TO: John Slawson  
FROM: Ethel C. Phillips  
RE: Mass Media Program

During the past few weeks I have consulted a number of men whose advice is valuable for one reason or another, namely:

Leo Bogart -- McCann-Erickson; author, "The Age of Television."  
Victor Ratner -- Benton & Bowles.  
Fred Palmer -- Vice President, Earl Newson and Co.  
Leonard Goldenson -- President, American Broadcasting-Paramount Theaters, Inc.  
John Daly -- ABC Vice President in charge of public affairs programs.  
Morris L. Ernst  
W. H. Ferry -- Executive Vice President, Fund for the Republic.

Two persons who ask to remain anonymous -- one a professor at NYU, the other a top-ranking television writer.

(Charles Siepmann, in charge of the Mass Communications Department at NYU, is abroad for the summer. Eric Barnouw, his opposite number at Columbia, is not available until mid-July.)

Two questions were put to these people: (1) Is it possible for an organization such as AJC to develop and put across a mass media program, especially in television, that will be planful and penetrating, rather than opportunistic and pot-shot? (2) If so, what would be the best way of gaining the know-how to do it?

Reactions were fairly unanimous on several counts:

1. The field is wide open; no educational organization has come close to making any appreciable dent on TV.

Even the Fund for the Republic, which has put forth the most substantial efforts, has not accomplished much. Mr. Ferry himself was the first to acknowledge this; indeed, he declared very heatedly that the more one gets into TV, the more plainly one perceives that it is under jungle law and
all but impervious to civilizing influences.

2. Courses in mass communications would offer no useful insight. The few that might be pertinent are conducted at a sophomoric level since most of the students are novices. Leo Bogart, who himself teaches such courses at Columbia, was the most outspoken on this point. Everything worth-while on the theoretical side may be gleaned by studying a fairly small body of literature.

It is quite apparent that the thinkers and the doers are poles apart. The thinkers can't "do" and the doers don't think. One big job yet to be accomplished is to build a bridge between the two.

Even such "intellectual" contributions as public opinion polls, attitudes tests and rating reports, to which the media supposedly attach great importance, are evidently viewed with considerable mistrust. For example, Mr. Palmer says he commissions exhaustive research through Roper and many others to discover what impression Standard Oil's public relations campaign is making. He claims practically nothing conclusive comes out in the way of guidance. Amusingly enough, he cited as typical of transparent pretentiousness the Cincinnati study of a UN campaign, reported in the Journal of Sociology several years ago and resurrected in a Harper's article last month — the same study James Marshall clings to so tenaciously... John Daly likewise spoke quite scornfully about the deficiencies in the studies...
The television writer with whom I conferred recently undertook to report on TV trends for the Writers' Guild; he says the analysts and testers themselves admit off-the-record that they hold no brief for their own findings and anyone with common sense can shoot them full of holes. Practitioners seem to use them mainly as a sop to Cerberus—to impress clients.

3. The best way to become oriented in TV is to talk to top working people in the networks, in the agencies, and among writers and film producers.

Leonard Goldenson and John Daly warned that this is a painfully tedious undertaking; while numerous people will profess great interest, only a few feel a sense of personal concern and even fewer are gifted enough to help put across something effective. John Daly stressed that one trouble with social-cause programs is that they usually cannot compete in technical and artistic excellence with the regular TV fare. We must ferret out top brains and top skill.

Leonard Goldenson says the greatest unlicked problem is how to use entertainment for education; he does not agree with Victor Ratner's view that never the twain shall meet. Goldenson says that what Disney has done for science and American history via entertainment can be done for intergroup relations, providing people with comparable genius can be discovered and cultivated. Otherwise, he says, we will simply go on reaching a mere 1% of the population
(still a huge number by normal standards) who watch high-brow programs and who, by and large, are on our side to begin with.

4. Before making any move, it is essential to formulate quite explicitly what we wish to accomplish. Practically every person immediately asked, "exactly what are you trying to say on TV?"

There can be no doubt that if our message is parochial ("Jews are religiously motivated"), we will be accorded a frigid reception everywhere outside of outright religious broadcasting. We will win no new friends and influence no new people. The broadest and least sectarian objectives will attract the most interest and support.

5. Money is essential; unless a very sizable budget is in view, there is no point in developing a plan, asking outsiders to waste their time discussing it and making ourselves look like babes in the woods.

Everyone stressed this point most emphatically. John Daly, for example, sees the prime opportunity for our kind of activity in films which can be used repeatedly, providing they are of top-notch quality. Every such venture, he says, would cost at least $100,000...Fred Palmer said, "Don't make a move unless you have money to back it up; otherwise no one can afford to listen to you". Leonard Goldenson cautioned against the whole enterprise unless given the greatest latitude in expenditure of time and money, especially the latter...Morris Ernst, although the most optimistic and enthusiastic of all (perhaps because the
least experienced in mass media), questioned how AJC could expect to swing a significant program without heavy foundation support...Actually, our accomplishments to date are altogether remarkable considering the shoestring budgets allocated to our film and television operations.

To sum up

On the plus side:
1. This is a challenging enterprise. Providing our objectives are broad enough not to be discounted as sectarian and self-serving, we will find many key people interested in helping us figure out ways of attaining them.

On the minus side:
1. Without money, the prospect is quite hopeless.
2. In the absence of reliable guages of effectiveness, there is no way of knowing we are doing the right thing. In any event, no rabbits can be pulled out of hats; the problem is to use the established popular entertainment techniques for the purpose of intergroup education.
3. Others have tried; in fact one organization has spent the equivalent of AJC's entire budget without making much headway.
4. Even with money, endless patience is needed, a quality AJC is not noted for.

The applications of these views to the question at issue may be discussed when we meet.