



RANDOM HOUSE, INC.

457 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 22, N.Y.

TELEPHONE PLAZA 1-2600

JOHN J. SIMON, EDITOR

August 31, 1966

Miss Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
Apartment 15-D
New York, New York

Dear Miss Meagher:

I have decided not to make an offer for your manuscript, primarily on commercial grounds. Our feeling is that, despite your inclusion of a great deal of new material, with the publication of Lane, Weisberg, Sauvage and Epstein, our publication of this book which, at the earliest, would have to be sometime next spring, would mean that we would be publishing after the bloom is off the market.

I certainly agree with you that there is a need for a definitive critique of the Report. However, on the level of impeaching the Report, of destroying whatever political and historical validity it pretended to have, this, it seems to me, has been done, or at least done to the extent where it would be difficult to interest readers seriously in yet another book.

I have read almost all the manuscript; the research and analysis are impressive, but I am concerned about two things. First, the tone of the book bothers me. To open a study with the sentence, "The Warren Report is a dishonest and slovenly document", simply and didactically asserted, means, to me at least, that the manuscript can only talk to those who are already persuaded. The Report may indeed be a perverted and fraudulent document, but truly those statements should be conclusions deriving from the argument you make in the book. Tactically and stylistically I think it is important to offer objectivity, or at least its appearance, so that readers will want to read the book rather than being put off by it. In short, the most important part of your audience is those who believe the opposite of what you assert in the introduction, and I think that it would be a great mistake to allow them to dismiss the book out of hand simply because you assert something that they are not prepared to believe. Instead, let your argument convince them.

Second, unfortunately, there is a stridency of tone that convinces one of your passion about the subject, but will make even only moderately hostile readers suspicious of your handling of the data. Look, for example, at the way Lane has been treated.



RANDOM HOUSE, INC.

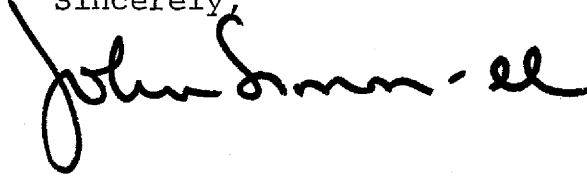
-2-

Lastly, there is occasionally in your manuscript the use of adjectives describing the Report, or sections thereof, which, because they can be associated with particular individuals, either members of the Commission's staff or those who participated in its "investigation," that come close to being libelous. I don't think that you can safely come to any conclusion about anything in this book without well-documented support of your material. You do this very well with the material that is in the Report, with the testimony and the documents, but occasionally you will characterize the behavior of one of the participants in an unsupported and derogatory manner, and here you leave yourself wide open, not only for critical but for legal attack as well.

For example, page 170: unless you can show in fact that FBI Agent Frazier's testimony is an "outright perversion of the truth", and in fact not a mistake, I would urge caution.

As I have said, our reason for not making an offer on the book is primarily commercial. I have gone into a detailed criticism because I think there is much good material here, the makings of a very good serious critique. Thank you for letting me see it.

Sincerely,



JJS:ec1