

September 15, 1977

TO: Honorable Louis Stokes
Honorable Richardson Preyer
Honorable Walter E. Fauntroy
Honorable Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
Honorable Harold E. Ford
Honorable Floyd J. Fithian
Honorable Robert W. Edgar
Honorable Samuel L. Devine
Honorable Stewart B. McKinney
Honorable Charles Thone
Honorable Harold Sawyer

I respectfully request the following be introduced into the record of today's Executive Session proceedings.

Shortly after creation of the Select Committee on Assassinations a meeting was held at which Congresswoman Yvonne B. Burke expressed concern over the decision to have the F.B.I. and C.I.A. conduct the background investigations for security clearances. I shared that concern and due to my unique situation of being the only staffer to have worked with the so-called "critical community", this concern was magnified. I had seen declassified C.I.A. documentation of what that agency termed their "propaganda campaign" to discredit those who publicly questioned the lone assassin theory. Several targets of that campaign were individuals with whom I had worked closely as a researcher in the lobbying effort to have this Committee created. My informational contacts with scholars and investigators in the unofficial investigation played a large part in the securing of a research position with this Committee staff.

A number of staffers made known their concerns. The very executive agencies who were suspect in public opinion because of ties to principal figures in the President's assassination and their continued withholding of evidence were now authorized to investigate in detail and report on our personal and professional lives. The Chief Counsel at that time spoke to staff on this and gave assurances that

in the event any derogatory information was developed which challenged our continued employment, we would be provided an opportunity to defend ourselves.

Amitai Etzioni, in last Sunday's Washington Post, wrote of the questionable quality of the F.B.I.'s information gathering as reflected in his own file, secured under the Freedom of Information Act. Recently, fellow staffers told me of telephone inquiries they received from the F.B.I. In order to make a determination as to their character and loyalty, the agent asked what the sleeping arrangements are between them and their girlfriends. Beyond the issue of granting clearance, what is the effect on those whose responsibility it is to review these files? Are we to expect complete impartiality in a subsequent working relationship? Confidential or not, information gathered by these agencies will remain on file for years to come.

The Warren Commission perceived conflicts of interest with agencies who would not likely be complimented in their report. Security clearance recommendations made to the Commission are available at the National Archives. Those recommendations identify various other investigative personnel used in background checks; G.A.O., I.R.S., Treasury, etc.

It was these concerns in mind that I recoiled with shock and confusion over Chief Counsel Blakey informing me that I am to be terminated. It was not, he said, for security reasons. The agencies had agreed to clear me even though they had "strong reservations about my ties to the critics". It was not, he said, because of my prior contacts with the critics; although he himself never would have hired me with such a background and regarded the original hiring a bad mistake. The only reason given for my dismissal is the quality of my work. This determination he said was based on the written evaluation of my immediate supervisor and the verbal evaluation of the Chief Researcher. As recently as yesterday, the Chief Counsel's assistant reiterated this as the grounds for dismissal.

In the nine months if my work on this staff, no one has ever offered me criticism; constructive or otherwise. There has been nothing but compliments. The Chief Researcher and my immediate supervisor tell me their evaluations could not be the basis. This is what they tell other staffers who are perplexed over the stated grounds for dismissal. Our top investigators spoke up for me regarding work product and helpfulness.

Hopefully, these comments will not be misconstrued. I believe strongly in Professor Blakey's integrity. Staff is grateful to the Committee for selecting a leader who has brought the demonstrable basis for believing a good job will be done. The man has already earned respect from an inherited staff and executive agencies whose cooperation is sorely needed.

I want very much to continue my contribution to this investigation. Through his assistance, Chief Counsel Blakey has belatedly offered me the opportunity to resign. Fellow staffers with experience on Capitol Hill advise that not doing so will have disastrous effects on future employment and security clearances. Others suggest joining in another staffer's litigation. The latter course reflects ignorance of Congressional immunity from fair employment laws and a disregard for the public image of a Committee which cannot defend itself in the press for the good reason that press relations hamper the investigation.

The first option - resignation - is one I cannot make under these circumstances. In fairness, I seek to be given an opportunity to defend myself and be informed of just what specifically is wrong with my work product. Our former security officer, Mr. Frank Kelly, conducted an investigation of my trustworthiness and performance. A memorandum detailing the results of that investigation is on file. I am told it goes into conflicts that existed months ago between myself and my immediate supervisor. It may well be one more of a series of justifications for basing dismissal considerations on grounds broader than the evaluation of a woman alleged by co-workers to have supervisory relating problems. I do have firm professional respect for my immediate supervisor and urge that her evaluation become a part of the record - in addition to Mr. Kelly's memorandum and some sort of evaluation from other staffers. I do not know what those reports will contain, but trust that my written work product will speak for itself.

In the interim, I request that termination be postponed pending a fair and thorough examination separate from considerations of the effect of someone else's litigation. My job, reputation, and future employment are at stake.

In the event the Committee does see fit to grant me these considerations and finds that dismissal is indicated on the basis of unacceptable work, I pledge to resign immediately and go quietly. If termination is indicated on the basis of a controversial background that hinders relations with the investigative agencies and causes ongoing security concerns, I will resign immediately, provided it is not under threat of dismissal. In the latter case, I would appreciate assistance in obtaining new employment and not being subjected to unwarranted financial loss.

Sincerely,

Kevin Walsh

KEVIN WALSH