

Dear Bill - (O'Connell)

11/21/67

To fill you in on Mont Sahl's attack, on behalf of Mh, on AAF:  
Sahl replaced an NBC radio talk jockey for 2 weeks, 7 pm - midnight monologues & phone calls. On Tuesday last week, Sahl said he had just received (from Bobbs-Merrill) a copy of AAF, was going to stay up all night reading it, it was "wild, just wild" etc. - all very positive.

After a 10-minute break for news, during which Sahl obviously talked to Lane or one of his satellites, he returned to the subject.

Now he called attention to Lane's jacket quote, saying Lane had been tricked into it. He had received a ms. which had favorable remarks about Garrison. He had given his quote.

Then the book had come out, with an attack on Garrison.

He was going to write to Bobbs-Merrill to have his name and quote removed from the jacket.

Bob Ockene, my editor, hearing about Sahl's remarks, wired him, asking Sahl to phone before airtime Wednesday to hear Ockene's side of the story. Sahl did not call but did read the wire on the air, saying "When Mark Lane gets here, we will both call."

Ockene next sent a letter to Sahl, by messenger, on Thursday. He pointed out that Lane's remarks referred solely to my critique of the WR (498 pages) while my marginal 1/2 page on Garrison was in the epilogue, and had nothing to do with the WR as such. He pointed out that the revision of the remarks on Garrison reflected a change in my position and was one of many minor changes and additions to the ms. before it went to press - normal last-minute changes, not "cleared" with any jacket-quoters. etc. Above all, Ockene emphasized that he & B-M bore all responsibility in the matter, not me.

Again Sahl merely referred to receiving a letter (on the Thursday broadcast) but not to its contents, sneering and hostile. He said that in attacking Garrison I was in the company of people I had no respect for (guilt by association) and that it was my "wilful mess" that had placed me in this situation. (He also sneered at Thompson's book, saying, in effect, that it was some kind of treachery for anyone except Garrison to speak against the WR - i.e. - Thompson had no right to upstage Garrison. When he got a call from the NYC counterpart of Steve Burton, who got to read his petition, Sahl's

response was, why don't you pass the hat for Garrison: He needs money! The kid didn't know enough to say, what about Truth & Consequences?)

The incident is interesting for what it shows about Lane. He has the strange notion that everything I do or write is first weighed on the scales of what Lane will think of it. Fact is, I never think about Lane one way or the other except when he pulls one of his dirty tricks. He has the further strange notion that my mind, like his, works in terms of tricks and deception. It does not. If it did, I would have made certain Lane paid the revised text on Garrison, in the hope that he would refuse a jacket quote. I had been begging Ockene not to seek Lane's quote — I even put it in writing, thank Heaven, in May, that I did not consent to having Lane on the jacket. This was well-known to the various critics, who knew even more my growing disgust with Garrison and surely informed Lane.

But in any case, he apparently would have withheld his presumably genuine appraisal of my book had he known that I refused to worship his God. Apparently it is not the assassination, not the WR, not the truth, that is important to Mark Sahl — It is Join the Grim Grim Buffoon. In other words, pure self-interest — they want to justify and redeem their investment in Garrison (Especially if he squeezes thru, and more especially if he makes it to the Senate or (as Sahl advocates) the White House). Well, they deserve each other. (It is irrelevant but paradoxical that Garrison, fully aware of my scorn for him, has one of his stiffs seek my comments on certain documentary evidence; while the stiffs in the DA's office debate Lane and want him out of there, having had a distrust of his motives and activities — while arguing that with me, at least they know exactly where they stand.) I am doing an "appearance" tomorrow night at a Village "profile of the assassination" at which Lane may also be present. If so, I am prepared to fire all the above