

E.

Mr Wood

cc Mr Innes  
Miss Pease  
Mr Hewitt  
Mr Mays

① Leo Kelly  
To see a possible VFM  
exercise

② In the end

16/12

Mr. Wilson

To see + copy to  
VFM file please

16/12

JH.

TV COMMERCIAL - SECURITY FORCES

Thank you for your minute of 7 December.

2. As you know, we have arranged for the advance payment of half the production costs to be paid out of a suspense account on the Law and Order BC until the NIO is in a position to provide funds to cover this cost. I am therefore sending your minute to copy recipients of this minute.

3. If there is one lesson to be learned from this exercise it is that commitments should not be entered into until (a) it has been established that funds are available and (b) credible estimates of costs are known.

4. I welcome your plans to assess the effectiveness and the VFM achieved by the commercial in the ways you suggest. In view of my responsibilities for co-ordinating all NIO's VFM exercises, I would be grateful if you could let me have quarterly reports.

P M COSTON

9 December 1987

5842

*Mr McCann*

08 DEC 1987

AW/284/87

*I am not sure what  
(if anything) Mr Wood  
is asking for.*

Mr Coston ✓

*Pease-sp.*

*8/12*

cc PS/SofS (B&L)  
PS/Mr Stanley (B&L)  
Miss Pease

TV COMMERCIAL - SECURITY FORCES

We have now received the first realistic and detailed costing for this project (copy attached) which, at £65,000 approx is substantially in excess of the agency's early "guestimate" of £40,000 and our own original figure of £50,000 (although we recognised that £50,-£100,000 was not realistic as Miss Pease's minute of 3.11.87 records).

This situation has been discussed at length with B P A McCann (the agency handling the commission) and Mr Derek Benjamin, a COI producer, who is acting as our consultant/adviser.

Basically there are now two options viz

proceed as planned and find the additional funding required (perhaps by reducing expenditure on screen time?); or,

cut out the use of a London film company and carry out all filming in Belfast, with a potential saving of the order of £10-12,000.

My preference, strongly supported by COI's general experience and specific advice on this project, is to proceed as planned for the following reasons -

(a) the estimate of £65,000 (£74,000 including VAT) represents extremely good value for money; comparable projects undertaken by the COI for other departments cost from £80-90,000 upwards;

(b) the itemised costings show no areas of overpricing or excessive profit;

(c) cutting out the London film company would inevitably result in a reduction in quality of the finished film. Bearing in mind the sensitive nature of the subject, and the scrutiny to which it may be subjected, we need to have it absolutely right and the greater experience and skill available in London is important in this respect;

(d) the extra cost involved in London filming are further justified by the fact that we are planning a "shelf-life" of several years for the commercial;

(e) increased filming time on the streets of Belfast may attract unwelcome attention, place extra demands upon the RUC in providing security cover, and may attract criticism to NIO for diverting RUC from other tasks;

(f) we could be involved by association, if not contractually, in a dispute with the London film company over costs already incurred or irrevocably committed at this late stage;

(g) the Director engaged for the work may decline to be involved in a Belfast only operation and replacing him at this stage would involve serious disruption to the project.

I should point out that we plan to assess the effectiveness and value for money achieved by the commercial over a period of time. This will be approached in two ways:-

by monitoring the calls and information received by the RUC through the Confidential Telephone and in other ways; and,

by carrying out surveys into public awareness and attitudes before and after the campaign.

Both of these approaches are open to distortion eg an incident like the Enniskillen bombing occurring during the period that the commercial is being shown would obviously have its own affect on public attitudes, but together they should provide a useful yardstick of VFM.

I have made it very clear to the agency that they created considerable difficulties by coming to us very late in the day with a detailed estimate so far above budget. However it does have to be said in fairness to them that the timescales with which we presented them were exceptionally tight. Our own view and that of the COI, is that they might have come to us earlier but probably not much more than a week or so earlier, which would have been of little real significance.

If there is a lesson to be learned therefore, I feel it is that the timescale which we attempted was unrealistic and that in trying to achieve it we were inevitably placed in a position where speed and quality were paramount and some commitment had to be entered into before it was possible to make accurate estimates of cost. In the circumstances it was almost inevitable that the production would run over budget; there is no doubt that this would have been the case regardless of which agency or production company was involved in the exercise.

*Andy Wood.*

SIGNED

A WOOD  
7th December 1987  
ID566