

August 17, 1967

Editor, The New Republic
19th and N Streets, NW
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The virtuosic displays of ignorance of basic and readily accessible fact by your two grown men, Alexander Bickel and Walter Lister (NR 8/19/67), each of whom thinks he has bought and owns the only true religion by the loudness of his prayer that the Emperor indeed wears clothes, is made possible by their stupefying self-satisfaction and blinding bias, as they were made acceptable to their opposing factions of the same Eastern intellectual clan by the abdications of both factions and expressible by the captive medium each used.

Neither really knows what he is talking about when he speaks of the Kennedy assassination or its "investigation"; neither wants to. Each wills his own ardent desire into pseudo-reality and demands its acceptance as fact.

Each is a coward, for neither will face those who have a pretty good idea of what the fact really is. I know. I tried Bickel after the eminent Chancellor Kent professor of law and legal history at Yale besmirched his own name in history as no enemy could do it for him in Commentary for October 1966, and CBS and the staff of its video-whitewash when it was aired. Each shares abject silence. Each, of course, can strike back because his means are accessible to him alone. When either does it to the face of one he calls "irresponsible" and the spreader of "vast misinformation" (on which each has his own kind of patent), he will show signs of manliness and intellectual integrity.

They share with that growing army of intellectual finks a remarkable reluctance to debate those they defame, in any medium and on any aspect of their own selection, their work or that they assail.

Lister's shameful violation of the dictionary in saying he and CBS made "an exhaustive, impartial study of seven months" makes it impossible to find language that can insult him or them. His own record is imperishable in the second installment of what all CBS's millions will never be able to buy back. Here he found black is white, fiction truth. His own integrity is delineated in the presentation of a fake that is less than a mock-up, where he, CBS and the "scientist" Olivier will pierce Governor Connally's smashed fifth rib out of even a Masochite existence and deny James G. Fagan the blood he shed because of that "missed" and forgotten bullet.

If you think this unfair, no wrong, or they claim either, gather the whole CBS whitewashing crew together, throw Bickel in, invite Charles Roberts, Merriman Smith, Bernard Gavzer and Sid Moody along,

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ask Pierre Salinger to "moderate" (as I have) and see if, individually or collectively, they will debate their own writings, on which they, certainly, are the preeminent authorities, with a single "irresponsible critic". Each has already declined me, so I know.

They all debase writers, defame mankind and sicken an already sick society.

With mixed saintliness and stupidity, they make impossible the defense of what each pretends to defend. There is no defense but truth.

Harold Weisberg

P.S. I omit Manchester for they are already overburdened. Him they could not hope to survive.