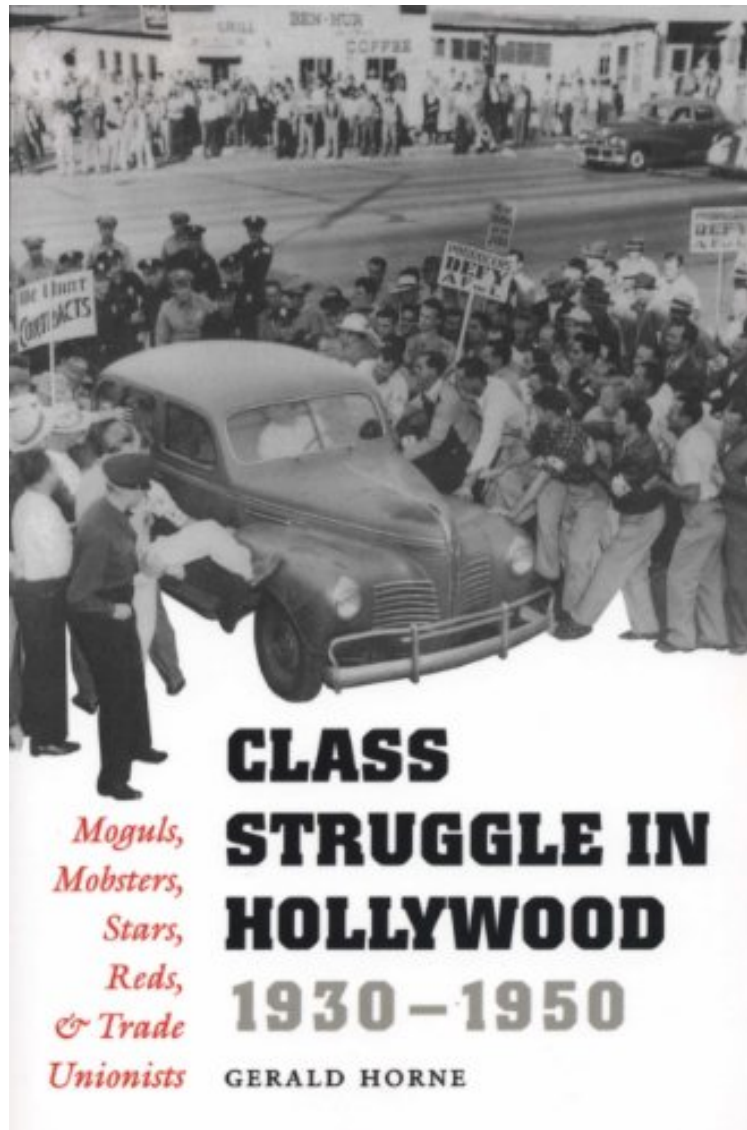


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Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, and Trade Unionists

Gerald Horne

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As World War II wound down in 1945 and the cold war heated up, the skilled trades that made up the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU) began a tumultuous strike at the major Hollywood studios. This turmoil escalated further when the studios retaliated by locking out CSU in 1946. This labor unrest unleashed a fury of Red-baiting that allowed studio moguls to crush the union and seize control of the production process, with far-reaching consequences.This engrossing book probes the motives and actions of all the players to reveal the full story of the CSU strike and the resulting lockout of 1946. Gerald Horne draws extensively on primary materials and oral histories to document how limited a "threat" the Communist party actually posed in Hollywood, even as studio moguls successfully used the Red scare to undermine union clout, prevent film stars from supporting labor, and prove the moguls' own patriotism.Horne also discloses that, unnoticed amid the turmoil, organized crime entrenched itself in management and labor, gaining considerable control over both the "product" and the profits of Hollywood. This research demonstrates that the CSU strike and lockout were a pivotal moment in Hollywood history, with consequences for everything from production values, to the kinds of stories told in films, to permanent shifts in the centers of power.

From Publishers WeeklyWalt Disney was famous in Hollywood for creating Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Communists: "Mr. Disney created more communists [than any other studio] with his substandard wage scales and the way he handled his people," claimed the leader of the Conference of Studio Unions, Herb Sorrell. But Disney's policies--which Horne contends were racist, anti-Semitic and sexist as well--were not unique in Hollywood. Tensions between workers and management had long roots: attempts at unionization began as early as 1918 and had ended up in a union lockout in 1921. In 1927, the industry attempted to sidestep the union's power by forming the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which was designed to give the appearance of a surrogate union. In the 1930s, attempts at organizing studio workers by the CSU or other unions were labeled "red." In this maelstrom of political, social and legal bitterness, noted historian Horne (*Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising of the 1960s*) focuses on the great postwar CSU strike of 1945, which after a studio lockout escalated into a full fledged Cold War culture war, with rabid red-baiting, anti-Semitism and, eventually, violence between striking union workers and scabs, and extensive police brutality. Crafting a taut narrative in elegant prose, Horne is sympathetic with the union's struggles, though his historical overview and blow-by-blow retelling of the strike and lockout never feels biased. Relying on a wealth of primary documents and with an eye for salient details, Horne has unearthed a vitally important and mostly forgotten aspect of Hollywood and labor history. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "This book is destined to be a bombshell in the field and perhaps far beyond the field." (Paul Buhle, coauthor of *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*) "This book is destined to be a bombshell in the field and perhaps far beyond the field." (Paul Buhle, coauthor of *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*)