

MOTION PICTURES

A Social Document of the
ULCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Series of Statements of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1924, 1932, 1934, 1936

1924: Minutes, 4th Biennial Convention, ULCA, p. 276.

In reference to the statement concerning motion pictures, we recognize the evil that is produced by suggestive, lewd and immoral pictures, and we believe that it is the duty of the Christian Church to protest against the same. In order to make such protest effective, we recommend that careful surveys be made in various centers and where such a survey shows conditions such as are referred to, that protests, with the facts secured, be presented to the Governor of the State in which such surveys shall have been made. We recommend that the Committee on Moral and Social Welfare be hereby authorized to act in accordance with this resolution.

1932: Minutes, 8th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 418-19.

Resolved, That the United Lutheran Church adopt the following submitted by a special committee after investigation and careful study of the particular subject:

Whereas, Throughout our land and nearly the whole civilized world, the moving picture has become a great center of attraction for the vast multitude of people, and especially for the young, and

Whereas, Notwithstanding the wonderful possibilities for both instruction and entertainment in pictures of good moral standard, the great commercial producing companies so often persist in forcing, through the block booking system, upon the communities of our land, a dangerously high percentage of pictures that are salacious and inciting to crime, and in pushing the sale of these in Europe and in Mohammedan and "heathen" lands, to the shame and injury of our American civilization, and to the great hindrance of our missionary work.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, That our United Lutheran Church in America hereby registers its strongest protest against the making, showing and sale of such pictures, as many prove to be most insidious forms of moral poison, and urges its pastors, teachers, parents and others to take a stand against this evil as it is brought into their communities.

1934: Minutes, 9th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 481-83.

The Convention resolved:

That we challenge our people to consider well that it is inconsistent with the ethics of the Christian life to patronize motion pictures portraying vileness; that to attend such pictures makes them accomplices in this crime against the moral well-being of the individual and the social order; that we urgently summon all who count themselves followers of the gospel, when they have doubt as to the wholesomeness of a picture, or see or hear it indecently advertised, to withhold their patronage, and to attend only such pictures as are wholesome and decent and meritorious; and that they avail themselves of the help of every reliable agency in their efforts to choose the good and avoid the bad, among the pictures scheduled for exhibition.

That we encourage our people to foster the organization of local leagues of citizens through which public opinion may be aroused and sentiment expressed, without mincing words, first to local exhibitors, and, if necessary, to the community, and that we direct the Committee on Moral and Social Welfare to prepare a suggested program of action, and furnish it on request, to pastors, congregations or other groups seeking to make the present nation-wide crusade for decency in the films locally effective.

That, in recognition of the fact that the entertainment provided by clean and worthy pictures is legitimate and highly to be lauded, our people be urged to endorse and support enterprises or movements meant to provide clean, wholesome recreation.

That we recommend to our pastors that they convey these recommendations to their people.

1936: Minutes, 10th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 373, 377.

We challenge our people to attend only wholesome, decent, worthy pictures since degraded films work havoc with their own moral well-being and make them accomplices in a conspiracy to enrich motion picture producers at the expense of society's moral order.

We urge upon all parents the wisdom of making it a rule that their minor children shall not attend a motion picture until they shall have satisfied themselves that the films to be shown are of wholesome character for juveniles, and that their children shall not normally have permission to attend the theatre more than once a week,

We request the editors of our several publications, if feasible, to secure the service of a reliable film estimate agency, and publish its evaluation of current films regularly for the information of our constituency.

We challenge our people to further the cause of free community selection of motion pictures, by using their influence in every legitimate way in behalf of the abolition of the motion picture trade practices known as "block booking" and "blind selling".

