

"The guiding principle of the system of credit determination is that the writing credits should be a true and accurate statement of authorship. Fortunately, the written material provides a definite basis for credit determination, and the willingness of experienced writers to read this material carefully and weigh the contributions of the participants insures a fair and impartial decision arrived at by qualified persons."

—Writers Guild Credits Manual as revised June 1, 1956.

## A STATEMENT

Mr. William Wyler is engaged in a systematic attack against the writing credits on BEN-HUR as determined by the Writers Guild of America.

The Guild feels that a statement of the facts is necessary.

Writing credits in dispute are determined by three arbiters drawn from a panel of experienced, qualified writers. Each arbiter has no knowledge of the other two. They hold no meetings or conferences. They arrive at their decisions independently and adjudicate the credits solely on the merits of the written material.

*In the case of BEN-HUR, the unanimous decision of the three judges was that the sole screenplay credit was to be awarded to Karl Tunberg.*

Mr. Wyler protested this decision. Mr. Wyler was then heard in a full meeting of the Executive Board of the Screen Branch. Mr. Wyler said that there was additional material which appeared in the film but which had not been submitted to the arbitration committee. Mr. Wyler was invited to submit this material.

The two highest officers of the Guild were assigned to study this so-called new material. After painstaking examination, *it was discovered that this material was not new, that it had, except for minor variations, been previously submitted to the arbiters, and that, in essence, it was the same material that Mr. Tunberg had written.*

*The record shows the following:*

- 1. Karl Tunberg is the only writer who has ever written a complete screenplay on BEN-HUR.*
- 2. Karl Tunberg continued to contribute material throughout the actual filming, and this material is incorporated in the final picture.*
- 3. Karl Tunberg alone did the necessary rewriting during the four months of retakes and added scenes.*

Mr. Christopher Fry himself was fully informed of the proceedings by the Guild. He has made it absolutely clear that he did not want to protest the decision of the Guild.

It is the historic hard-won right of the Writers Guild to adjudicate writing credits. For the past 15 years every major studio and every independent producer has recognized the justness of this right and has abided by the Guild's decisions, including MGM in the case of BEN-HUR.



*Writers Guild of America, West, Inc.*