

9 April 1969

Dear Bill,

My special thanks for sending the Kunkin press cuttings. I am not sure that I agree with your characterization of his reports as "garbage." But, even with the help of Roget's, I have not succeeded in finding the more accurate term which should exist if we are to do justice to Kunkin's literary/reportorial products. The word I want would have to yield an immediate visceral impression of slime, filth, putrefaction, stench, and filth, all on the intellectual and moral level, and at the same time convey the babbling of an idiot who fancies himself a cut above Clarence Darrow and the forensic overlord for all eternity. (I see that I have used the word "filth" twice --but in Kunkin's case, it is fitting.)

I took my courage in both hands and ventured to write to Weisberg about his ms., praising to the sky the brilliance and relentlessness of his dissection of the 1968 panel's report, and doing so quite sincerely, but also expressing dismay at the quality and monotonously febrile tone of the writing and its pervasive lack of clarity. I tried to suggest, without being too explicit, that he was completely defeating his avowed purpose by sacrificing quality to speed which had no point whatever, since the ms. was unpublishable. Instead of placing the facts before the public, the facts were smothered and buried, by his own hand, obviating any need for external interference and suppression. I urged him strongly to extract a limited number of his major points and reframe them as a magazine article, without prejudice to the later publication of the full ms.

The reply was not, as I had feared, an angry attack but, on the contrary, an expression of appreciation especially for my constructive criticism. So far, so good. But then came two or more pages of irrelevancies about his personal regime, manual work, health, sleeping periods, etc., all leading up to the inevitable finale---this is the way he works, must work, and will continue to work. Might as well have saved my breath.

Trent Gough, the NYC counterpart of Steve Burton, phoned me the other night to say that he had had a letter from Mrs. F., the beloved assassination mayven, and that she was arriving in NYC Wednesday (today). Was I likely to receive a phone call from her, and if so would I please ask her to call him? I told dear Trent (dense Trent, incorrigibly so) that I was not likely to hear from the B.A.M. Even so, I must admit that I have been answering phone-calls all day with a certain degree of trepidation.

Thanks for the account of your visit with the Newcombs, and especially for your generous words (as always) about the Commonweal review.

Fondly yours,