

7/28/71

Dear Jerry,

Having to write the enclosed letter to Harris has upset me enough so that I can't return to writing until I can calm down. I therefore write the letter I had intended writing you after your call this morning. Unfortunately, the interruption in what might be creative work came only too soon.

As you know, I enjoy talking to you. And, when there are days when there is nobody else here or when we see nobody else, any different voice on that basis alone is welcome and pleasant if it is that of a friend. And if the conversation is no more than idle chatter. As we both know, you do not phone me from idleness but with purpose, and as you also know, I do appreciate your willingness to take this time and to do the many helpful things you have for so long done.

I do not know whether you phoned from work or from home this a.m. I am sorry you didn't take my frequent hints, for the connection was clear as could be and the volume so low that you were barely audible at best and sometimes, when I didn't ask you to repeat, I had guessed what you had said, not really heard and understood it.

Lil had been on the extension, but she hung up early for she also was aware of the low level and the difficulty of hearing at this end. That raised the volume perceptibly. When it became clear that you were about to conclude the conversation, the click that I took to be of a receiver going back on the hook or a key on a switchboard was quite audible. It was immediately followed by an increase in level. For the first time your voice was clear and fully audible.

Now, this is not consistent with a tap. It means reduced voltage caused by another phone or phones being used. If you were at work it could have been either the operator or someone she had plugged in on that line. If you were at home there is no immediate explanation, for taps are by induction, which have no influence on the voltage.

I take the liberty of an older man and a friend who can look back on many more years and many, many more mistakes and encourage you to confine your calls to those that are important. If you phoned from home, you should not spend money in what is often waste. I would like very much for you to have some kind of financial security, not to be always in or on the verge of debt, with a really fine income. In time you will come to understand that among other things, this often can determine freedom. Nobody ought ever have to live the way Lil and I do and make decisions about our lives based on the way we have to live. As fast as you can, please, I beg you, seek and achieve this kind of freedom. It means you have to stop squandering money. NOT stop spending it, but not to spend it without some meaningful purpose, some meaningful return for it. Hence, for minor example, please do not bring us the usual gift we always find so welcome. We know how you feel, we know that you would do everything you could for us, and you should know how we feel about you. Your gifts are a nice gesture. We appreciate the fact of them as we appreciate your just thinking to do it. But because we do feel about you the way we do, we will be happier if we know you are doing what we think is in your interest, and as your friends, that will really mean more to us than a nice liquor. If you phoned from the office, you were monitored. I think if you have heard nothing, you should learn from this and reserve those calls for the important and then keep them brief. You are looking at this thing too narrowly. Let me undertake to explain how your employer might feel and would, really, be justified in feeling. He spends all that money for such a line just to have it available for conducting his business. If you are on that line during the time of the day others have business need for it, you are costing him money (the use of another line), the time of employees (if they wait for the clearing of the WAFs) or delay in conducting his business, which can also amount to money and sometimes more of it. Money is, after all, the reason for his business, and the WAFs is for convenience, saving or both.

I am willing to assume that any intelligent employer understands that some of his facilities are used, to a limited degree, by employees for personal rather than business reasons. And, it may be safe to assume that most employers may not resent this if it is not too frequent. But there can always be the once incident when someone is short-tempered and a minor thing gets inflated and deeply resented. And there can be much talk about this kind of thing, of which you might never hear but which, as a crucial moment, might work very much against your interest. One is in the competition for and availability of a raise or other benefit.

If this kind of thing were to hap en often enough, not only with you, if nothing worse eventuated, there might be a rule that all WATS calls had to be placed through the operator. This would automatically cut of your access to it when you feel you really need it.

Or, putting it even more simply than shielding yourself from possible (and really justified) retaliation, don't abuse a good thing.

I am sorry you can't come this weekend, for we have no other expected guests. What I wanted to tell you will have to await your coming. I think it is something.

The letter to Harris is for your information only. This is getting pretty nasty. The hell of it is if I have to sue him, even if I win I lose. I'll have to figure a different way of making them pay what they owe. And from what I've seen of their business, they really may not have the money. They are utter incompetents. Although even such people as Walter, who are in a position to make responsible judgements, believe they have been reached in some way, I can find simpler explanations, and being incompetent is one. Add David's ego to it and do you need more? I am not saying that they have been reached. I never think of that, for all that counts is performance, and that is such the reason really makes no difference. If you have any suggestions, I'd welcome them-in writing.

And, again you did not take my repeated hint, please make the fullest memo you can on your conversation ~~with~~ with the Taylor girl and give me a copy. What is in your head alone is of no value to anyone at some time in the future, when I anticipate a possibility this may be. Even your recollection of her appearance, how she was dressed, if such things are clear, for they would, were there later a need, tend to establish the dependability of your recollection. Date it honestly, state when and where the meeting(s) ~~occurred~~ occurred. Who else was there, etc/ Then, as best you can recall, what she said and what you said and asked. Even if it is no more than you told me. Don't bother mailing a copy. You can bring it, when I'll explain its possible usefulness at some time in the perhaps not distant future.

Hurriedly,