

24 February 1967

Dear Verne Moberg,

Although I seem constantly to be in a race against time, I do want to reply at least briefly to your comments after copy-editing my manuscript. First, thank you for your kind remarks about the ms.: you encourage me to hope that it will sustain the interest of readers despite its length and density.

Second, I think you are quite right in your apprehension that our present legal and social system does not guarantee that justice will invariably or even as a rule emerge from the courtroom. A recent series of historic decisions have recognized the close correlation between judicial "error" and the impoverished defendant or member of minority groups; the decisions attempt to protect a defendant against self-incrimination (via coerced confession etc.) and to provide a public defender to represent the interests of an accused who does not have the means to provide his own defense.

Although I am not especially well-informed about the law and cannot claim to have "legal perspective," one fundamental fact strikes me with great force about Oswald's so-called trial—that is that it was not a trial in any true sense of the word. A trial supposedly consists of the presentation of a prosecution case, a defense case, and a verdict by an impartial jury, guided on points of law by an impartial judge. In the Oswald case, the Warren Commission acted as the prosecution, the judge, and the jury, but denied Oswald a defense. I do not refer merely to the refusal to allow Mark Lane to serve as defense attorney, as Oswald's mother requested; nor even to the appointment of the head of the American Bar Association, which was a mere farce: I refer to the denial of the request by the Commission's own lawyers to cross-examine certain witnesses (brought to light in Epstein's book Inquest). The refusal to engage in any form of adversary procedure, even within the structure of the Commission itself, to me is a very damning factor.

You ask "is it worth devoting that much effort to Kennedy's killers instead of the Poverty Program?" I will reply in the words of the New Orleans District Attorney, James Garrison, who has said this week that there is no evidence that Oswald killed anyone in Dallas on November 22nd: Let justice be done though the heavens fall. And a good way to finance the poverty program would be to stop the slaughter in Vietnam and use those billions for life instead of for death, destruction, and the maiming of innocent people.

I appreciate the many improvements you introduced into the ms. and the greater clarity and simplicity which your editing produced. With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher