

19 August 1968

The Editors
Assassination Inquiry Committee Newsletter
4718 Saratoga Avenue
San Diego 92107

Dear Sirs,

I have just read with particular interest the Newsletter of 21 July 1968 and the references to my position on Garrison by Dr. Nichols on page 1 and by Richard Popkin on page 7. You will recall that I expressed my views on Garrison in my letters of 25 and 26 July to Dr. Abbot, which unfortunately were too late for possible use in the issue of 21 July (although I still expect some form of response to my comments with respect to Dr. Nichols' characterization of Bradley).

Under the circumstances, I cannot complain about the publication of Mr. Popkin's account of what he considers or assumes my position to be, rather than my own statement of position. However, Mr. Popkin's remarks are incomplete and do not reflect my views adequately or quite accurately. I should therefore hope that, as a matter of courtesy and simple fairness, you will publish the following clarifications.

It is not quite accurate to suggest that I have been "extremely sceptical" of Garrison from the time he came to the fore. From the time I first learned of Garrison's interest in the assassination (January 1967) until Perry Raymond Russo testified in the preliminary hearing of the Clay Shaw case (March 1967), I was a wholehearted supporter and admirer of Garrison. I volunteered any and all assistance which I could render, and sent him considerable material from my unpublished as well as my published work. Ironically, I even disputed some of my colleagues among the critics who were then extremely cautious about or suspicious of Garrison (without cause, in my opinion), the same critics who are now ardent champions of Garrison (despite massive evidence which has piled up which compromises his methods and his "case" in much the same way that the Warren Report is blatantly compromised).

My scepticism began when Garrison offered as serious witnesses Messrs. Russo and Vernon Bundy, whose allegations and testimony was inherently bereft of credibility. My disenchantment became complete when Garrison proclaimed his deciphering of the so-called code ("P.O. 19106"), in May 1967, with unprofessional haste, impetuosity, and foolishness. The so-called "code" was a preposterous and amateurish blunder on Garrison's part, in the first instance; but when he failed to retract his claims after being made aware of the fatal defects in his facts and reasoning, but only reiterated and expanded his cryptographic "evidence," the "code" became outright fabricated evidence. Mr. Popkin, in a lengthy apologia for Garrison in The New York Review of Books last year, omitted mention of the "code," although I scarcely see how it is possible to make any assessment of the New Orleans "investigation" without taking account of it and its implications with respect to Garrison's prosecutory standards and skill.

Mr. Popkin is quite correct in saying that I was disturbed by Garrison's promiscuity with the facts and his "mixing them up." I do indeed insist that the facts be "kept pure and pristine" (or, to paraphrase Mr. Popkin, precise and accurate), and I take his remarks as a compliment even if he did not intend them as such. Facts must be respected, as a general principle, and certainly they may not be trifled with in a homicide, much less an assassination of the gravest national and international repercussions. A central charge against the Warren Report by the critics is that it trifles with, omits, and perverts material fact in order to arrive at a "lone assassin" who is utterly irreconcilable with the actual evidence. I have devoted rather a massive book to the exposition of the Warren Commission's liberties with the facts. I have no intention of applying a less rigorous standard to Garrison's "facts," however prissy or sanctimonious that may strike Mr. Popkin; and I only wish that he and Garrison's other devotees would apply to him the same scepticism and objectivity as they applied to the Warren Report.

Finally, it is not my position—as Mr. Popkin suggests—that "one has to stick to just the facts and not do any speculating." To prohibit speculation would be to circumscribe severely the marvelous capacity of the human brain to master environment and to interpret events. But I do insist that speculation be identified as speculation, not foisted in the guise of established fact or mixed indiscriminately with hypothesis, theory, evidence, and proof. If some wretched fool wishes to speculate that an assassin fired at the President from a manhole, let him do so; but if he proclaims his speculation to be fact, I would hope that an eminent academician like Mr. Popkin would be among the first to recoil, and publicly.

Yours very truly,

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