

[1956, c. June 12

Monday

Dear Herbert:

The enclosed paper (since I endorsed it at the bank I have, as you see, defaced it) is probably the best thing that has happened to me in a long while; and I am curiously grateful for what befell me as a result of it. When it turned out to be not quite good, two things happened very quickly: (a) I perforce cancelled my Mexico City trip, and (b) the government attached my bank account to recover a promised (but skipped) payment. I came home with eleven cents in my pocket to face some very healthy realities, as follows:

When a man is in such a position that the accidental miscarriage of so miserable a sum can throw him into immediate penury, he has no one but himself to blame and had damned well better take the most energetic measures to get financially well. I should, in the first place, never have taken this assignment, for the ample reason that I knew it would consume a minimum of two months of intensive work and probably longer. I now, somewhat belatedly, realize that I can't afford to do it.

I sired these kids of mine, and I've got to support them, and even the noblest intention to write a screenplay with social content cannot excuse me for not having at present the money to buy their badly needed clothes for the new school term. That is a primary obligation, and, in accepting the assignment for reasons which were perfectly decent, I made it secondary. That was wrong. Since the problem is exclusively mine, I am the only one I know of who can solve it, and the first step to solution is clear.

I am, from today on and for some time in the future, not interested in pamphlets, speeches or progressive motion pictures. I have got to earn money---a considerable sum of it---very quickly. I cannot and will not hypothecate two or three months, or even a month, for any project that doesn't contain the possibility of an immediate and substantial sum. Once I have earned the money, once I have sold the ranch, once I am in a position where the slightest mishap no longer places me in peril, I shall again function as I should like to. But this is well in the future.

I'm absolutely certain, with the large number of progressive writers available, there must be several who have had an opportunity to work in the past year, and who therefore are financially able to undertake the task which I relinquish.

Did I say I was grateful? You betcha! And also furious with myself. Because if this hadn't happened, I wouldn't have understood the seriousness of my situation, and would have been stuck with a job that might well have been my economic ruin. Hence,

dear fellow, I pass the torch back. Catch it and find someone who will hold it high while your deservedly harrassed friend wrestles with the government and the groceryman!

In the Name of Him we Adore,