

January 14, 1973

To: JPK
From: LBS
Re: SOS on HOUSING Show

Early last week, in a moment of euphoria such as I rarely feel these days, I sketched out a memo to you entitled: "Report on the Housing Show--Significant Progress." Then, recalling all the unbelievable mishaps we've encountered on this show, I decided it might be best to hold off a bit before sending it and see how things developed.

As things stand now, two of the three main items I covered in that un-sent memo are just as valid and encouraging as they were then:

We have a complete script, finally, which Bill, Ephraim and I all feel to be solid and smooth-flowing, and which I know, too, can be married well to the footage already taken. (Or, in one instance, to pictures which Al has agreed we can shoot.)

We also have, in Hugh Thompson, a new editor who seems thoroughly competent, is easy and pleasant to work with, and, perhaps most important, gives every indication of understanding what we are driving at and of appreciating the kinds of changes that must be made if we are to arrive there.

On one item of "progress", however, I had seriously miscalculated. That was the amount of editing I thought must have been accomplished between mid-December and now. Just before the

movie crews took off for their Christmas break Bill and I had divvied up the narration sections and re-worked them to make the points we wanted; Ephraim had put all of this together into a new script for Paul Stein to tape and cut to (a somewhat scrappy script, admittedly, because of haste, but still a sound enough guide for some very important basic changes); I had prepared a memo for Paul matching the words of the new script with suggestions about specific footage that would illuminate them; and, finally, he and I had spent several very amicable sessions reviewing this material together. In short, I had every reason to expect that the film I saw with Hugh and Bill Goldbeck last Friday would represent a big step forward from the one we all saw together on December 5th.

But in fact, except for a few minor cuts in people talking on camera, absolutely nothing has changed since then. I know that the revised narration was taped because I witnessed the act, but it was not in evidence. Paul had assured me that he had located the Brooklyn Bridge Southwest pictures, crucial to our sequence on middle-income housing (and also to another sequence in the Environment film), but they were nowhere to be seen. We had spent a good deal of time discussing the footage needed for the completely rewritten sequence about public housing, but none of this appeared either, and the words were the same as before. And so on and on and on.

After reading the finished script a week ago, Hugh had said, "This finally makes sense, but it's a whole new ball game. The film will have to be completely restructured." As Al had blanched at these words I had inwardly applauded, because this is what

I'd known was needed all along. But I hadn't appreciated how far out in left field he would be starting from. Even if Paul had accomplished all I hoped, time would be very tight. As it is, we find ourselves right up against the wall. It's not an impossible task; the job can still be done, but there is absolutely no leeway any longer for the kind of trial and error approach we've been using (let them do it their way and we'll correct it later) or for the kind of unnecessary delays that have plagued this project from its inception. Hence this SOS requesting your backing on a strong line of action which Bill and I have decided upon.

Both of us have a lot of respect for Hugh Thompson, and under normal circumstances we would want to do the tactful thing and give him a chance to feel his way through this morass a bit on his own. But under these particular circumstances, with so little time, and with so many subtly crucial points demanding attention, we don't feel that either he or we can afford this luxury. Instead, what we are proposing is two things:

First, that we and Hugh get together to view the film and exchange comments on it as it stands, before any further changes are made. This way the three of us can come to an agreement right off as to the full range of the job that faces us, and there should be minimal need for backtracking later.

Second, I wrote several sequences in the new script to match pictures which I know were taken but which are either not now in the rough cut at all or badly misplaced there. I would like to help Hugh find these as quickly as possible.

I have made up a list of these shots, but it is not easy to describe them on paper in such a way that he will be sure to identify them. It would be much easier for me to whip through the out-takes on a viewer with a footage counter and note the point at which each shot or sequence required appears.

On the face of it, ~~then~~^o these would not seem to be very radical requests. Or very time-consuming, either. The screening for comment should take no more than a day, and I should be able to pick out the shots from the out-takes in another day or two without in any way interfering with Hugh's work. But in fact Paul Stein has permitted no comments at all during his showings except by Al (and that only very recently); and it was my asking over and over that we assemble the MOS footage so that we knew what we had to work with which precipitated my exile--not that anyone ever did anything about it, which is why the job still remains to be done.

Al, I suspect, will not like the idea; and what concerns me much more is that it will be very hard to explain to Hugh. He is well aware that much of what he needs is buried in the out-takes, but he naturally thinks of Paul as his source of information, and has in fact asked him to assist with this chore. Without going into the whole incredible story of what's happened on this film, which I'd rather not do, I don't see any way of getting across ^{to him} how little confidence I have in the help that Paul can give ~~me~~. So I suspect that a tactful but at the same time forceful suggestion (or, if you will, ultimatum) from you would be the best way to gain entree for Bill and me.

Once we have gained entree, Bill and I are resolved to lean over backwards to assure Hugh that we are not trying to muscle in on his territory, and that in fact, after the course of the film has been agreed upon, we will very quickly get off his back. We would, I think, want another review after a decent interval, and of course at all times we would stand by to assist at his request.

Esquire Bond

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