

October 28, 1966

OPEN LETTER TO WALTER CRONKITE AND JOHN HART, CBS:

Your news presentation last night on the investigation of the Kennedy assassination was interesting. I was particularly fascinated by your choice of Hugh Aynesworth as the inferred rebuttal-figure to be used against Penn Jones' position regarding conspiracy and the Dallas tragedies. Mr. Aynesworth was described as being "in" on more of the assassination scenes than any other reporter (a dubious distinction), and while this fact is no doubt accurate, surely Aynesworth's physical presence here, there and everywhere on that terrible weekend implies neither knowledge nor wisdom. In fact, Mr. Aynesworth, in conversation, presents himself as one of the most poorly informed individuals (on the subject of the assassination, the WR, the 26 volumes of testimony and the critical works on the WR) of any in the United States

Mr. Aynesworth is also a predictably human human being; in conversation with me he deplored the fact that prizes were being won for assassination coverage, whereas he had yet to be universally acknowledged for having been "there at all the critical scenes."¹ In private conversation,

1. I spoke to Aynesworth two months before the WR was published in September, 1964. At this time, before the facts on the time element were released, there was no general awareness regarding the critical minutes allegedly used by LHO to get from downtown Dallas where he allegedly shot Kennedy to Oak Cliff where he is alleged to have shot Tippit. When the Report was issued, it was learned that if Oswald killed Tippit before 1:15 pm, he could not have shot Kennedy; whereas if he killed Kennedy at 12:51 pm, he could not have killed Tippit prior to 1:15 pm. The Commission therefore concluded that LHO fired the bullets which killed Tippit at approximately 1:16 pm. All other evidence to the contrary (and there was some that was substantial) was cut from the Final Warren Report. Yet Aynesworth told me when he reached the Tippit murder scene, he checked immediately on the time. "I was there (on 10th)," he said, "looking down on the spot at 1:05 pm--not later than 1:10 pm." Needless to say, Aynesworth was not called to appear before the WC, in spite of having been the only reporter in the U.S. "there at all the critical scenes." Or maybe because of it.

Mr. Aynesworth is vehement in his conviction that the Kennedy assassination was a "Communist plot;" nor is he shy about expressing his admiration and respect for the Dallas right-wing. Thus, whatever Mr. Aynesworth may appear to be on the surface, there is no doubt he is a different man underneath, who blows as the wind blows. It was Aynesworth, for example, who arranged to have the Oswald diary story "leaked" to him by a member of the Commission staff² (thus serving himself and the Commission) and it was Aynesworth who "placed" ^{collected} police affidavits in the hands of Mark Lane in the early days of the investigation when such documents should have been positively unattainable.³ Mr. Aynesworth has one endearing trait, however: he knows everybody and everything worth knowing in the field of influence in Dallas; nor is it difficult to believe that whenever Hugh Aynesworth breaks wind, he cries out: "Praise Dealey."⁴ Such facts of

2. At the time the Oswald diary story broke, a member of the Dallas Morning News told me that Aynesworth had received the Oswald diary directly "from a member of the Commission staff who is in Dallas now." It is only a matter of research and reference to locate the name of this staff member who was in Dallas at the time the Aynesworth story broke.

3. Rush to Judgment, Mark Lane, Chapter 8, Page 114

4. E.M. (Ted) Dealey, publisher of the Dallas Morning News, which paper employs Aynesworth and was also responsible for the black-bordered anti-Kennedy ad to be found on November 22, 1963. It was Dealey who once showed the exquisite poor taste to accept an invitation to lunch at the White House (during the Kennedy Administration) and while there to stand up and insult the President of the United States by accusing him of trying to lead the country "on Caroline's tricycle." The News was equally vehement against Vice President Johnson. Mr. Dealey, however, is not without some measure of prognostication: "During the several months BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION, the News moderated its approach to Johnson notably. Some News people and Johnson representatives had been anxious to arrange some kind of meeting at which editorial differences between the paper and the Vice President could be talked out at length. A weekend meeting was arranged at the LBJ ranch...The meeting was frank and open, and it had a marked effect on the editorial policy of the paper." (Dallas Public and Private, ^{Leslie} Chapter 7). The moderation policy mentioned by Leslie had effect, however, only in regard to Johnson. There was NO shift, subtle or otherwise, in the editorial approach of the News to Mr. Kennedy. Even Leslie describes the November 22 ad condemning Mr. Kennedy as "semi-inflammatory." (Dallas Public and Private, Chapter 7)

life are hardly surprising in any major American society, particularly not in one so nouveau riche as Dallas. On the other hand, Walter Cronkite and John Hart would have done better (by making their presentation more credible) had they researched the participants for their assassination story coverage more carefully. One hardly rebuts that most courageous and individualistic Texan of all, Penn Jones, Jr., with a Draculean Jelly Monster.

Sincerely,

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cc: 25