

Harold Weisberg  
Hyattstown, Md. 20734  
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Mr. Herb Michelson  
Public Affairs Director  
NAACP, Akron, Ohio

Dear Mr. Michelson,

Your letter of January 11 warrants an immediate if too-hasty answer. Generally speaking, I will meet and debate any time with any of the former staff members of the Warren Commission. Specifically, Mr. Griffin's proposal is too loaded against success. I will at a later date, if you so desire, analyze it at length for you, possibly when you get closer to doing something.

It is so loaded, I wonder if it began with you and in his way of saying no while seeming to say yes. This is not intended frivolously, for Mr. Griffin has had a number of opportunities to confront me. I expect to confront a number of his colleagues in a New York TV studio last month. They had asked for the program but seemingly had a change of heart after they learned I'd be facing them. Now is this an isolated case. His, of course, is their right, but it does not entitle them to pretend that they seek confrontations other avoid, that they have not and do not avoid confrontations, or to stipulate conditions that work hardships on the other side or assert any kind of rights or prerogatives that their opposition does not have.

Your description of what you have in mind is not exaggerated. Griffin's format can prevent it, if not its success.

For one thing, it projects such great length that no station would or could afford to carry it. Second of all it, on the face of it, is unfair. For example, he projects that each staff member will specialize in but a single aspect of the Commission's work whereas each of us who says they did less than we were entitled to expect of them will have to cover the entire field or, having in our own work had to cover the entire field, suddenly become instant experts, whatever the aspect. It also limits us to the decisions and organization of the Commission's Report, which is not warranted and not designated to elicit unstinted truth and reality.

If this projects either a lengthy preparation of questions or answers in advance, most of us "critics" cannot do it. Unlike the former staff members, who have comfortable positions (and were paid for their work) I, for example, have no income and despite the standards retailed by some you will be inviting to represent the other side, have not only not made a cent but I'm still far from recovering my costs. Others have regular jobs and obligations they must meet.

The format anticipates a too-heavy participation by lawyers and law-school personnel who, whether or not "respected" generally have a shabby record to defend on this subject. This is conspicuously true of the bar association of which, presumably, those on the other side are at least members. It is a fiction to expect the "administrator", whatever he agrees to, "to diligently familiarize himself with all the issues..." Section 7 arrogates rights to "the staff of the Warren Commission" (does it still exist?) that are presumptuous and to which I will not agree.

While I cannot and do not blame Mr. Griffin for not taking upon his shoulders the responsibilities of others, for he should not, I do want to point out to you that his concluding paragraph gives him an out. He does not have to appear if unnamed others do not. They have until now steadfastly refused to make such appearances, once in a single month four times against me, another about six times in all.

Another consequence of this paragraph is to limit what parts of the Warren Report can be examined. Need it be pointed out what this means?

What Mr. Griffin proposes is what he hopes will not be agreed to and what would, if agreed to, be loaded in his favor and so dull and dead as to justify little hope for attracting TV station interest. What is needed is a simple, direct approach to people so that they can understand and not be bored, for what this important <sup>SUBJECT</sup> needs is public understanding something every official and unofficial set up to this time has been calculated to avoid or frustrate. Having done this in their official capacities, I see no advantage in permitting these men to perpetuate it, which is what Griffin's proposal amounts to.

To summarize, while I am all for your objectives, I am not in accord with this attempt to frustrate or divert them, nor am I for an single additional obfuscation or evasion of any kind on this subject. I, personally, have accepted every single confrontation that has been offered, against members of the staff of the former Commission ( who in not a single case appeared) or their champions.

To answer your specific questions, I am willing to appear, and as of now the time of the year is immaterial. I think there should be remuneration, what I cannot now say or estimate. As to the format, all I can now say is that it should be simple, aiming for utmost comprehensibility by the general public and designed, as this one is not, for impartiality and unrestricted presentation of truth and unalloyed fact.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Haisberg