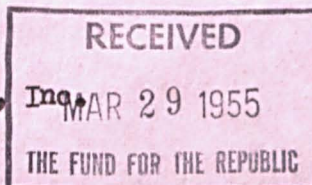


March 28, 1955

Mr. Edward Reed
The Fund for the Republic, Inc.
1 East 54th Street
New York 22, New York



DR *RMH*
I hope the lady is
wrong. I fear she is
right. *Right*

Dear Ed:

I am returning the Worthington Miner script.

If I had been given this without the knowledge that it's a Worthington Miner presentation, written by two well-known and accepted writers, my inclination would have been to toss it in the round brown file. In other words, I don't think the script is any world beater.

Specifically, I feel there is a lot of wasted time building up to the point. There is good positive value in the affection of the kids for the driver, and the father and son relationship is interesting, but it doesn't seem to me to call for the melancholy the script seems to exude.

The meat of the show is, of course, in the trial scene, and there is good dramatic stuff (any argument with emotional heat is always good), but I find it quite stereotyped in its handling. Maybe it can't be handled better in a schoolroom set up, so I question the schoolroom as the best location. The arguments are neither brilliant (which they, of course, cannot be because they are given by ordinary people) -- nor are they true-life because here the ordinary people do not speak like people.

Let's face it, this is a hard nut to crack and this script doesn't crack it. I think the writers should have worked a little harder at getting their stuff down on paper before they put it into script form.

The very act of slanting the characterizations destroys some of the acceptability of the script. For example, the head rabble rouser (the fascist, if you will) is a rather snotty, crotchety little shot. Just because he is not liberal in his politics is hardly reason to portray him as a minor arch fiend. I'm afraid these disciples of liberalism underrate the brain power of the right wing so that intolerance bounces back upon itself and in his own way the liberal wishes to force conformity on the fascist.



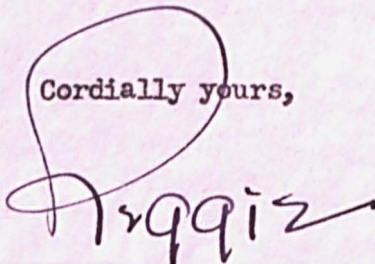
March 28, 1955

I don't think the father put across a real solid reason for not signing the loyalty oath and never once did anybody tell me in the script what the loyalty oath is -- what it says. If it's a positive swearing of allegiance, as children do in school every day, what's wrong with it? If it's not, what is it? The script doesn't enlighten me.*

As for acceptability by stations, which is probably what you really want me to tell you, I would hate this to be an audition film on which an entire series depended. I don't think even Mr. Miner's name as producer would help it in acceptability. Certainly, I can't see any commercial advertiser paying for it.

Love and kisses.

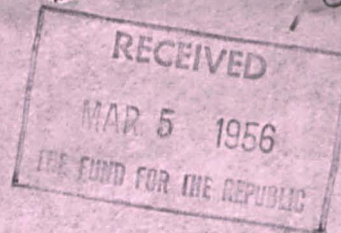
Cordially yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Reggie". The signature is written over the typed name "REGGIE SCHUEBEL, INC." and extends upwards into the "Cordially yours," line.

REGGIE SCHUEBEL, INC.

RS:B
ENC.

* I mean "one" the audience.



March 2, 1956

Dear Chuck,

The Worthington Miner story is a sad one. Miner did a pilot film on loyalty oaths which was financed by us. The script was written by Reginald Rose and Rod Serling, who are supposed to be the best. The film version was produced by Sydney Lumet, also supposed to be the best. The story was effective: a school bus driver, when asked to sign a loyalty oath just instituted by the school system in the small town in which he lived, refuses. At first he is inarticulate about his reasons but he gradually discovers why he objects. He has been working in the school system for many years. The school superintendent concludes he must fire the bus driver if the oath is not signed. A public clamor arises, and everybody attends a meeting of the school board where every argument you have ever heard for or against loyalty oaths is stated passionately by some member of the audience. At the end of the program the cameras swing to the school board, and the announcer says, "What would you do?"

NBC and Miner assured us that a program of this format could deal with current issues, no matter how controversial, and because no position was taken, could be commercially sponsored. NBC tried for the period of its 70-day option to sell it. ABC and CBS also gave it a whirl. On February 1, when no one had been able to sell it--or even get a nibble--the rights to the pilot film reverted to us. We are now planning to make the film available to interested discussion groups, and are dropping the idea of a television program.

I am not clear how this use of the film might lead to fund-raising difficulties for you. The people interested in it so far are mostly the Freedom Agenda program. I am sure we would be interested to let you make use of it if you want it. Just let me know what you are worried about and what you would like us to do. You can certainly see the film the next time you are in New York, and when you are there you should talk to Ed Reed about distribution plans.

Has anybody in your staff come up with a big way to use the "Trial of Socrates?"

Kindest regards,

Hallock Hoffman

Mr. Charles A. Nelson
American Foundation for Political Education
19 South La Salle Street
Chicago 3, Illinois

cc: Mr. Edward Reed, New York

~~FIC~~ ~~DF~~ ~~Before we take~~ TVproj
The Fund for the Republic INC.

MEMORANDUM

This might be a usable
gimmick if we were going
to do the series. But we're
not
Return to

To Edward Reed
From Sylvia Spence SS
Subject "THE CHALLENGE"

Date March 1, 1956

I saw this pilot film yesterday for the first time and I was impressed very much with it. There are a few minor flaws but they're too trivial to even mention at this point. My overall feeling was that I liked it - I liked it very much. As a result, I devoted some thought to making it more palatable to potential commercial sponsors - and I think I have come up with a gimmick. I don't think you will be enthused about my idea because it will probably offend all your idealistic principles - but in the hard world of television it is sometimes necessary to compromise ideals with practicality and realism (end of philosophy).

I am going along on the assumption that the series is planned along the same lines as this pilot film. In other words, that it will always be a story that will present a challenge to the viewer in that no resolution of the problem will be presented. Briefly my idea is this: At the beginning of the program - before the story actually starts - we would have a teaser in the form of an announcement that would say, substantially: "Be sure to listen at the end of this program for details of a contest sponsored by the FFR in connection with this program." Then, at the end of the program you announce three prizes - first, second and third - for the three best letters giving the best solution to the problem presented, letters to be postmarked not later than one week from the date of the program, winners to be announced two weeks from the date of the program; the contest to continue each week for so long as "The Challenge" remains on the air. The prizes need not be munificent - but they should be in the form of cash. Maybe \$250 for the first prize, \$100 for the second and \$50 for the third. The details could of course be worked out later if there's any interest in this suggestion. It should, however, be clearly emphasized the prizes are being offered by the FFR.

I'd like to point out that the most successful television programs are those which give away something for nothing. The \$64,000 program gets top rating week after week. These programs are confined to the people who appear as contestants. My idea leaves the field wide open for all viewers to compete. In order to compete they have to (1) watch the program and (2) give it a little thought. This is exactly what the Fund is trying to do. In addition, it is then presented to a potential sponsor as a dramatic series with audience participation. If, in the selling job, the emphasis is laid on the audience participation - you might very well be surprised at the interest shown. Don't you think it's worthy a try?

(FOR PM'S TUESDAY SEPT. 20

(TV RADIO IN HOLLYWOOD)

BY ALINE MOSBY

UNITED PRESS HOLLYWOOD CORRESPONDENT

HOLLYWOOD, SEPT. 20.--(UP)--TV VIEWERS SELDOM HEAR ABOUT THE SHOWS THAT DON'T GET ON THE AIR. ONE PRODUCER TOLD TODAY OF A PROGRAM THAT'S BRANDED "TOO HOT" FOR TELEVISION.

WORTHINGTON MINER, WHO PRODUCED "MEDIC" AND "FRONTIER" AND EVEN INTRODUCED ED SULLIVAN TO UNSUSPECTING CITIZENS, HAS CREATED A NEW SHOW CALLED "CHALLENGE."

BUT THIS PROGRAM IS SO CONTROVERSIAL THAT NETWORKS AND SPONSORS HAVE RUN IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

"CHALLENGE" WOULD DRAMATIZE VARIOUS WIDELY ARGUED SUBJECTS OF THE DAY ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF AMERICANS. THE STORY WOULD PRESENT BOTH SIDES OF THE QUESTION, AND THE VIEWER WOULD HAVE TO MAKE UP HIS OWN MIND.

THE "PILOT" FILM OF "CHALLENGE," FOR EXAMPLE, TELLS ABOUT A SCHOOL BUS DRIVER WHO WAS FIRED FOR REFUSING TO SIGN A LOYALTY OATH. THE PROGRAM ENDED WITH THE UNANSWERED QUESTION: SHOULD HE GET HIS JOB BACK?

MINER STARTED THE SHOW AFTER A SUBSIDIARY OF THE FORD FOUNDATION, THE FUND FOR THE REPUBLIC, ASKED HIM TO MAKE A PROGRAM ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS. AFTER EXTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO LAW, HE PRODUCED THE PILOT FILM IN NEW YORK LAST APRIL. IT'S GATHERED DUST IN HIS OFFICE EVER SINCE.

HE SAYS IT'S DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY SPONSORS WOULD BE LEARY, SINCE THE SHOW NEVER TAKES A STAND.

"BUT I SUPPOSE YOU MERELY MENTION THE SUBJECT OF LOYALTY OATHS AND THE LUNATIC FRINGE WOULD COMPLAIN BEFORE EVEN SEEING THE SHOW AND FINDING OUT WE DON'T EDITORIALIZE," HE SAID.

NBC THOUGHT THE SHOW WAS "DYNAMITE," HE SAID, BUT MADE NO OFFER TO CARRY IT WITHOUT A SPONSOR. CBS AND ABC SAID NOTHING.

"IT WAS UNDER OPTION TO NBC BUT THAT'S OVER NOW AND I'LL TAKE IT ANY PLACE," MINER SAID. "I THINK IT HAS TREMENDOUS IMPACT."

OTHER CHAPTERS OF "CHALLENGE" WOULD DEAL WITH FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, THE FIFTH AMENDMENT, FREEDOM OF SPEECH, SEGREGATION AND UNIONS.

MINER HAS NOT LOST HOPE. "WE WORKED A YEAR TO SELL 'MEDIC,'" HE SAID.

"ANY PROVOCATIVE SHOW IS HARD TO SELL," HE SAID. "EVERYBODY IN TOWN TURNED DOWN 'MEDIC.' THREE AGENCIES TURNED DOWN 'FRONTIER' SO I TOOK IT TO SPONSORS DIRECTLY AND SOLD IT RIGHT AWAY.

"CBS SAID NO WHEN I FIRST SUGGESTED A VARIETY SHOW WITH THE WORST ~~INCESSANT~~ ~~THE~~ COUNTRY, ED SULLIVAN. I FIGURED HE COUL ENTERTAINING HIMSELF SO HE'D HAVE TO FIND GOOD TALENT. WELL, HE'S STILL GOING."

KM525P

SEP 21 1955