made under most difficult circumstances. Robeson likewise turned to book writing, publishing *Here I Stand* in 1958.

Jay Leyda also abandoned a career in film production and turned increasingly to writing, publishing *The Melville Log; A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819–1891* in 1951. He left the United States in 1954, spending most of the next 20 years working abroad. When he returned to New York and started to teach at NYU in 1973, Leyda undoubtedly quietly reconnected with survivors of the red scare, including Carl Marzani, who lived and worked nearby. Jay could not only have told me that Marzani made *People's Congressman*, he could have introduced me to its writer-producer. D***, d***, d***!

NOTES

This essay has benefited from the generous assistance of many people. In particular, Dan Streible, with his early support and excellent editorial suggestions, and the Marzani family, who kindly invited me into their home and provided documents from their archive. Grateful thanks also to Jan-Christopher Horak, Rick Prelinger and Fred MacDonald for providing video copies of otherwise unavailable Union Films productions, as well as to Maria Threese Serana and Jonathan Kahana for their many insights and political perspectives.

1. I took my first film class with Jay Leyda as an undergraduate at Yale University, where he taught from 1970 to 1972. I later followed him to NYU's Cinema Studies Department, where he was a professor from 1973 until his death in 1988. Jay, who was my dissertation advisor, had a rich, multifaceted life. As a filmmaker, he had made at least two important documentaries in the 1930s (*A Bronx Morning*, 1931; and *People of the Cumberland*, 1937). He was a close associate of Sergei Eisenstein and the author of many books including

Kino: A History of Russian and Soviet Film (New York: Macmillan, 1960). For more biographical information see *Guide to the Jay and Si-lan Chen Leyda Papers 1913–1987*, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (2003), <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids>. See Jay Leyda et al., *Before Hollywood: American Films from American Archives* (New York: Hudson Hill Press, 1987).

2. Vito Marcantonio's papers at the New York Public Library failed to provide any leads. In retrospect, I missed an opportunity when looking through Gerald Meyer's *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902–1954* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Meyer briefly describes such a campaign film (99). In the corresponding endnote, he calls the film *Vito Marcantonio* [sic], states it was directed by Carl Marzani, and mentions that a copy was deposited at the MoMA (236n5). An even more vague allusion appears in Karl M. Schmidt's *Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade 1948* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1960). He mentions that "more than a dozen films were turned out for the party 'on a shoestring by volunteers.' These presented in cartoon, comedy, and dramatic forms some of the political issues of the campaign for presentation to home groups and small local gatherings remote from the paths of the touring caravans" (218). Schmidt does not mention the films again.

3. "Paul Robeson: Artist and Citizen" showed at the California African American Museum (Los Angeles) and the Museum of the City of New York. Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed. *Paul Robeson: Artist and Citizen* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

4. See *Guide to the Carl Aldo Marzani Papers [1890]–1994*, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (2003), <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids>. Nelson Lichtenstein, "Deadline for Action; Our Union; The Great Swindle," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2 (Spring 2005): 140–43; Carl Marzani, *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, 4 vols. (New York: Topical Books, 1992–95) and Carl Marzani, *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, vol. 5, *Reconstruction* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002).

5. Film Division of the National Council for the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, *Films for '48: A Guide to Progressive Films and Their Use* (New York: National Wallace for President Committee, 1948), 30.

6. John J. Simon, "Rebel in the House: The Life and Times of Vito Marcantonio," *Monthly Review* (Apr. 2006), www.monthlyreview.org/0406jjsimon.htm.

7. Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jack C. Ellis, *The Documentary Idea: A Critical History of English-Language Documentary Film and Video* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989). Marzani and Union Films also go unmentioned in books such as Keith Booker's *Film and the American Left: A Research Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999) and Brian Neve's *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

8. William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Jonathan

Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Russell Campbell, *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982). Film scholars' almost exclusive interest in 1930s leftist filmmaking is further evidenced by the publication of Leo Hurwitz's "One Man's Voyage: Ideas and Films in the 1930s," *Cinema Journal* 15 (Fall 1975): 1-15. There was little interest in his career during the 1940s and subsequent decades. A counterpart to this present examination of left-wing documentary in postwar America is Steven J. Ross's *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), which looks at radical filmmaking before 1930.

9. Richard Meran Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History*. Revised and Expanded. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 285-92.

10. *Ibid.*, 282.

11. George C. Stoney, "Documentary in the United States in the Immediate Post-World War II Years; A Supplement to Chapter 11," in Jack C. Ellis, *The Documentary Idea: A Critical History Of English-Language Documentary Film and Video* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), 302. As Dan Streible has pointed out, many of the presentations at the Orphan Film Symposiums have revealed the importance of state sponsorship.

12. Ellis, *The Documentary Idea*, 169.

13. *Ibid.*, 171.

14. Even Erik Barnouw, who does not shortchange left-wing film practices, pays attention to *Louisiana Story* while alluding only briefly to the demise of progressive documentary.

15. George Stoney, e-mail, Sept. 29, 2008.

16. D. A. Pennebaker, Nov. 25, 2008. Artemis Willis asked Ricky Leacock the same question on my behalf and also received a negative response. Michael Roemer interview, Dec. 6, 2008.

17. Gerry Williams, who had grown up in India and whose father was a close friend of Gandhi, was serving time for refusing to register for the draft.

18. Gary Crowdus and Lenny Rubenstein, "Union Films: An Interview with Carl Marzani," *Cineaste* 7.2 (1976): 33.

19. Donal McLaughlin, telephone interview, Mar. 26, 2008. There are many books on the black list in media. See John Cogley's *Report on Blacklisting* (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1956), Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund's *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-60* (1980; reprint, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003), David Everitt's *A Shadow of Red: Communism and the Blacklist in Radio and Television* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), and Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve, and Peter Stanfield's *"Un-American" Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

20. Eric Glandbard, e-mails, Aug. 17 and Sept. 18, 2008, provided information not otherwise footnoted.

21. "Lack of Deep Snow Disappoints Visitor from New York," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Nov. 4, 1939.

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22. "New Theatre Group's Permanent Director," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Oct. 28, 1939.
 23. Cited in John W. Gassner, "The One-Act Play in the Revolutionary Theatre," in *The One-Act Play Today: A Discussion of the Technique, Scope & History of the Contemporary Short Drama*, ed. William Kozlenko (1938; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 257.
 24. Ibid. For more on *One Third of a Nation* see Malcolm Goldstein, *The Political Stage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 281–84.
 25. Doug Smith, *Joe Zuken: Citizen and Socialist* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1990), 68–69; "Volpone is Staged with Zest," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Feb. 3, 1940.
 26. Brian Barr, "Wright Field Broadcast was Impetus for Thriving Acting Troupe," *Skywriter*, Jan. 19, 1996, courtesy of Ralph Dennler. Ralph Dennler, VP for Creative Operations, Dayton Theatre Guild, Mar. 26, 2008.
 27. Glandbard was a discussant for D. L. MacAdam, "Stereoscopic Perceptions of Size, Shape, Distance and Direction," *Journal of the SMPTE* 62 (Apr. 1954): 289–90. His affiliation was given as Filmwright Productions.
 28. "People," *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 1961.
 29. "Darkness at Noon," Lortel Archives: The Internet Off-Broadway Database, www.lortel.org/LLA_archive.
 30. "CURC Features New Series On CSPA Meeting This Week," *Barnard Bulletin*, Mar. 13, 1942, 1.
 31. Shannon Komow, e-mail, Mar. 29, 2008.
 32. A. H.-B., "Josephine Komow, Retired Day Librarian, Friend of *The Daytime*, Is Dead at 81," *The Daytime* [F. A. Day Middle School, Newton, Mass.], Apr. 2005, www.thedaytime.org/04-05/news.html.
 33. "Dramatic Academy Graduates 38 Actors," *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1934; "Home Town Fetes Cohan on Return," *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1934; Marzani, *Education of a Reluctant Radical*, 2: 180–81.
 34. Marzani, *Education of a Reluctant Radical*, 3: 52–54; Percy Brazil, "Memories of Carl Marzani," *Monthly Review* (Mar. 1995): 36.
 35. Donal McLaughlin, telephone interview, Mar. 27, 2008. For Marzani, Lundquist, and Zablodowsky, these are their only credits appearing in the Internet Movie Database.
 36. "Army Film Shows Problems of War," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1943. Near Times Square, 729 Seventh Avenue, was home to several motion pictures companies, including Mary Pickford's.
 37. "Army Report," *Washington Post*, Dec. 11, 1943.
 38. Brazil, "Memories of Carl Marzani," 38.
 39. The UE membership figure of six hundred thousand comes from *Deadline for Action*. See also "UE Gains 29% In Membership," *CIO News*, Sept. 29, 1947, 7. At the end of World War II, membership may have reached seven hundred and fifty thousand. Ronald L. Filippelli and Mark McColloch, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 33. According to its own Web site (ueunion.org), the UE membership in 2008 was about thirty-five thousand.
 40. "The Drive Against Labor," *CIO News*, Jan. 13, 1947, 9.

41. *Deadline for Action* can be viewed online via the Internet Archive, www.archive.org/details/Deadline1946. For information on several films mentioned here, see Rick Prelinger's *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006).
42. "The Critics Agree—It's Great," *UE News*, Oct. 19, 1946, 7.
43. "Deadline Wins Oscar in Moscow," *New York World-Telegram*, Oct. 29, 1946; Marzani, *Education of a Reluctant Radical*, 4: 179–81.
44. "Sees Output Way to Combat 'Isms,'" *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1947; Prelinger, *Field Guide to Sponsored Films*, 24. See also Andrew F. Smith and Henry A. Kissinger, *Rescuing the World: The Life and Times of Leo Cherne* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
45. "Ex-Employe of State Dept. Held as Red," *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1947. Prosecutors found witnesses that claimed Marzani lied about his communist past at the time he was hired and also left the government. Marzani maintains (with considerable evidence) that his superiors were implicitly aware of his past and so never asked. Under these circumstances, where he was being framed, Marzani's defense in these court cases was to deny he had been a Communist.
46. Howard L. Dutkin, "Former OSS Attache Faces Total Term of 110 Years," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1947. Marzani makes compelling arguments as to the dissembling of government witnesses and the ways in which the case was a carefully made frame-up (4: 215–26).
47. "Marzani Conviction Is Upheld by 4-4 Tie in Supreme Court," *Washington Post*, Dec. 21, 1948. See clippings in the Trial/Prison Papers of the Marzani Papers at NYU. *Marzani v. U.S.*, 335 U.S. 895 (1948); 336 U.S. 910 (1949).
48. "Marzani Jailed For 1–3 Years, Retrial Denied," *Washington Post*, Mar. 26, 1949.
49. "World's Greatest Food Producers-CIO," *CIO News*, Feb. 17, 1947, 6–7. The H. Arthur Klein Papers, ca. 1928–91, are at the Department of Special Collections, UCLA Library.
50. "New Film: Are Fishermen Workers?" *CIO News*, Feb. 24, 1947, 14.
51. "Fishermen to Continue Fight," *CIO News*, May 19, 1947, 10; "Fishermen Hit Jury Selection," *CIO News*, Feb. 23, 1948, 10.
52. Tom Wright, "Contract Standards Set; Murray Hails UE Record," *UE News*, Sept. 14, 1946, 1.
53. "Murray Serves Notice," *CIO News*, Nov. 29, 1948, 3.
54. "CP Admits Setting Up Wallace Party," *CIO News*, June 7, 1948, 2; "Truman Gets CIO Board Backing by Split Vote," *UE News*, Sept. 4, 1948, 4.
55. Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994), 196.
56. "Convention Premiere: 'Our Union,'—the New UE Film Featuring All-Star UE Cast," *UE News*, Sept. 13, 1947, 5.
57. "Put These Facts to Work to Help build the Union," *UE News*, July 10, 1948, 7.
58. "Convention Premiere," *UE News*, Sept. 13, 1947, 5.
59. "Protests Mount as Marzani, Framed for Making Labor Films, Still Held in Prison," *UE News*, Oct. 30, 1950, 10.

- 01 **60.** "Marzani Turns to Film Making Awaiting Red Charge Appeal,"
 02 *Washington Post*, Feb. 27, 1948.
- 03 **61.** "The Great Swindle!" *UE News*, Jan. 31, 1948, 9; Marzani, *Education of a*
 04 *Reluctant Radical*, 4: 231.
- 05 **62.** There is some uncertainty as to the completion and release date of *The*
 06 *Great Swindle*. Marzani indicates that the documentary was not completed
 07 until after he had moved to New York City, even though the film was
 08 copyrighted on February 1, 1948. His move to New York and his production of
 09 Wallace campaign films may have delayed its completion. *The Great Swindle*
 10 can be viewed online at www.archive.org/details/GreatSwi1948.
- 11 **63.** Ralph Steiner and Leo T. Hurwitz, "A New Approach to Filmmaking,"
 12 *New Theatre*, Sept. 1935, 22–23, in *New Theatre and Film, 1934 to 1937:*
 13 *An Anthology*, ed. Herbert Kline (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,
 14 1985), 305.
- 15 **64.** Since Jay's remark that campaign films constitute an underappreciated
 16 genre, Joanne Morreale has published *The Presidential Campaign Film: A*
 17 *Critical History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993). Although it is highly
 18 informative, Morreale somehow misses those moments I expect Jay most
 19 valued—including the McKinley film—and buys into a tall tale about
 20 Vitagraph following Teddy Roosevelt to Cuba. Since Morreale often echoes
 21 received wisdom and characterizes Woodrow Wilson as "not personally
 22 successful at manipulating the media (34)," our Wilson campaign film was
 23 once again overlooked. She mentions George Wallace but not Henry.
- 24 **65.** David B. Woolner, "Henry A. Wallace Biography,"
 25 www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/wallac73.html. See also Henry A. Wallace, *The*
 26 *Century of the Common Man* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943); Dwight
 27 Macdonald, *Henry Wallace, the Man and the Myth* (New York: Vanguard,
 28 1948); and John C. Culver, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry*
 29 *A. Wallace* (New York: Norton, 2000).
- 30 **66.** Michael Schiavone, "Social Movement Unionism and the UE," *Flinders*
 31 *Journal of History & Politics* 23 (2006): 62.
- 32 **67.** "Pres. Fitzgerald Heads Wallace Labor Committee," *UE News*, Mar. 20,
 33 1948, 1; Curtis D. MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, vol. 2, *The Decision and the*
 34 *Organization* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1965), 516.
- 35 **68.** "Wallaceites Ready to Move into Philadelphia Saturday," *Washington*
 36 *Post*, July 16, 1948; Mary Spargo, "Wallaceites Hit at Major Parties,"
 37 *Washington Post*, July 23, 1948. While Martin Duberman details some aspects
 38 of Robeson's active role in the Progressive Party and the Wallace for President
 39 campaign, he focuses exclusively on Robeson's activities in the realm of
 40 politics while overlooking his activities in the cultural realm. See Duberman,
 41 *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 316–35.
- 42 **69.** MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, 2: 524.
- 43 **70.** McLaughlin, telephone interview, Mar. 27, 2008. McLaughlin designed
 44 posters and campaign buttons for Wallace—as well as the layout for his book
 45 *Toward World Peace* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1948). He also attended
 46 the Progressive Party's convention in Philadelphia in late July.
- 47 **71.** "Marzani Turns to Film Making Awaiting Red Charge Appeal,"
 48 *Washington Post*, Feb. 27, 1948; "Wallace Sees Democratic Loss in 1948,"

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 18, 1948. Wallace and Robeson were also together in Chicago on May 14, 1947, before a crowd of twenty-two thousand in Chicago Stadium. (See "Chant 'Wallace in '48' at Rally in the Stadium," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1947.) However, it is the January 1948 event to which Edith Marzani refers.

72. "Of Local Origin," *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1937; "The Screen," *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 1937.

73. The catalog was promoted in "Progressives Offer Film Booklet," *Daily Worker* [New York], Aug. 11, 1948.

74. Kahana, *Intelligence Work*, 7.

75. Waldemar Hille with Peter Seeger and Irwin Silber, eds., *Songs for Wallace* (New York: People's Song, Inc. for the National Wallace for President Committee, June 1948), 2. Contributors to the songbook included Malvina Reynolds, Ray Glaser & Bill Wolff, Dick Blakeslee ("Passing Through"), E. Y. "Yip" Harburg & Milton Agar ("Friendly Henry Wallace"), Alan Lomax & Pete Seeger ("Stand Up and Be Counted"), Louise Jeffers ("Use Your Ballot"), Bob and Adrienne Claiborne ("March of the Common Men"), and Woody Guthrie ("The Wallace-Taylor Train"). The 1948 booklet *Songs of the Progressive Party* offered "Choral arrangements, orchestrations, recordings and film strips available from People's Songs, Inc." Another, *Songs for a New Party* read: "Permission for use on television, newsreel, radio, etc., can easily be obtained from People's Songs."

76. MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, 2: 486.

77. Dorothy E. Cook and Katharine M. Holden, compilers, *Educational Film Guide*, 8th ed. (New York: H. H. Wilson, 1948), 222.

78. Herbert Romerstein, "From Henry Wallace to William Ayers—the Communist and 'Progressive' Movements," *America's Survival*, Oct. 14, 2008, page 14 of this 24-page document: www.usasurvival.org/docs/Wallace_to_Ayers_Communist_Progressive.pdf. America's Survival, Inc. is an anti-United Nations watchdog group; Romerstein identifies himself as a former investigator for HUAC and "former head of the Office to Counter Soviet Disinformation for the United States Information Agency" (24).

79. The Films of '48 catalog descriptions of *Freedom Rally* and *Wallace at York* might have mistakenly interchanged song titles, in which case Kenneth Spencer sang "We'll All Join Gideon's Army," which Robeson actually wrote (Hille, *Songs for Wallace*, 3)!

80. Kenneth Spencer (1913–1964) had roles in such Hollywood films as *Cabin in the Sky* (1943) and "covered" other songs made popular by Robeson such as "Deep River" and "Go Down, Moses." See Bruce Eder, "Kenneth Spencer," *All Movie Guide*, www.allmovie.com/artist/67181.

81. Gerald Horne, *Communist Front! The Civil Rights Congress, 1946–1956* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), 104–5.

82. Lewis Allan [pseudonym for Abel Meeropol], script for *The Investigators* (June 1948), Stage for Action Collection, Series XCIX, McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University.

83. Serge Hovey, *The Robert Burns Song Book*, vol. 1 (Pacific, Mo.: Mel Bay Publications, 1997).

- 01 **84.** Eric Winship Trumbull, *Musicals of the American Workers'*
 02 *Theatre Movement, 1928–1941: Propaganda and Ritual in Documents of*
 03 *a Social Movement* (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1991), chapter 1;
 04 Malcolm Goldstein, *The Political Stage: American Drama and Theater*
 05 *of the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974),
 06 238–39.
- 07 **85.** "The John Lenthier Troupe on Tour," *New Theatre News* (Dec. 1939),
 08 12–15, reprinted in Karen Malpede Taylor, *People's Theatre in Amerika* (New
 09 York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972), 173–77. Again it is worth noting that
 10 Taylor is similar to her cinema studies counterparts in that *People's Theatre*
 11 *in Amerika* looks at theater in the 1930s, skips the 40s, and then focuses on
 12 groups prominent in the 60s (e.g., The Living Theater).
- 13 **86.** Goldstein, *The Political Stage*, 28–29, 239.
- 14 **87.** Lyrics from the Union Films production, but using spelling and line
 15 breaks from Allan, *The Investigators*, 1, 6.
- 16 **88.** Neve, *Film and Politics in America*, 11.
- 17 **89.** Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture*
 18 *in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 118–21.
- 19 **90.** *The Elephant Who Never Remembered and the Donkey Who Forgot* was
 20 also produced as a film strip (*Films for '48*, 10).
- 21 **91.** The description for *The Great Swindle* in *Films for '48* is surprisingly
 22 critical, acknowledging that "it is top heavy with facts and tried to teach too
 23 much at one sitting" (22).
- 24 **92.** Sam Wanamaker was subsequently blacklisted. See Karl E. Meyer, "Sam
 25 Wanamaker's Great Obsession," *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1996, and
 26 Theodore W. Libbey Jr., "Hershey Kay, Arranger, Dies," *New York Times*,
 27 Dec. 4, 1981. Another person who worked on *Dollar Patriots* was Haskell
 28 Wexler. Saul Landau, "The People's Cinematographer—Haskell Wexler," *The*
 29 *Progressive*, Apr. 1, 1998,
 30 www.thefreelibrary.com/The_people's_cinematographer-a020452305.
- 31 **93.** Many thanks to Charlotte Marzani and the Marzani family who
 32 shared video copies of this and other Union Films productions. Other
 33 Union Films productions, such as *Dollar Patriots* and *Young People's*
 34 *Convention*, may eventually be located in the family's archive or other
 35 repositories.
- 36 **94.** The cover of *Sing Out!* (July 1951) uses a picture of Paul Robeson signing
 37 with the People's Artists Quartet, one of whom is Ernie Lieberman. See his
 son's book: Robbie Lieberman, "My Song Is My Weapon": *People's Songs,*
American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930–1950 (Urbana, Ill.
 University of Ill.: Press, 1989), 145.
- 95.** For instances where Robeson combined song and speech at a Wallace rally
 in which he was the principal political figure, see "Robeson Flays 'Truman
 Crowd' at Local Rally," *Chester (PA) Times*, Sept. 21, 1948; "Robeson Still
 Possesses Fine Singing Voice, But Propaganda About Reds Flavors His
 Speech," *Nevada State Journal*, Oct. 14, 1948; advertisement, *Cleveland Call*
 and *Post*, Feb. 1, 1948, 7B (the ad was for a Henry Wallace for President event
 in Cleveland on February 8).

96. Lieberman, "My Song Is My Weapon," 132. The book provides a history of People's Songs, Inc.. Founders Pete Seeger, Earl Robinson, Woody Guthrie, Josh White, Bess Hawes, and others, created the organization to disseminate folk music and spur progressive political action. Robeson was a member of its board.
97. For a brief history of the Popular Front in the United States, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 22–25. The "cultural front," in the postwar era would seem to be more productive and richer than Denning suggests. Like the writings of William Alexander and Russell Campbell in cinema studies, Denning focuses on the 1930s.
98. One suspects that if a print of *Dollar Patriots* is found and it includes production credits, Max Glandbard will be listed as director. Eric Glandbard reports that Carl Marzani tried to contact his father and was distressed to learn that he had died. Eric was under the impression that he wanted to apologize. It may be that in Marzani's effort to gain recognition for his role in Union Films productions, he had minimized Glandbard's contributions and afterwards felt guilty. The increasingly difficult circumstances that the Union Films group faced could also have led to a breakdown in their relationship.
99. I have been unable to identify Joe Kohn. Presumably the Union Films collective was involved in the filming.
100. *Ballad for Americans*, cantata by Earl Robinson (music) and John Latouche (lyrics) (Robbins Music Corp., copyright 1940). Paul Robeson first sang the popular piece on a live CBS radio broadcast, November 5, 1939. He recorded it in February 1940 (RCA Victor 26516-17). Ironically, the Republican Party opened its convention with a performance of the Robinson-Latouche composition ("WPA Song at Convention," *New York Times*, June 23, 1940). The most popular singer of the day, Bing Crosby, released his version in September. Decca 3297-98 (1940); reissued as Decca DA 453 (1946) and DL 8020 (1950).
101. "The House I Live In (That's America to Me)," Earl Robinson (music), Lewis Allan [Abel Meeropol] (lyrics), Chappell Music, 1942.
102. Spargo, "Wallaceites Hit at Major Parties."
103. "Taft-Hartley" was a common way to refer to the Labor-Management Relations Act, the 1947 law restricting the power of labor unions. Sponsored by Republicans (Sen. Robert Taft and Rep. Fred A. Hartley, Jr.) it became law when Congress overrode President Truman's veto. Aaron Max Berkowitz, "Taft-Hartley Act," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-class History*, vol. 1, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1352–54.
104. Kahana, *Intelligence Work*, 7.
105. Morreale, *The Presidential Campaign Film*, 36–37; David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 684–85.
106. The year 1949 also saw the launching of the *Monthly Review*, which fifty plus years later would publish the final, posthumous volume of Marzani's autobiography, *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, vol. 5, *Reconstruction* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002).
107. Arthur Gaeth was the only journalist to witness the execution of the leading Nazi war criminals after the Nuremberg trials. For a biographical account of his life see "Why UE's Commentator Speaks Up for the People," *UE News*, June 13, 1949, 10.

- 01 **108.** "UE Movies Combat Corporation Propaganda," *UE News*, Sept. 19,
02 1949, 10.
- 03 **109.** "Gaeth Reports to Delegates on Unemployment Survey," *UE News*,
04 Oct. 3, 1949, 10; "UE Forced to End Radio Program, Millions Will Miss Gaeth
05 Series," *UE News*, Jan. 9, 1950, 15; Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Waves of*
06 *Opposition: Labor and the Struggle for Democratic Radio* (Urbana: University
07 of Illinois Press, 2006), 218.
- 08 **110.** "Old Age—A Time of Rest," *UE News*, Sept. 10, 1949, 10.
- 09 **111.** Frederic Krahn, ed., *Educational Film Guide*, 11th ed. (New York: H. H.
10 Wilson, 1953), 355.
- 11 **112.** "Protest the Frame-ups!" *UE News*, Aug. 21, 1950, 7.
- 12 **113.** "Why the Frame-Ups?" *UE News*, May 28, 1951, 5.
- 13 **114.** *UE News*, Oct. 30, 1950, 10.
- 14 **115.** "Delegates Praise Quaker Film," *UE News*, Sept. 29, 1952, 11.
- 15 **116.** "17th Convention Pledges Full Support to Strikers," *UE News*, Sept. 29,
16 1952, 1. The Alien Registration Act of 1940 (19 USC §2385) criminalized
17 advocating the violent overthrow of federal or state governments.
- 18 **117.** "Smelter Workers Union Completes Motion Picture Despite Attacks."
19 *UE News*, Mar. 16, 1953, 11.
- 20 **118.** David Platt, "Brooklyn Has a New Film School," *Daily Worker* [New
21 York], Oct. 12, 1946.
- 22 **119.** "Labor Film Company is Formed," *CIO News*, Jan. 20, 1947, 13.
- 23 **120.** "Film Shows Ex-GI Learning of Unions," *CIO News*, Dec. 22, 1947, 10.
- 24 **121.** Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film*, 292.
- 25 **122.** Advertisement, *CIO News*, Apr. 7, 1947, 10.
- 26 **123.** "Clothing Workers Start Film Service," *CIO News*, Apr. 12, 1948, 8.
27 Hemsing still held this position when he wrote the essay "Labor and Film,"
28 which appeared in Cecile Starr's *Ideas on Film: A Handbook for the 16mm*
29 *User* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1951), 35–38.
- 30 **124.** Campbell, *Cinema Strikes Back*, 281.
- 31 **125.** Ibid.
- 32 **126.** Michael Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: British Film
33 Institute, 2007), 7.
- 34 **127.** For hints of the retreat of left-wing documentary as the 1940s waned, see:
35 "Films Available to Pep Up PAC Work," *CIO News*, June 14, 1948, 4.
- 36 **128.** Barney Rosset, "On Samuel Beckett's *Film*," *Tin House 2*, no. 2 (Winter
37 2001): 94–97.
- 38 **129.** Charles Musser, "Utopian Visions in Cold War Documentary: Joris
Ivens, Paul Robeson and *Song of the Rivers* (1954)," *Cinemas: Revue d'etudes*
Cinématographiques [Montreal] 12, no.3 (2002): 109–53.