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6/NTI

Dear John,

Jim has told me of your phone conversation with him.

Dare you have problems. I've been trying to give you time to solve them, a very long time in all. My requests date to 1969. The Bureau promises on the part you are on to last September if not earlier.

I'll begin by telling you frankly how I feel. I'd like to have reason not to feel this way.

You personally represent a great change over the past. You are personable, pleasant, have a sense of humor, seem open enough and give assurances of trying. Trying meaning to do what is right when a vast and determined bureaucracy detests the act.

And there are always close questions, legitimate disagreements. So I decide to give you time to work it all out. There is a calendar call and I do not go, ask "in to talk" the judge the foregoing in his own way. With the record in this case I'd be surprised if the judge was not surprised.

Wings! All your sermons don't work and none of your people detect this. With what is supposed to be review, too.

We discuss the published work with indexes, you say you have and use them and suddenly your people are not using them and well-publicized names are obliterated. What names are written in it is unclear and incomplete.

I tell you attachments are not attached and they are never produced, never referred to by you again. With all the attachments referred to very few have been provided to date. If and when they now are the problem for me is of such a nature that unless I can obtain help I'll not be able to put them where they belong in those records and may miss the sense, the significance or the meaning.

You agree there should not have been certain withholdings. To date they all remain withheld. The mere mechanical problem above applies here, too.

And not once has any response, where there has been one, been made a matter of record, that is, in any writing to which you can be held.

Review, if it can be called that, has been close to totally meaningless. In a few cases names have been written back in, not uncommonly illegibly. The fact is there never was any basis for withholding them and this becomes a separate machine for at least delaying compliance.

With the record in this case there is more than mere basis for suspicion. Sure one can be suspicious where it may not be warranted. But your record cries out for this when what cannot be withheld is withheld with regularity and after repeated protest. Maybe with this record I made a few wrong guesses about the names withheld. Jim gave me a couple of illustrations of this as you gave them to him.

You say I guess incorrectly on the Ray family. Okay, try it on Serial 4760, the table of contents. Then tell me you did not withhold the names of Carol Jagger and her father. And that there is any basis for it under any exemption or in any way in their interest. The Bureau violated their privacy and this is withheld in the table of contents, after which the claim is their names have to be withheld to protect their privacy.

... I do not ... party to the ... I will ...



You claim a need to withhold the names of inmates to protect them from retaliation just because they spoke to the FBI. This is superficially reasonable. Actually it is subterfuge. Remember, this case and these interviews are now nine years old and your own record show there was no such thing as a real friend of James Earl Ray in jail or anywhere else. And since when did the FBI forego interviewing inmates because it feared they would be harmed?

In this case there is an FBI record. It was either ostentatious or careless in some of these interviews. Known agents interviewed inmates in full view of other inmates. You may not know it ~~like~~ I also conducted some in-jail interviews. You have not yet provided interviews with Walter Rife, one of those closer to Ray in the past but he is one example of the above. And that was to the knowledge of James Ray's brother, in the same jail.

I'm only addressing your explanation. In fact I doubt that today and in this case the exemption claimed can be applied. In any event if you do not know that you have named publicly known names from the very beginning and to date have rectified ~~in~~ none you have not been supervising on this case.

The very first records Tom Wiseman produced withheld the names of the people in the Aeromarine story. None have received more extensive international publicity. These first papers still have not been replaced, despite the judge's comment on this particular one. And the in-court admissions of FBI witnesses. There never was any basis in the Act for this withholding. Among the possible ~~the~~ motives is that to a man they all said Ray knew nothing about rifles. Harassment is another possibility.

But what can't be contacted is first your people do these things and then you never straighten it out. Some time in the distant future is neither acceptable nor proper. There is no basis for claiming a right to do wrong and then to perpetuate that wrong. There also is no good reason for not correcting errors, if this they be, as you go. Meanwhile, with the passing of time I do forget. I've forgotten most already. There is also the danger that I'll be misled and I want to be accurate.

I have been raising questions about the interpretation, I think the rewriting of some provisions of the Act and there has been no response, not written and not verbal. This goes back to before you were assigned to this and continues under you. You have people under you who still blot out virtually every name to begin with, even that of run-down hotels, in some cases the names of cities. At least some are lawyers. All are trained FBI agents. All have supposedly undergone special additional training for this new function. You insult all intelligences in pretending they do not know better. And on top of this there is a review? An automatic appeal? Even this is used as a dodge to delay if not prevent compliance.

These abuses are unchanged after about 15 months in this case alone. They are unchanged in your part after eight months. Please try to explain this to me in terms of due diligence and good faith.

I am in wholehearted accord with the exemptions. There are some headed protections for people, as I have discussed with you and in many cases for the protection of unknown informers. You people abuse this regularly, as you do the government protections. Most recently I cited the Somerset case. (Memory is fragile but try Sidney Barnes for one of the other withheld names. I can be precise and accurate if I consult my own files on this.)

I keep trying to be patient, as I surely have been for a very long time. I keep taking time that at my age and in my condition I do not have to try to work these things out. I continue to be confronted with a stone wall. I have to go off on a short trip soon. If there has been no change and no undoing of some of this by the time I return and catch up I am going to have to explore my alternatives. Aside from the many other considerations I will feel that if I do not I will become party to the negating of a law that I think is essential to our society in its function as it should. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg