

FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20540

Memorandum to: John Fischer, Director  
Division of Information

Subject: Request from Region 12  
for the services of a  
photographer and sug-  
gestion on a proposed  
film strip

Dear Mr. Fischer:

It is planned that Arthur Rothstein should leave Washington sometime around the middle of February for an extended photographic trip in the southwest and south. Several stops are planned before reaching Amarillo. It will probably be March 1 before he could be expected in Region 12 for photographic work. He will be able to spend a reasonable time there taking pictures which should be useful to the Regional office as well as to Washington. We would like very much to have Mr. Wilkinson submit a general schedule of the things he would like to have photographed and some idea as to where these pictures can be obtained. It is essential that we have such a schedule before Rothstein leaves Washington so that we can, as far as possible, work out his general campaign. There are certain jobs in southern Texas which will have to be done at a specific time making it necessary to plan his time quite closely.

The photographer can be most helpful in the preparation of a film strip if he has:

- (1) A clear idea of the story to be told in the strip.
- (2) A carefully worked "shooting script".

It will help if we can have such a shooting script before the photographer leaves Washington.

The material which Mr. Wilkinson has submitted is really not an adequate basis for the construction of a "vacafilm type" of film strip. The suggestions fail to follow a plan for a logical story of the problems and work of Region 12. I am afraid a film strip assembled on the basis of this outline would prove to be unconvincing and perhaps even confusing.

If the film strip is to be of the "vocafilm" type (pictures and 15-minute record) a brief but carefully worked out story of what is to be presented should be prepared. This need not be more than two or three paragraphs and could be written without too much regard for the particular pictures. This brief statement should contain the gist of the story for the film strip and is an essential guide for the next step--that of preparing the field shooting script. (Pictures may be photographed expressly for this strip or those already available may be used.) Between sixty to ninety pictures may be submitted for animation in the 15-minute show--though seventy frames or pictures is the preferable number.

The shooting script is actually a series of terse leading phrases or sentences which follow closely the logical development of the story and will tell the person assembling the material for the strip just what specific things are wanted. It should be remembered that the camera has certain limitations. Pictures can symbolize ideas but so often cannot realistically illustrate them.

The sum total, then, of these statements composing the shooting script should equal in a rough way the story to be told. It is always a good idea to take or assemble more pictures than will actually be used. This allows a greater choice for the final strip.

It should not be forgotten that the film strip should have movement and dramatic structure. Whatever type of film strip is to be used the material in the strip must be well selected and carefully assembled.

After the pictures are assembled the narration may be prepared. The film strip is a form of visual presentation and the story should be subordinated to the visual matter. Points should not be made in the narrative which are not made on the screen. The time each picture will be held on the screen will depend on the nature and development of each strip.

The "vocafilm" type is recommended where many copies are to be made or where a qualified speaker cannot accompany the showing of the strip. A series of glass slides for projecting in the standard stereopticon machine in some cases may be more useful than the film strip.

I would like to suggest that Mr. Wilkinson work out a "shooting script" for his proposed film strip keeping in mind the above brief suggestions. It is hoped very soon to have ready a simple manual on the preparation of film strips.

Sincerely yours,

Ray E. Stryker  
Chief, Historical Section  
Division of Information

January 14, 1938