10/8/66

Shirley—

Just a quick clarification: My remarks about RFK and Hoffa did not stem from anything Hoffa said or wrote but from an article by Fred Cook that appeared in The Nation sometime in 1962 or early1963 if my memory is correct. If I ever run across it, I am going to send it to you. It is a very shocking and discouraging story. Now I don't regard what Fred Cook writes as automatically authoritative—after all, look at his half-assed treatment of the WC a few months ago in The Nation—but his books on Hiss and on the FBI were good and so far as I know they have not been faulted—nor has his story on the RFK/Hoffa gambit.

Now, Shirley, you know damned well that it is not necessary to like admire respect or agree with Hoffa—or with Lee Oswald—in order to fight like a tiger to be sure that he is not framed and that his rights under the law and the Constitution are meticulously respected. After all, a lot of people don't like me—does that mean that my rights may be violated by the attorney general? Does that mean that he can kidnap coerce and suborn witnesses to give false testimony and convict me, when he cannot find legitimate evidence to prove what he is certain is my guilt? No, whenever the rights of an Oswald or even a Hoffa an Al Capone a General Walker or you pick him, are crushed torn destroyed, your rights and mine are under direct attack. And I think no one who values justice in the abstract or the personal sense should ever compromise on that issue.

One other clarification: the "virtues" I listed in my last letter were not intended to apply to the left or the left or any particular sch of people (probably the biggest proponents of honour are the left-over Southern Colonels, who lived by a beautiful code of behavior—towards the white aristocracy, of course). Darn it—I can't find a copy of my letter to you so I don't know exactly how I phrased it (maybe it was a handwritten letter?) but I know I didn't intend it to describe the left, even if I didn't express myself well. Everyone has told me at one time or another that I am too naive or (if they were terribly tactful) too "idealistic" about the WC and the WC and about my various political ideas in general. Maybe I am but I can't operate on the basis of blind trust in anyone—not Warren, not RFK, not JFK and to tell you the truth, not even in my self. I have to watch myself like a hawk for signs of compromise, cowardliness, and just plain mental laziness. Anyway, if RFK comes out purewhite in the wash, I will be pleased, I am just not counting on it.

You say we don't know for sure we are on the right side. I am not on any side, in terms of membership or loyalty—I don't like Soviet policy today, I haven't liked USA policy since Fulton Oaks, but I do know on a human level the difference between good and foul. You don't have to be a brilliant historian or political analyst to know when something smells putrid—the war in Vietnam, the WR, and the recent actions or non-actions of the K family don't come up smelling like roses—and nothing you can say in a search for justification or an exercise of faith in the K can really change the scent. Maybe one day when it can all be told there will emerge a set of reasons and motives that we can all applaud—I leave open the possibility, even the hope.

One thing does fascinate and impress me: you say that LBJ took the Vice-Presidency only because he was told JFK would not live out the Presidency. I have heard that somewhere, sometime, but can you give me the source? How can we really be certain it was that way? (It is absolutely plausible, I admit.)