

Letter to Tom BETHELL

7 March 1968

Dear Tom,

If Lane thinks my letter was "most unpleasant," I wonder what he would have said to the first draft...Actually, I did not have to exercise much self-restraint in stating my reasons for holding Garrison in contempt... anything I have learned privately, from several persons, has merely served to corroborate my conclusions...and I would feel exactly as I do feel even if I had no information beyond Garrison's public pronouncements.

Certainly it is hard to understand why Lane is risking so much by committing himself without reservation to Garrison's "case," however much its absurdity continues to multiply. I suspect that Lane, like Garrison himself, said far too much in the first instance...discovered that the general public was uncritical and ready to believe any old unsupported assertion or any old Russo/Bundy kind of witness...and since it was hard to retreat, decided to gamble on Garrison's being able to bluff his way out of his self-engineered farce, or at least ~~have~~ establish a position of martyr^{dom} into which to retreat...with Lane sharing the hero's mantle.

Can you tell me Mays' first name? When I told Arnoni the Mays/Horsey story after Tink Thompson told me about it, it rang a bell with him. He thinks Mays may be the same person who contacted him some time ago, about a matter completely unrelated to the case, offering to sell information about a person then much in the headlines. (Please regard this as confidential.)

Coming to the central question in your letter ("How do you feel about my position, from a moral point of view?"): This is a hard question to answer. I do agree that you have an invaluable opportunity to see and to expose the whole sordid story. That is of the utmost importance, for the sake of the victims of this "investigation" and for the historical record. The fact that you work for Garrison does not commit you to covering up improprieties or fraud. A case in point is that of the former staff members who exposed Senator Dodd. I can only tell you that I hold them in very high esteem for their act of conscience and for their courage in the face of dangerous and powerful adversaries who have resorted to personal smears of the ugliest kind, among other tactics. Yet I feel certain that these ex-staffers deserve and have the respect and gratitude of thoughtful people and that the attempts to defame them merely defame those who are responsible for the calumnies. Since you accepted your job in good faith, and worked diligently and honestly, I can find nothing unethical or immoral there. Once having realized the real nature of the "investigation," you reached a decision to reveal the facts to the public. Dodd's staff did not quit at the first discovery of his malfeasance--they stayed until they had a strong and irrefutable case. And, indeed, to have acted prematurely would have achieved nothing. These are the thoughts that come to my mind, for what they are worth. But in the last analysis, you have to decide for yourself what is, or is not, compatible with your own sense of right and wrong.

When you are clear in your own mind about your purpose--which I believe from our conversations and correspondence to be the uncovering of the truth, whatever it may be, about the Warren Report and the assassination--you should make this clear for the record. I have in mind a letter or letters to one or two trusted friends or relatives, in which you pose the dilemma and

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state your decision (if, indeed, you make such a decision) to remain as you are for the time being, for the ultimate and overriding purpose of a true and accurate historical record of the events in which you have a unique opportunity to participate.

I learned long ago that few things are as important and protective of fact as the commitment of one's position on the record. You can imagine how glad I felt that I had written to my publishers, for the record, to formalize my unwillingness to have a jacket quote from Lane. I would never have sent him a copy of that letter gratuitously; but when he was so unfair and vicious as to charge that he had been tricked into providing the "endorsement," it gave me great satisfaction to have that letter as my irrefutable proof that I neither tricked him nor even wanted his commendation.

There is one other consideration to which you should give your attention --that is, that you are dealing with a man who can be vindictive and unscrupulous, and who does not easily accommodate contrary views, much less "disloyalty" or "defection." If he is already uneasy about you, you must be very alert at all times not to be vulnerable to real or contrived attack. Be on guard; and if any ambiguous incidents should occur, again, make a record to which you can refer after the passage of time, so that you are not dependent on someone's memory or someone's word against your word.

I am relieved that you have taken precautionary steps to protect your material. I hope that these steps cover all contingencies and that the material in question will be available for the historical record whatever the circumstances that may develop.

Please do stay in touch. I think you know that I have not violated your confidences, and will continue to respect any limitations which you place on what you write me, unless and until such information becomes vital to your own needs. Remember--when all is said and done, Garrison does not want another Gurvich, and in itself that is both security and danger. Don't underestimate your strength, or his capacity for improvisation.

All the best,