

C O P Y

Mr. Edward Jay Epstein  
295 Harvard Street  
Cambridge, Mass.

14 July 1968

Dear Ed,

When you telephoned me on Friday night, you had not yet received my letter of the 11th but you nevertheless volunteered that you would elaborate on the question of the palmprint on the rifle and similar evidenciary points which I had raised with you, in preparing your book on Garrison. I was pleased to hear you say this, of course. But the next day, thinking about it further and re-reading your New Yorker article, I found myself still disquieted and decided that I should express myself, for the record, with less diffidence and with bluntness, if necessary.

Until I read your New Yorker article on Wednesday, I anticipated that you would have modified the earlier manuscript that I read in February so as to make it clear that you do not accept the Warren Report (WR) or its conclusions and that you advocate a new, competent and impartial investigation. I had written you on 14 February 1968:

"More serious is the omission of the very compelling argument which you yourself have made in conversation—that the lunatic New Orleans investigation of the assassination increases the urgency of setting into motion a responsible, professional investigation...The article as it now stands may encourage the impression that the Warren Report is probably all right and that all criticism of the Commission is Garrison-like and to be dismissed as more of the same crack-pottery."

I did not expect you to adjust your article merely in order to satisfy my point of view but I did expect you to reflect your own viewpoint, as expressed in letters and conversation. Nothing in the published article expresses your own argument that the "Garrison investigation" in itself is a cogent and compelling argument for a new examination of the events of Dallas. Nothing in the published article expresses your conclusion that it is "extremely unlikely, even inconceivable, that a single assassin was responsible" (your letter of 1 December 1967). Nothing in the published article indicates that critics of the Warren Report like Leo Sauvage and myself have been repudiating Garrison vigorously, and on the record, for more than a year, as we have been repudiating the WR from the outset and continue to do without the slightest backsliding. On the contrary, your article implicitly and explicitly defends the WR; disparages that part of the general public which rejects the WR as being either "chronic doubters" or gulled by the preposterous Garrison; snidely dismisses all critics as "demonologists;" and defaults on the intellectual and moral obligation to apply to the WR the same rigorous and uncompromising criteria as you did apply to Garrison. No wonder even the New Yorker thought that your article was too soft on the WR!

Let me make it very clear that I am not asking you to write anything that violates your own convictions. But what are your convictions? I am no longer sure if they are to be found in Inquest and in your letters and conversation, or in the long obeisance to the WR which is the leitmotif of your Garrison article. The cooperation or assistance I have extended to you, as to others, has always been

predicated on the assumption of genuine commitment to the determination of the truth, without regard to giving offense to important persons or any other consideration. I would not knowingly cooperate with anyone who consciously or unconsciously seeks to rehabilitate the contemptible WR any more than I would cooperate knowingly with any other shabby exercise in fraud, like Garrison's. That must be evident from my breaking off all contacts with former colleagues and valued friends like Salandria, Marcus, Field, Penn Jones, etc., notwithstanding the painful sadness and the isolation it cost. I am ready to do the same thing at any time that it becomes obvious that my efforts, extended in good faith, are serving a perverse and inimical purpose.

It should hardly be necessary to say this, but let me emphasize again that the fact that the Garrison "investigation" has no shred of validity in no way confers the slightest legitimacy or respectability on the WR. When the same single criterion is applied, both "investigations" are seen to be dishonest, deformed, and insupportable. You share my dismay at the spectacle of respected critics of the WR investing belief and trust in Garrison because he too dismisses the WR, and despite the rising mountain of his misstatements, distortions, and outright fictions. A critic who rightly denounces Garrison, but becomes—or appears to become—an apologist for the WR is nothing more than the mirror image of the pro-Garrison critics. If the rule is to be that the WR is excoriated for its abuse of fact, logic, and justice, but that Garrison's ploys and inventions are condoned, OR that Garrison is censured for misuse of power and charlatanism, but the WR is condoned and deodorized, then it will be a complete triumph for opportunism, cynicism, and corruption.

I have been grateful that Leo Sauvage, first and foremost, consigned Garrison to the same ugly niche in history as the WR and the Dreyfus case; and I have been grateful and relieved that the entrepreneur Mark Lane opted for Garrison's camp, not Sauvage's and mine. And I would now like to know, Ed, just where YOU stand, because your New Yorker article leaves me in the most serious doubt and I disassociate myself completely from its posture toward the WR and from its insinuations as to the demonological character of all criticism and all conspiracy hypotheses. I hope that it has occurred to you that Hannah Arendt's pronouncement, that the liar is usually more persuasive than the truth-teller, applies no less to the WR with its prestigious front-men than it applies to Garrison.

If we are in basic disagreement on the WR, despite various unequivocal statements you have made over the years in personal conversations or letters and at times in public, I hope that you will say so unambiguously. If we are not in basic disagreement, then I am at a loss to understand how your New Yorker article could have acquired so strong a stamp of the apologist for the WR. If I can be helpful to you in expanding the article to book length, I will gladly do so—but only if I am absolutely certain that I will not be contributing so much as a semi-colon to any subtle or overt effort to encourage charity toward or credence in the WR.

Yours sincerely,

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cc: Leo Sauvage,  
M.S. Arnoni, et al