

Mr. J. R. Suman
Building

July 2, 1948

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Dear John:

Re: Aramco Radio Program

Over the last several weeks Stew Schackne and I have had several discussions with the Aramco people on their proposal to inaugurate a radio program in Aramco's name. Aramco is now going ahead with this program and, as a member of Aramco's Public Relations Advisory Committee, I have given my endorsement of it.

No doubt there will be criticism of Aramco's undertaking this program and criticism is certainly justified of some of the possible contents of it which have been suggested. From our standpoint, however, we believe there is also risk right now in doing nothing and that a radio program which would relieve the intangible character which most people associate with Aramco would be helpful. Obviously they are going to have to stay as far away from controversy or bias as they can so as to avoid justified criticism and minimize the effect of criticism which can be expected of anything that Aramco does.

The general outline of the proposed program, as we now understand it, is that it will be a fifteen minute news program for thirteen weeks beginning July 4 originating in New York at 6:30 PM. This time is a portion of the time previously held by "The Greatest Story Ever Told".

A guest will be interviewed on most of the programs, although not necessarily on every one. In general, the guests will be individuals who are very familiar with the Middle East — its customs, culture, geography, etc. Here, again, however, a departure from this rule may be made on occasion — as, for example, on the program occurring during the Democratic National Convention, when some prominent person in U.S. affairs might be interviewed.

We have laid great emphasis on our view that these interviews should be of a completely non-political nature and should, instead, be planned to provide background information on Aramco's business. Among guests mentioned by way of illustrating this approach were Max Ball, who could talk on the general world oil situation or Paul Hoffman who could discuss the role of oil in E.R.P.

It is not impossible that Winchell or Pearson will attack the program, as they would almost anything that Aramco might do, but that this will increase the audience which the company will then have an opportunity to speak to.

While conceding that a news commentary by Godwin may not turn out to be the most exciting radio program on the air, we feel nevertheless that this can be at least a start and might provide a foundation for further activities along this line.

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position we have taken with respect to this program is outlined as follows:

1. It is important that Aramco have some regular means of communicating with the American public so that it can develop a tangible character in the public mind — so that it will cease to be a shadowy entity about which only sinister things are reported, and will become familiar to people in its own right.
2. It is quite normal and proper that it should speak about its own business and about the places where its business is chiefly done.
3. In so doing, however, Aramco must avoid being a spokesman for any government — it must maintain its true character of a commercial enterprise. In our discussion we pointed out that this would be a valid rule to follow even if there were no special considerations with respect to the Middle East today — that the same thing would be true if we were talking about France, The Netherlands, or any other country.
4. Everything possible must be done to avoid even the appearance of being a spokesman for anyone but the company itself. We said that the selection of a number of guests on the program who are considered pro-Arab (whether or not they actually are) would seem to confirm in the public's mind the accusation which has been made against Aramco that it has acted as a kind of government arm for some of the Arab countries.
5. No action by Aramco (short of its going out of business) was likely to find favor with pro-Zionists — that the objective of the program must be primarily to reach the broad numbers of the American public who are neither pro-Israel nor pro-Arab, and who are not very well informed on Middle Eastern affairs and their importance to the U.S.
6. A suggestion has been made that an attempt be made to distinguish this news commentary from the others on the air by putting emphasis on the constructive side of the news — particularly national and international. The point was that a number of commentators take a sort of voice-of-doom approach and that hopeful elements in the problems of our time are often over-shadowed by the more spectacular and frightening elements. It has been suggested that the program might even be called "The Hope for Peace." This association with Aramco would surely be a good one.

Sincerely,

G. H. Freyermuth

GHF:VSL
cc-Mr. F. W. Abrams
Mr. O. Harden
Mr. W. L. Butte
Mr. H. L. Thompson