

14 July 1968

Mr. Edward Jay Epstein
295 Harvard Street
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Ed,

When you telephoned me on Friday night, you had not yet received my letter of the 11th but you nevertheless volunteered that you would elaborate on the question of the palmprint on the rifle and similar evidentiary points which I had raised with you, in preparing your book on Garrison. I was pleased to hear you say this, of course. But the next day, thinking about it further and re-reading your New Yorker article, I found myself still disquieted and decided that I should express myself, for the record, with less diffidence and with bluntness, if necessary.

Until I read your New Yorker article on Wednesday, I anticipated that you would have modified the earlier manuscript that I read in February so as to make it clear that you do not accept the Warren Report or its conclusions and that you advocate a new, competent and impartial investigation. I had written you on 14 February 1968: "More serious is the omission of the very compelling argument which you yourself have made in conversation: that the lunatic New Orleans investigation of the assassination increases the urgency of setting into motion a responsible, professional investigation...The article as it now stands may encourage the impression that the Warren Report is probably all right and that all criticisms of the Commission is Garrison-like and to be dismissed as more of the same crack-pottery."

I did not expect you to adjust your article merely in order to satisfy my point of view but I did expect you to reflect your own viewpoint, as expressed in letters and conversation. Nothing in the published article expresses your own argument that the "Garrison investigation" in itself is a cogent and compelling argument for a new examination of the events of Dallas. Nothing in the published article expresses your conclusion that it is "extremely unlikely, even inconceivable, that a single assassin was responsible" (your letter of 1 December 1967). Nothing in the published article indicates that critics of the Warren Report like Leo Sauvage and myself have been repudiating Garrison vigorously, and on the record, for more than a year, as we have been repudiating the Warren Report from the outset and as we continue to do without the smallest backsliding. On the contrary, your article implicitly and explicitly defends the Warren Report, disparages that part of the general public which rejects the Report as being either "chronic doubters" or gulled by the preposterous Garrison, snidely dismisses all critics as "demonologists," and defaults on the intellectual and moral obligation to apply to the Warren Commission the same rigorous and uncompromising criteria as you did apply to Garrison. No wonder even The New Yorker thought that your article was too soft on the Warren Report!

Let me make it very clear that I am not asking you to write anything that violates your own convictions, merely to please me. But what are your convictions? I am no longer sure ~~if~~ they are to be found in Inquest ~~and~~ in your letters and conversation, or in the long obsequance to the Warren Report which is the leitmotif of your Garrison article. The cooperation or assistance I have extended to you, as to others, has always been predicated on the assumption of genuine commitment to the determination of the truth, without regard to giving offense to important persons or any other consideration. I would not knowingly cooperate with anyone

who consciously or unconsciously seeks to rehabilitate the contemptible Warren Report any more than I would cooperate knowingly with any other shabby exercises in fraud, like Garrison's. That must be evident from my breaking off all contacts with former colleagues and valued friends like Salandria, Marcus, Field, Penn Jones, and others, notwithstanding the painful sadness and the isolation it cost. I am ready to do the same thing at any time that it becomes obvious that my efforts, extended in good faith, are serving a perverse and invidious purpose.

It should hardly be necessary to say this, but let me emphasize again that the fact that Garrison's "investigation" has no shred of validity in no way confers the slightest legitimacy or respectability on the Warren Report. When the same single criterion is applied, both "investigations" are seen to be dishonest, deformed, and insupportable. You share my dismay at the spectacle of respected critics of the KR investing belief and trust in Garrison because he too dismissed the KR and despite his rising mountain of misstatements, distortions, and outright fictions: a critic who rightly denounces Garrison becomes—or appears to become—an apologist for the KR is nothing more than the mirror image of the pro-Garrison critic. If the rule is to be that the Warren Report is excoriated for its abuse of fact, truth, and justice, but that Garrison's ploys and inventions are condoned, OR that Garrison is censured for misuse of power and charlatanism, but the Warren Commission is condoned and deodorized, then it will be a complete triumph for opportunism, cynicism, and corruption.

I have been grateful that Leo Sauvage, first and foremost, consigned Garrison to the same ugly niche in history as the Warren Report and the Dreyfus case; and I have been grateful and relieved that the entrepreneur Mark Lane opted for Garrison's camp, not Sauvage's or mine. And I would now like to know, Ed, just where you stand, because your New Yorker article leaves me in the most serious doubt and I disassociate myself completely from its posture toward the Warren Report and from its insinuations as to the demagogical character of all critics and all conspiracy hypotheses. I hope that it has occurred to you that Hannah Arendt's pronouncement, that the liar is usually more persuasive than the truth-teller, applies no less to the Warren Commission with its prestigious front-men than it applies to Garrison.

If we are in basic disagreement on the Warren Report, despite various unequivocal statements you have made over the years in personal conversations or letters and at times in public, I hope that you will say so unambiguously. If we are not in basic disagreement, then I am at a loss to understand how your New Yorker article could have acquired so strong a stamp of an apologist for the Report. If I can be helpful to you in expanding the article to book length, I will gladly do so but only if I am absolutely certain that I will not be contributing so much as a semi-colon to any subtle or overt effort to encourage charity toward or credence in the Warren Report.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher

cc Leo Sauvage,
M.S. Aronson, et al