



# **The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in the American Cold War**

*James J. Lorence*

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This impassioned history tells a story of censorship and politics during the early Cold War. The author recounts the 1950 Empire Zinc Strike in Bayard, New Mexico, the making of the extraordinary motion picture *Salt of the Earth* by Local 890 of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, and the film's suppression by Hollywood, federal and state governments, and organized labor. This disturbing episode reflects the intense fear that gripped America during the Cold War and reveals the unsavory side of the rapprochement between organized labor and big business in the 1950s. In the face of intense political opposition, blackballed union activists, blacklisted Hollywood artists and writers, and Local 890 united to write a script, raise money, hire actors and crews, and make and distribute the film. Rediscovered in the 1970s, *Salt of the Earth* is a revealing celluloid document of socially conscious unionism that sought to break down racial barriers, bridge class divisions, and emphasize the role of women. Lorence has interviewed participants in the strike and film such as Clinton Jencks and Paul Jarrico and has consulted private and public archives to reconstruct the story of this extraordinary documentary and the coordinated efforts to suppress it.

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