

★ Virginia Wright

Drama Editor

If "Crossfire" wins any of the five Academy awards tonight for which it has been nominated the makers will be in a peculiarly advantageous position. But without waiting for the results of the voting, or for the outcome of their \$3,000,000 combined suits against RKO (which dismissed them for refusing to make a statement of political affiliation before a congressional committee) producer Adrian Scott and director Edward Dmytryk have organized a new film company to be known as Sentinel Productions.

They have purchased the screenrights to Millen Brand's novel, "Albert Sears," which will be produced on a short schedule and at an estimated cost of \$175,000.

Scott and Dmytryk, who demonstrated with "Crossfire" that artistic and economic wonders can be achieved with careful preparation and a tight schedule, are proceeding on a percentage arrangement, and financing the company with stock deals.

According to Scott, they are not concerned at the moment with the problems of a release. While they hope that after the film is completed a major or minor studio will be interested, they are quite prepared to handle the release themselves, a method of exhibition which Samuel Goldwyn once proved to be feasible.

Scott and Dmytryk are confident that "Albert Sears" can be converted into an exciting screenplay by Ben Barzman, but in the event they are not satisfied that they have the makings of a fine picture they will not go ahead with production. And investors will get their money back, unless they want to participate in the production of another property.

"Albert Sears," which was published last year by Simon and Schuster, included some material which the film makers consider extraneous to the social theme. Because they don't want to go against conventions, and because the title character's relations with a woman who is not his wife add little to the motivation, the picture will present a portrait of a normal family.

The main story is the real estate war which brings a Negro family into a white neighborhood, and the effect on the community in general and Albert Sears in particular.

While Sears is a man with a strict sense of honesty and fair play he doesn't want the Negroes there. As a property owner he sides with those who argue that real estate values will decline. But as a man of justice he is compelled to fight on the side of the Negroes against the terrorization tactics of the "committee."

"Albert Sears" is the story, too, of the gravitation of a timid young son toward a kind Negro family and their boy, and of a normal community whose latent prejudices can be transformed into violent action.

The book was laid in Jersey City in 1911, but the screenplay will be modernized to make the Negro a veteran of the last war, and the scene will be a fictional city in the north.

Scott and Dmytryk hope to be ready to shoot this summer, and their plan is to work as realistically as possible in actual city locations.

No players have been approached at this date, but all members of the cast will work on a percentage basis.

"The Great Man's Whiskers"

Still under contract to RKO screenwriter John Paxton (who is up for an award for "Crossfire," and who wrote "Murder, My Sweet," "Cornered" and "So Well Remembered" for the Scott-Dmytryk unit (at RKO) has been elevated to the position of producer on that lot, and avoids a break with his former associate by taking over production reins on Adrian Scott's "The Great Man's Whiskers."

Scott's dramatization of an anecdote about how Abraham Lincoln got his whiskers was written originally and published as a one act play. In expanding the theme for the screen Paxton introduces the character of Lincoln, who was only an off stage presence in the two scene comedy.

This period piece is a charming and funny tale of one night in 1860 when President Lincoln's train passes through a community in upstate New York. In the course of the light and humorous action the wonderful fancies of a little girl's mind are explored, the ways of politicians are revealed, and the point is made that it's the people's will which directs the action of the chief executive, and not the other way around.

When Paxton completed the script he asked for a four months' leave of absence before putting the picture into production. He had wanted a rest after returning from Eng-

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where "So Well Remembered" was filmed, but in the excitement over "Crossfire" he decided he wasn't quite as tired as he thought. Then "The Great Man's Whiskers" was offered to him, and again he was caught up in the excitement of a new project.

But what with RKO's busy schedule, and no necessity to rush this film into production, Paxton requested and received

his leave of absence. When the picture does go before the cameras there is some talk of trying to interest Fredric March in the part of the little girl's father, a man who suddenly finds himself the object of a political machine's fickle affections.

But with that actor ready to sail for England to play "Columbus" anything can happen on "The Great Man's Whiskers."

Virginia Wright column, Los Angeles Daily News, March 20, 1948.
Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.