Wyler's concern about sending a CFA delegation to Washington that might include Communists stemmed not just from fear of attacks by the press. (In fact, as the hearings progressed, it was HUAC that came under editorial attack by the responsible press while the CFA drew favorable coverage.) Wyler, Dunne, and Huston worried that once the CFA delegation entered the caucus room of the House Office Building, where the hearings were being held, Thomas very well might subpoena the delegates and put them under oath. According to Dunne, this possibility unsettled them. "It caused heated discussion as our chartered Constellation droned toward Washington," he said. "We had to have a principled defense to the question: 'Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?'"

The delegation aboard the plane "finally agreed on a unified course of action," Dunne noted. "If any or all of us were called to the stand and asked the question, we would reply, 'I must respectfully decline to answer that question, on the grounds that the information is privileged under the First Amendment to the Constitution.' We would then call a press conference, ask a Supreme Court justice to put us under oath . . . and answer all questions the newspapermen cared to ask us, including the Sixty-Four-Dollar one. We felt that this second step, though it might to some extent detract from the purity of our stand, was necessary to protect the major stars on the flight."

Moreover, by proving it had nothing to hide, the CFA delegation felt it might sway public opinion not so much about its principles but about HUAC'S lack of them. "I didn't like that compromise," Dunne recounted, still eager to set the record straight forty-two years later. "But there was no other way. We would make that statement before the congressional committee and there would be nothing it could do except to dismiss us and cite us for contempt. Then Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, who was a friend of my father's, would swear us in on the radio and we would express our political affiliations. We would 'come out.' But it would not be under the direct duress of the committee."

Thomas chose to play a different game. He switched witnesses. Instead of calling Johnston, as scheduled, he called John Howard Lawson, a co-founder and former president of the Screen Writers Guild, who, Dunne said, "could be counted on to foul things up." Johnston had a likable personality. He had made persuasive speeches against HUAC (though in secret he was advising producers not to keep "proven Communists" on their payrolls). Lawson, however, was "the grand old man of Hollywood Communism," and he had a notoriously self-dramatizing personality. As the first of the unfriendly witnesses, his contentious testimony set the tone for what would follow.

Lawson tried to assert his rights. "I an not on trial here, Mr. Chairman," he said. "This committee is on trial before the American people. Let us get that straight." He had a prepared statement to read, but Thomas wouldn't allow it. Lawson denounced the committee for "the old technique . . . used in Hitler's Germany . . . to create a scare here!" Thomas threatened him with contempt. Lawson shouted that his rights were being trampled. Correct though he was, the witness succeeded in making a high-handed spectacle of himself. (In the prepared remarks that he never got to deliver, Lawson accused the committee of relying on "stool pigeons, neurotics, publicity-seeking clowns, Gestapo agents, paid informers and a few ignorant and frightened Hollywood artists.") When Thomas dismissed him, Lawson refused to leave until forced out of

his chair. But after he was hustled from the caucus room, his bitter demeanor turned to smiles for the photographers, making it immediately clear to the press that he'd been grandstanding. Following Lawson's testimony, an FBI agent testified that he had copies of registration cards for the Communist Party from 1944, Lawson's among them.

The rest of the Hollywood Ten — so named because ten of the original nineteen unfriendly witnesses were called to testify — included six other screenwriters of varied talent and reputation: Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, Ring Lardner Jr., Lester Cole, Samuel Ornitz, Alvah Bessie, as well as the director Edward Dmytryk, the producer-director Herbert Biberman, and the producer-writer Adrian Scott. (An eleventh unfriendly witness, the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, left the country after he testified.)

As the Hollywood Ten's testimony played out, and the CFA's advice was all but ignored, the notion of a principled defense seemed to dissolve in pandemonium. "I think their tactics were abysmal and self-defeating," Dunne recalled. "They wound up yelling and shouting and saying, 'I'm trying to answer your question.' Even my friend Ring Lardner, who was one of the two people among the Ten for whom I had any respect, made that mistake. I think if they had followed our strategy, which we had suggested to them, it would have been very hard to throw them in prison….The First Amendment may have been on the minds of the Hollywood Ten when they evaded direct answers to the questions, but in only a few cases did it fall from their lips. At best it appeared as an afterthought, which could be paraphrased: 'I am trying to answer your questions, which, by the way, I don't think you have any right to ask me.' This is hardly the way to pose a clear-cut constitutional issue."

Meanwhile, the CFA's attempt to confront Richard Nixon, the young Republican congressman from California, also fizzled. He had flown back to California just as the CFA delegation arrived in Washington. "We phoned Willy and asked him to get hold of Nixon," Dunne remembered. "Willy tried to find him, to present our petition personally. But Nixon disappeared. He wasn't home. He wasn't in his office. Nobody knew where he was."

During the first week of the hearings HUAC had put on a host of friendly witnesses whose testimony it knew in advance, having interviewed them previously in Los Angeles. Besides Menjou, Cooper, and Warner, it brought on Ayn Rand, Ronald Reagan, Walt Disney, and Louis B. Mayer, among others. To counter HUAC's celebrity parade, the CFA put on its own show with two national radio broadcasts directed by Norman Corwin, on October 26 and November 2. The shows enlisted everyone from Joseph Cotten to Frank Sinatra and consisted of fervent partisan testimonials.

Because Wyler had come under attack, Gene Kelly asked the radio audience: "Did you happen to see *The Best Years of Our Lives?* Did you like it? Were you subverted by it? Did it make you un-American? Did you come out of the movie with the desire to overthrow the government?"

Wyler, for his part, told the radio audience: "I wouldn't be allowed to make *The Best Years of Our Lives* in Hollywood today. That is directly the result of the activities of the Un-American Activities Committee. They are making decent people afraid to express their opinions. They are

creating fear in Hollywood. Fear will result in self-censorship. Self-censorship will paralyze the screen. In the last analysis, you will suffer. … You will be given a diet of pictures which conform to arbitrary standards of Americanism."

Thomas called an abrupt halt to the hearings on October 30, two weeks after they began, citing each of the Hollywood Ten for contempt. Meanwhile, the CFA opposition had struck a chord not only in the press but with public opinion and was beginning to neutralize the impact of the hearings. Thomas denied being "swayed, intimidated or influenced by either Hollywood glamour, pressure groups, threats, ridicule or high-pressure tactics on the part of high-paid puppets and apologists for the motion picture industry." But, as his chief investigator said, the hearings had begun to sound like "a broken record." And in any case, their damage was done.

A month later, on November 24, the House of Representatives voted by nearly unanimous margins to uphold the contempt citations against every one of the Hollywood Ten. That same day, the top echelon of the motion picture industry and their minions gathered in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria to give birth to the blacklist. It took a few days, but the Waldorf Statement — announced by Eric Johnston in a stunning about-face of his public stance — represented total capitulation to HUAC. Johnston announced that each of the Hollywood Ten would be fired immediately and would not be rehired until he was either acquitted or purged of the contempt charges and declared "under oath that he is not a Communist." This edict came with a mind-boggling disclaimer that "we do not desire to prejudge their legal rights."

More broadly, the producers proclaimed they would not knowingly employ a Communist and would root out "alleged subversive and disloyal elements in Hollywood" by combining efforts with the various talent guilds. They acknowledged that some innocent people might get hurt and conceded "the risk of creating an atmosphere of fear." But they would do their utmost to "guard against this danger." Above all, they wanted the world to know that "in pursuing this policy, we are not going to be swayed by hysteria or intimidation from any source." The Orwellian implications were manifold.

"In the aftermath of all that," Dunne recalled, "when we had been pretty well defeated by the producers' cowardice, Willy didn't want to disband the Committee [for the First Amendment]. There was a bit of a pogrom mentality. He wanted to fight that, unlike some naturalized Americans who felt vulnerable to HUAC and had a reverence for authority. Willy was not afraid."

Indeed, Wyler wrote Hellman that J. Parnell Thomas and his ilk "have been an education for many of us" and that the CFA had to continue mobilizing. "My guess, if we learned nothing else," he observed, "is that these gentlemen won't stop attacking or vilifying us because we soft-pedalled. … We need to maintain an office and a paid secretary. … We want to be able to take out further advertisements, as they may become necessary. … We want to send out information to the thousand or more people who consider themselves members of our group. Thomas and the rest of his boys are only quiet for the moment. We want to be able to come out fighting whenever they come back."

Basically, however, there was nothing the CFA could do once the blacklist took hold. In an effort to head it off just days before the Waldorf Statement, Wyler and Dunne met with various studio chiefs and the Hollywood Ten and found themselves rebuffed on both sides. Further, their attempt at mediation was "seen as spineless by many on the left," and especially by the Hollywood Ten. Worse, the Red Scare had yet to peak. It would reach a climax in the early fifties with a second round of HUAC hearings and Senator Joseph McCarthy's separate Senate investigation of purported Communist spies in the government.

In 1950, when Edward Dmytryk of the Hollywood Ten was about to go off to prison for six months, he came to Wyler's home unexpectedly. "Willy excused himself and took Dmytryk upstairs to his study," Bob Parrish, who was having dinner with the Wylers that evening, recalls: "They were gone about two hours. I wasn't going home until I heard what that was all about. When Willy came back, we found out."

Wyler said Dmytryk wanted his advice and told him he was not a Communist and never had been. "Why the hell didn't you say that before?" Wyler asked. Dmytryk said he felt pressured by the rest of the Hollywood Ten. But under the circumstances, what should he do? Wyler said to get in touch with him after he began serving his sentence. He would arrange a press conference for Dmytryk, who would say exactly what he had just told him. That might get him parole.

Dmytryk never called. But he signed a statement in prison claiming he was not a Communist. It also said that he felt he was right not to cooperate with HUAC. When that didn't get him off the blacklist, he went before HUAC again and this time admitted he had been a Communist, after all. He also named names. It wasn't long before he was directing *The Caine Mutiny.*

Parrish recalls that Wyler purposely made light of the situation. "Bob," he said. "Never trust anybody, especially a member of the Directors Guild."

The blacklist would continue for another decade.