

27 January 1967

Dear Jones,

*Harris*

I don't think that I expressed myself as clearly or as candidly as I should have when you called me at the office early this week. Because I have had a soft spot for you despite irreconcilable differences between us on some fundamental issues, I was inhibited during our conversation by reluctance to add to your obvious unhappiness by personal reproaches about the article in the WJT.

But I was not entirely frank when I said that I did not blame you for the Lewis article or the decision by Felker to print it. I think you did contribute to this disaster, although you may not have intended it to encompass me or some of the others, by your vendetta against Mark Lane and your encouragement or promotion of published attacks on him. We did not, and we do not, see that eye to eye. I was greatly disturbed when you told me some time back that about three articles whose purpose was to discredit Lane were in preparation; and you probably recall how angered I was by your remark that "we" had to "clean house" by debunking and expelling Lane. I know that I made it clear then that despite any reservations I might have about Lane (or any other critic) I would not be a party to any campaign against him. And I think I recall correctly that I said then that I considered certain other "critics" more dangerous than Lane by far; and that I was not subject to any "strategy" or "leadership"—Epstein's, Thompson's, or yours—nor had I authorized anyone to regard me as a member of any "team."

The plain fact is that the "scavengers" article would never have been written but for the campaign against Lane, which you welcomed, encouraged, and/or advocated. He was the main target; and the rest of us were defamed and ridiculed purely as a by-product.

You maintain friendship with Epstein, who is really beneath contempt on several scores and a true gutless wonder; with Felker, who published this piece of scurrility but protected or excluded his friends Epstein and Jones Harris; with Alan Livingston, who published the scurrilous record album, also conferring immunity on Epstein in return perhaps for the hatchet-job on Penn Jones; and with Liebelar, about whose role no equivocation or ambiguity is possible. Indeed, at one time last summer, there appeared to be a conflict-of-interest when you escorted Liebelar to a publishing house where my manuscript was under consideration. As it turned out, his proposed ms. and my own were both rejected—but the fact remains that you were easing his path, and might under other circumstances have tipped the scales against a book challenging the WR in favor of one "defending" it.

How can you be their friend, and also my friend? To my moralistic, puritanical, or square thinking—take your choice—it reduces everything to meaninglessness.

About a year ago when you told me how many spokes you had succeeded in putting in Lane's wheel while you were both in Dallas, I was appalled and repelled by that interference, that playing-of-God, that unethical meddling. I should have terminated our association then, and I blame myself for compromising on that issue of gratuitous and malicious interference. I am paying the price for that compromise now, when further assaults on Lane have sprayed my most valued colleagues and myself with filth and venom. I know you did not intend or foresee such a thing and that you tried to block it. I want to believe your expressions of regard and friendship; but I am troubled by your acknowledged cultivation of other persons for reasons other than respect or compatibility, and from time to time I experience doubt—am I being "cultivated" or "monitored"? And what harm will befall me next at the hands of your friends? Those considerations bring us to a parting of ways, Jones. Indeed, I have been compelled to choose sides—as between Lane and

Liebeler, if choose I must, I greatly prefer Lane; as between Penn Jones and Epstein, of course I choose Penn. Without hesitation. I elect to be with those whose commitment is undeviating; I want nothing to do with the enemy, the finks, or those who fraternize with them.

I am rather sad about this, Jones, where you personally are concerned—we've had some good diggings into the 26 volumes together, by phone, and some laughs. But I hope that you can understand the way I feel and that you may even agree that we should quit, while we are ahead.

Sincerely yours,

Sylvia Meagher