

28 December 1966

Mr. Steven J. Burton
4829 Morella Avenue
North Hollywood, Calif. 91607

Dear Mr. Burton,

Thank you for your interesting letter of the 22nd and for your kind words about my articles. Certainly I support the objectives of the revived Citizens' Committee of Inquiry and the fact that Mrs. Field is supporting your activities in itself is a high recommendation.

(1) Proposed petition The text seems appropriate. I would only suggest the following rewording, for the sake of greater precision:

The Congress...institute a new investigation of the assassination...to be conducted by independent non-governmental experts competent in the forensic sciences (criminalists, lawyers, pathologists, etc.), utilizing the adversary procedure, in open public hearings.

(2) Advisory Board I am glad to give my provisional agreement to the use of my name on your stationery or literature. If possible, I should like to see the entire roster of names before giving final consent.

(3) Formation of Committees in the East Here I am sorry that I cannot be helpful. I do not know anyone in New York City who might be interested in organizing a committee. You undoubtedly are aware that there was a Citizens' Committee of Inquiry functioning in 1964 under the aegis of Mark Lane. I had little contact with the group apart from sending occasional financial contributions but I have heard from others who had closer acquaintance (through doing volunteer work and the like) that the Committee tended to antagonize interested individuals and that while much good work was accomplished, policy was geared to one critic and was handicapped by consequent limitations stemming from that commitment.

In Philadelphia there is an active group of university students, some of whom held a silent vigil and protest at the National Archives building on November 22, 1966. You could probably make contact with them through Vincent Salandria, one of the first and foremost of the critics.

I feel that I should make clear my own position about committees in the context of the reopening of the investigation. It is a wholly legitimate and necessary activity which every critic must welcome. However, the critics and researchers who are working primarily on the analysis of evidence should be on guard against assuming commitments and responsibilities, however worthy, that will make serious inroads on their time and energy, which (speaking for myself) must continue to go predominantly to research and analysis. To become enmeshed in matters of organization, membership, meetings, and like committee procedures would be a misuse of whatever expertise a critic has acquired.

Recently the new wave of interest in the Warren Report has involved most of the critics in all kinds of marginal or secondary activities of a public relations nature. I have been approached by numerous groups for

interviews, review of manuscripts, broadcasts, research assistance for films and plays, and the like, to the detriment of my continued work on the case as such. In some instances, nothing more is involved than a crude attempt to exploit the case for gain; in other instances, the purpose is mischief or malice, geared to demeaning criticism of the Warren Commission and compromising the critics.

I have therefore determined to rule out participation in secondary or questionably-motivated projects and so far as possible to concentrate on study of the evidence. This is said not in any way to detract from your Citizens' Committee--on the contrary, I think your work should go forward and should be supported by the critics, but the support and participation should not take on dimensions that would overshadow their technical work.

It seemed to me that I should explain this in some detail so that it will be understood from the outset that while I wholeheartedly concur in the Committee's purposes and am willing to help if I can help, I am unable to commit myself to any time-consuming responsibilities.

Finally, on Senators or Congressmen who may be interested, you are aware already of Representative Kupferman's Joint Resolution, which he will re-introduce at the next session of Congress; and you probably know that Representatives Ogden Reid, and William Fitz Ryan, and a Congressman from Garden City, New York, whose name escapes me this moment (Wydler?) have made public statements in support of some form of inquiry or reinvestigation.

With warm good wishes for your success, and reiterating my support of your plans and purposes,

Yours very sincerely,

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