

31 May 1969

Dear George,

Thanks for the letter, and happy Birthday. Belated, but not for once an oversight. Though the mention of birthdays does remind me that I overlooked yesterday's birthday of my niece's husband, which should be easy enough to remember since it coincides with a legal holiday. I guess I had Freudian reasons for that blackout (a distaste for having to address a man over 40 as "Sonny"?). Now that I know your age, you might as well know mine--47, or two more decades than you have yet experienced of the idiocy and nastiness of human society.

I have a special warmth toward those few individuals who began as advocates of the WR but were willing and able to reconsider their position--and they are few. I know that somewhere along the line I have encountered one or two, other than yourself, but I cannot think who they are. By the same token, I have a special animus for those who started as "critics" and switched, and I do remember their names--Epstein, for one, and Curtis Crawford, who converted so early in the game that you may not have heard his name before now. Crawford, like Popkin and Thompson, is a philosophy instructor; he is also a Unitarian minister and a prig of rather awesome dimensions.

Your original view of the critics was not very wrong, as we may all sorrowfully admit now. I was the original wide-eyed dope, except about Mark Lane (about whom I was rapidly disillusioned, thanks to a series of personal experiences with him and his inner circle), and entered into close friendships with most of the critics who later went gaga about Garrison and who are still laboring under the addiction. Those who did not succumb to the magic eye, and there were a few, were disappointing or dishonest in other ways--about the evidence in the WR or the Archives, which was misrepresented for reasons of self-interest, or even in such unoriginal ways as swindling money and in quite large amounts out of such gullible critics as those who thought a fellow-campaigner was by definition above suspicion. Those with whom I am still on terms of complete mutual respect are lamentably few. (I recognized all the names you mentioned on page 2 para. 2 of your letter except "Jim Rose." Who is he?)

Don't feel disquieted by the fact that you confided in me the details of the anti-Boxley saga: although you were sworn to secrecy, the whole story has been circulating and I have heard it from at least two other people. The other accounts included a hilarious bit about the pursuit of one Steve Jaffe to retrieve his credentials as a Garrison investigator, but I no longer remember the details. But I had not heard the story of Sprague and the chalk-mark, however, and for this gem, my thanks. Dick Sprague is a very decent guy personally, very courteous and inspired by the highest motives, but I think he has a clump of jello where the gray matter is supposed to reside. I cannot sustain any real rancor against him, because he is just short on brain but not a self-seeking opportunist and double-crosser like certain other preachers of the gospel according to St. Garrison.

By the way, I am still getting reports of Garrison's extremely high praise of me. This was perfectly understandable before and during the Shaw trial, when he was very anxious to "enlist" me or at least to defuse my public scorn of him as much as possible. I considered it gross and transparent flattery, and it only increased my contempt for that shyster. But just the other night I met a guy who had just returned from a week in New Orleans, which he apparently spent sitting at Garrison's feet and

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absorbing the well-known crap. (This guy has been out of the country and was unfamiliar with the long Garrison saga, which is why he went, listened, and was--momentarily--conquered.) I would have thought that Garrison would warn him away from me, since he had indicated that he intended to contact a number of the critics when he returned to New York. Instead, Garrison seemingly praised me to the skies, while disparaging all the other critics except Salandria for having let him down in a variety of ways. I really do not understand the gimmick behind this--he knows that his past forays into flattery have not affected me one iota, so why keep it up now, when the jig is up anyway?

This man who had just returned from New Orleans was simply flabbergasted when I tore into Garrison, after what Garrison had said about me, and then horrified when I recounted to him certain features of the Shaw trial about which Garrison had maintained careful silence---for example, he knew nothing about Charles Speisel, the unforgettable accountant who fingerprinted his daughter to make sure she was not an imposter, or Aloysious Hobbyhorse, denounced as a liar by da judge, Hizzoner Haggerty, even. But my piece-de-resistance, the thing that really opened this guy's eyes about Garrison, was when I told him that he was now prosecuting five SUNO protesters for flag-desecration. Now THAT got my new acquaintance where it really hurt--since he is far-out in his political posture--and did more than anything else to shake him up in re: Garrison. My good deed for that week that was.

Like you say, we sure clobber each other...but do we really have a choice? I hear that the Bertrand Russell committee or group in London that was knee-deep with Mark Lane in 1964-1966 is now suing him to recover some of the \$20,000 they had invested in his film of Rush to Judgment, which did make some money. I feel for them, I must admit, since I was bilked out of a fairly large sum by someone I had trusted without reservation (not, obviously, Lane) and who presented himself convincingly for some years as the holiest of the holy where moral and fiscal integrity was concerned. All that time, while publicly denouncing avarice and money dealings in the USA in general--you know, graft and corruption and profiteering, the whole life-style and the whole system---this arch hypocrite was systematically swindling a large audience of admirers of amounts from \$1.00 to the many thousands. The closer the friend, the bigger the bite---and I was the official "best friend." If I sometimes seem bitter, I have a certain amount of justification. The one first-generation critic for whom I have not a single bad word is, ironically enough, Leo Sauvage. He has always been completely honest and scrupulously ethical, in every way. The irony is that our political views are far apart, very far apart, on Castro, the USSR, and other questions of moment. It is the liberal/left and extreme left faction among the critics that has generated the greatest disgust and disillusion in me, and I would not advise you to count on the arrival of that "happy day" of the collective press conference.

Well, dear friend, fellow-sufferer, and valued correspondent--be of good cheer, things could be still worse, and I imagine they will be, soon. Just around the corner, there's another Hamburger Hill. Surely it is time to turn the whole shebang over to the dolphins or someother really civilized species.

Keep in touch, please.
All the best,