

10 October 1968

Dr. A. George Abbott
Assassination Inquiry Committee
4718 Saratoga Avenue
San Diego 92107

Dear Dr. Abbott,

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 1968. I welcome the tone of your reply to my letters of July 25 and 26 and August 19, 1968. But when I come to the substance of your letter, I wonder whether any amount of mutual good will can succeed in narrowing the gap between our respective positions.

I am discouraged, if I may say so, by confusion and contradiction in your exposition, by the irrelevancy and illogic of some of your questions, and by your failure to address yourself to explicit points in my earlier letters.

On the question of Bradley: I can see no possible equation between prejudicial insinuations about a man accused of conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy on little or no evidence worthy of the name, on the one hand, and denunciation of this resort to demagogic defamation, on the other hand. Your letter sets up a straw man of whether Bradley is in fact a right-wing Christian^{ist} Communist. But I never disputed that. I dispute and deplore the attempt to incriminate any individual in a specific crime on the basis of his religious or political beliefs, in lieu of material evidence which is certainly lacking in Bradley's case. It is Bradley's incontrovertible right to seek every protection that the law affords him in resisting accusation, extradition, or trial; and until such time as the evidence establishes beyond a reasonable doubt the guilt of the accused, he is entitled to be accorded the status of innocence. I maintain my criticism of the manner in which Bradley was characterized in the Newsletter.

You say in your letter that you are truly interested in learning the truth about the assassination, but that, in effect, you have not yet achieved an authoritative knowledge derived from primary research and investigation. If you are at the exploratory or learning stage, as your letter suggests, then I cannot understand the basis on which the Committee exhorts its audience to "SUPPORT JIM GARRISON!" That you take such a categorical stance seems to me especially regrettable when the public record provides massive and serious evidence, even to the casual student of the Garrison affair, of disquieting disrespect for fact and logic on the district attorney's part.

This much you concede, implicitly, when you refer in your letter to the fact or the possibility that "part of the basis for his conclusion is faulty." I will return to this point later.

I do not know what you mean when you say that I have a "strong anti-Garrison bias." It is perfectly clear from my letter of 19 August 1968, paragraph 4, that any prejudice on my part was in favor of Garrison, and that it was against my hopes and fervent wishes that I was forced, by his declarations and actions, to recognize that he was a charlatan and a real danger to the critics' effort to reopen the case of the Dallas crimes.

In my published work and correspondence, I have given an account of specific instances of Garrison's irresponsibility, inaccuracies, and untrustworthiness. A full inventory covering much the same ground is found in Epstein's New Yorker article, which I fully endorse insofar as it deals with Garrison (but repudiate in terms of its softness on the Warren Report). I have independent and conclusive corroboration from sources other than Epstein of all or most of his charges against Garrison--none of which Garrison has been willing or able to refute.

Consequently, I cannot agree that I have any "bias" against Garrison but only the same uncompromising opposition that I hold against the Warren Commission and its Report, for the reasons fully documented in my book and other published work.

I discussed Russo's testimony, as to its inherent lack of credibility, in a published letter of September 1967 to the New York Review of Books, explaining that I do not believe that three conspirators chose to discuss their assassination strategy in the presence of a witness who was left at liberty to report them, before or after the fact, to the authorities. In the same letter, I explained why I rejected Burdy's "identification," as I would reject from any source an identification almost four years after seeing the subjects, from some distance, on a single occasion. Any prosecutor who utilizes such testimony (replying, I have been told, to objections by his own aides that if the witness wished to perjure himself, that was his affair) invites grave suspicion of his professional judgment, motivation, and moral integrity.

Similarly, whether the so-called code "P.O. 19106" is central or secondary to Garrison's "case," it is extremely illuminating of his professional competence and ethics, as discussed in my letter of 19 August 1968 paragraph 4.

You ask if Garrison should not be allowed to prosecute Shaw without federal interference, without mentioning the case I called to your attention in my letter of 26 July 1968 page 2 paragraph 4. That example indicates that federal intervention can be both legitimate and desirable. In any event, Shaw is entitled to exhaust every legal avenue open to him. The benefit of doubt is incontrovertibly due Shaw and cannot be transferred to the prosecutor, by your Committee or any other agency. The more so when the public record incriminates Garrison, Sciambra, and Russo more than it incriminates Shaw. I look forward to the day when well-meaning persons and groups will display on behalf of the protection of the accused the same zeal now devoted to uncritical support of the prosecutor.

The whole anguished cry to let Garrison have his trial is a simplistic piece of sophistry. Some trials are immoral from beginning to end. The Dreyfus case, of course, is the classic example, and there are many contemporary examples. Do you believe that Dr. Spock and his colleagues should have been tried? or that we can place utter faith in the jury system which found them "guilty"? Do you insist that the anti-war protestors who had their heads bashed in by the Chicago police must now stand trial in Daley's courts? Surely not.

Garrison and his claue are so busy clamoring for the Shaw trial to get under way that a curious fact is overlooked--that Garrison has been strangely dilatory about bring to trial other accused persons who have not placed any obstacles in his path or resisted extradition. Layton Martens, who was arrested in April 1967, and Kerry Thornley, who was arrested quite a few months ago, come readily to mind.

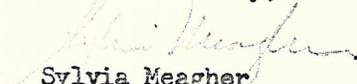
I reject completely the thesis put forward by some supporters of Garrison (although not by you, if my impression is correct) that he may write and say whatever he pleases but must be immune from criticism and challenge on the specious ground that his pronouncements are sub judice.

Let me comment now on your suggestion that a man's thesis can be basically correct, even if part of the basis for his conclusion is "faulty." Garrison's performance has been not merely "faulty" (in the sense of innocent error) but consciously dishonest, vindictive, and false. Naturally, I do not look to such a man to lead the way to the truth about the assassination. Your argument is exactly the argument invoked by the die-hard apologists for the Warren Report: although they have been left no choice but to admit the deformations and deceit in the Report, they then fall back on the deranged postulate that the Commission relied on a body of wholly defective and false "evidence" but nevertheless staggered blindly to the true conclusion that Oswald was the lone assassin.

You ask if it is not likely that Garrison has evidence against Shaw not yet made public. Forgive me, and I say it in a friendly spirit, but this proposition smacks of desperation. It really does not warrant discussion, and in any case it ignores the quality of the "evidence" which has been made public by Garrison and calls for the blind faith which I am not willing to invest in men who have a claim on confidence and respect and certainly not in a fatuous mountebank like Garrison.

Time does not permit me to elaborate further, but I trust that I have commented on most of the questions you raised.

Yours sincerely,


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