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Dear Sylvia,

Mark Lane arrived in the office today, and I met him for the first time. He seemed surprisingly subdued, almost a retiring person, after all that I had heard.

My main reason for replying so promptly is to discuss Phelan's contact with you. This interested me very much, not because I suspect you of playing "footsie" with the other side, but because it is now apparent to me that Phelan is either onto something very important, or else is playing some kind of a game with the critics. My first indication of this was a few weeks ago when G. told me that Phelan had told him that some big break in the case was going to emerge in November or December of this year; he added that this had nothing to do with Garrison's investigation, but that under some 4 year time span guaranteeing non incrimination, someone in a position to know was going to come forward with new evidence which would "destroy" the Warren Report.

I then hear<sup>from you</sup> that Phelan has been reading your articles, and appears to be boning up on the weaknesses in the Commission's case. I immediately mentioned the gist of what Phelan told G. to Mark Lane today and he told me that Phelan had also approached him with essentially the same story. Lane added that the person Phelan has been talking to, according to Phelan, is a lawyer in Washington (I believe the lawyer is merely representing a client who has the important story to tell), who regrets what is about to happen because he, the lawyer, has a high opinion of Warren. Lane, however, puts a different interpretation on this: he says Phelan is employing this as a ruse to lure the critics away from G., because Phelan has repeatedly insisted that the outcome of this is going to be that the critics are right and that G. will be shown to have been off the mark. Thus, a Commission critic, by refusing to endorse either G. or the Warren Report, will be doubly vindicated. This is Lane's interpretation.

It doesn't work too well in your case, because, according to what you said in your letter, Phelan would be merely preaching to the converted. The fact that you immediately appraised Phelan of the fact that you had no love for G. should have been enough reason for Phelan to discontinue contact with you, according to Lane's argument.

On the other hand, a good target for Phelan to attack, according to Lane's view, would be Matt Herron, the photographer for the SEP article who is a ~~moderate~~ buff tending to side more with G. than with Phelan, and has rather reluctantly agreed to testify in Phelan's favour at the Shaw trial. I called Matt this evening and he said he had not heard from Phelan for three months.

All this tends to confirm that Phelan really may be on to something big. I have never met him, but my impression from his SEP article was that he is a fundamentally honest man, not merely wielding an axe at Garrison, which was the impression I got from Aynesworth's very unpleasant and dishonest piece in Newsweek. In other words, my impression was that Phelan is not necessarily committed to protecting the national interest etc., and would be capable of doing an anti-Warren story, especially in view of the fact that he would have practically the scoop of the century if he is telling the truth.

What are your thoughts about this? It may be that you already know more about it than I realise. I can see that such a possible future development would not only very strongly vindicate the position you have all along taken, but you may in addition feel a reluctance in disclosing any details to Garrison's office, in view of the possibility that he could then manœuvre the situation in some way to take credit for it if and when the ballon bursts. (However I think this would be unlikely to happen.)

The irony of Lane's position is almost unbelievable. He is supprting G. on a conspiracy charge which ipso facto implicates Oswald, whereas he was supposedly representing Oswald's interests in writing his book. Also, surprisingly, he presented your position vis-a-vis Garrison to me (I pretended not to know it) accurately, objectively, and without rancour, in a manner which implied that he perfectly understood your position. What I

can't understand is that he doesn't seem to understand his own position.

There is one point on which I think I am in complete disagreement with you, and that is with regard to your statement that the Warren Report has "collapsed". It seems to me that although public credibility in the Report is probably at an all time low (especially since CBS showed us what a difficult shot it was), the Report has by no means collapsed. Evidently we are employing different criteria here for use of the word collapse; I would only regard it as having collapsed in the event of such a hypothetical occurrence: An FBI agent comes forward and says publicly: "CE 399 is not a genuine exhibit; I planted it on the stretcher." or, a Dallas policeman comes forward and says: "We found 2 rifles in the TSBD after the assassination. I found the second one." Revelations of this kind really would "destroy" the report, you would be justified in saying that the Report had collapsed, and the news would not only be front page all over the world, but it would also be conceded somewhere in Section 1 of the New York Times. Until that happens, however, Warren's flag still flies. One is justified in saying that grave doubts about the validity of the Report exist, but surely not that it has collapsed.

Frankly, I think that until such an admission is made (eg of planting evidence) the assassination is in a stalemate stage. Even if Shaw is convicted I don't think anyone seriously believes the problem is solved. It is only worsened, ie. we have legally accepted evidence that an unidentified gunman is at large.

That is why I think Phelan's possible revelations are so very important: they may really result in the collapse of the Report. Should this happen, I think there would be not merely a group of dissatisfied critics backed up by a large but uninformed section of the public, but very serious political repercussions in this country. An immediate and probably overwhelming outcry would ensue for the re-investigation of not only the assassination but an investigation of everyone involved in the initial effort.

Don't you agree with this? Consider CE 399, in my opinion the most damaging piece of evidence in the case. It is almost certain that this is not a genuine exhibit, but absolutely no headway is going to be made until someone ~~public someone~~ comes forward with more information as to how it got there. The whole world can disbelieve it (Salandria says he has a tape of Specter saying it is "impossible") but Warren still grins back at us, for the rest of our lives, unless some brand new information is provided about it.

Best wishes,

Tom