

2. Synopsis of Albert Sears

MEMORANDUM TO: EDWARD KOOK AND SIDNEY COHEN

I am writing this memorandum in the hope that it will contain the information necessary for your purposes. It is very good of you to undertake the combined role of missionary and broker. It gives me the opportunity of spending all my time on the preparation of the script and the production.

First I should like to make clear that I am not going through the usual channels to raise money. The 'usual channels' very often are to blame for the emptiness of the content of Hollywood pictures. Very often they demand safeguards which force the producer to make the very same picture that he has made the last time — operating on the theory that what was once good should be good again. These safeguards are in reality no safeguards at all; for look what faces the industry today with its dried up markets partially a result, in my opinion, of the peoples' weariness at seeing the same old thing.

These taboos for which money people and the less than hardy executives of the industry are responsible, have been broken. In the last year Crossfire touched upon a hitherto forbidden subject matter and made a fortune. It was made at a cost of \$595,000 (which is small for a major studio) and has grossed to date about \$3,000,000. To show you the bloated costs of pictures I refer you to Out of the Past with Robert Mitchum as the star. This picture cost \$1,000,000. Then there is the new Dick Powell picture, To the Ends of the Earth costing around \$1,500,000. These two pictures are roughly in the class of Crossfire — in terms only of star power. They do not touch it in terms of quality and financial success.

I think Crossfire proved something other than making a contribution

tribution (however small) to the obliteration of anti-Semitism. It proved, I think, that if picture makers are to survive, they must move militantly to destroy the shackles that bind them. And if money is to be made, new and original projects must be devised.

The problem can be met. First, good material must be selected. It must be well written. Second, it must be efficiently planned and produced and it must allow itself - most important of all - to be a candidate for efficient planning and producing. I mean to say here that some material just does not allow for efficiency by its very nature. Third, it must cost a minimum of what pictures usually cost.

Albert Sears, the novel by Millen Brand, meets the above demands. It lends itself for efficient planning and production; it is new and original motion picture material. We feel strongly that the eloquence and dignity with which Millen Brand has treated Negro-White friendship in the book, can be transformed to the screen. We feel, equally strongly, that unless the script when finished meets these demands, that it would be absurd to make the picture. We refuse to move unless we are certain that this will be the best picture we've ever made.

To be practical:

None of us taking any salary for screen writing, directing or producing until the negative cost has been returned to the investors. There will be a small expense account available to the writer, director and producer - not to exceed \$25000 for each. This will be chargeable against his percentage.

The principal actors will work wholly on a percentage. Featured players on a deferment plus percentage basis.

By that last paragraph we are removing the largest cost of motion picture production. Let me explain it this way: Crossfire was made at a total cost of \$595,000. Of this amount about \$325,000 (with overhead) was the cost

Adrian Scott to Edward Kook and Sidney Cohen, 1948.
Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.