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December 13, 1990

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KCET, 4401 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90027

Dear Friends,

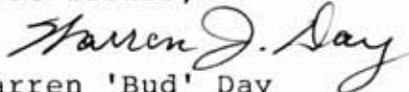
On behalf of UCLA and USC Africanists, I want to thank all three of you for the frank and helpful interaction session held in your chambers earlier this month. All four of us - Merrick Posnansky, Bill Worger, Doe Mayer, and I - agree that there is good reason to look forward to creative sharing in the future.

Due to my oversight, copies of the booklet "USC South Africa Semester" were not available that day. I am enclosing one for each of you, to see something of the scope of concern at USC and other higher educational institutions. Note the broad sweep illustrated by the courses offered, listed on page 3 of the brochure.

We know that you will soon be making further decisions about the screening of "South Africa Now". Certainly you have heard our strong support for its continuation despite some difficulties. We hope you will agree and soon inform us that it will be available for viewing by upcoming 1991 classes.

Steve, your strong concern re: "fairness" prompted my further thinking and research. I am adding a separate note along those lines, hoping it may stimulate further reflection on your part.

Best wishes,



Warren 'Bud' Day
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(phone: 213/204-5904)

cc: William Kobin, President, KCET

Additional note to Steve re: News and Fairness...from Bud Day, Dec. 13, 1990.

Having heard your arguments over the phone, Steve, as to the limitations of "South Africa Now", as well as those from your letters to my colleagues these past several months, it was of interest to hear you focusing in our discussion on the question of a "news" show and its "fairness".

For example, you seemed to be overly upset that "South Africa Now" would quote from the research of an academic from Boston, indicating how very very limited was network coverage of Southern Africa, without giving a chance for the networks to dispute the data presented. As one who was present when that paper was given to the annual meeting of the African Studies Association in Baltimore last month, I expected your response to be the same as mine, namely, "only seven minutes a year? no wonder we need to have public t.v., with coverage such as South Africa Now". In-stead, you apparently wanted the producers to re-do the research! Your other example, re: critique of ABC, I had not seen on t.v., but you seem not to accept that the ABC spokesperson was not available for comment. Perhaps the producers did not try hard enough.

I took those examples to be indicative of an high standard you want because "South Africa Now" is a "news" show. But, in looking again at several recent presentations, I feel the need to remind you of their self-definition: **"South Africa Now"** introduces itself as **the t.v. newsmagazine of Southern Africa..... News..... Views.....Frontline Focus.....In depth analysis.....Covering the Coverage.....and Cultural features.** That seems to me to be broad enough to cover more than simply "news". If your point applies only to the "news" items, I can share your concern, but think it should be applied to all shows on an equal basis, and seen in the broader context, rather than specifics.

For example, yesterday's **MacNeil/Lehrer** presentation in its news coverage of Southern Africa had several flaws. We met Savimbi, Shevardnadze, and Baker (by name), but the Angolan Foreign Minister (Pedro de Castro Van Dunem) remained nameless in the report. A major factual error claimed that the USSR had given arms support to the Angolan government "for over a decade", while US aid to UNITA "began in 1986", thus ignoring the millions US gave to UNITA in 1975, not to mention covert aid throughout the next ten years in contravention of Congressional wishes.

Again, in the same brief news segment, there was a film clip from the South African township of Thokoza, where both Buthelezi and Mandela visited yesterday. According to my stop-watch, Buthelezi coverage was 53 seconds in length, Mandela coverage only 16 seconds...over 3 to 1.

Do these specific examples of poor coverage suggest the bouncing of MacNeil/Lehrer news from TV28? No, I am sure you and I agree that over a period of time, these problems are minimal. However, if we consider the long look, it is of interest to review another study (by academics from Boston!) reported in the special issue (Winter, 1990) of Extra, a publication of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting). Over a six-month period, guests on this "public" tv show were 90% white and 87% male; for international political discussions, both categories rose to 94%. So, on the best of shows, there is plenty of room for improvement.

I submit that "South Africa Now", also fraught with limitations, is honoring your high standard at least as well as MacNeil/Lehrer. Should they both be bounced? I think not. I believe they both serve important functions!

Bud