

6/5/67

Mr. Jack McKinney, Night Talk
WZLW, Philadelphia.

Dear Jack,

This is in further response to Linda's call last night. I will appear opposite Larry Schiller, any time beginning the 26th of this month that is convenient for both of you. I'd prefer that it be a little later, because my work schedule is very heavy. My next scheduled appearance in Philadelphia is September, and I would not ask you to wait that long.

Having said this, and as you know, I usually mean what I say, I regret very much that what I understand is your own integrity impels you to give him an airing. Larry is different than the other "critics of the critics" in that he is an out and out and entirely unscrupulous opportunist who becomes a professional liars-pittie to be a thorough scavenger. He engaged in a total misrepresentation and deception for purely commercial reasons. He is the living authentication of the lawyers's maxim, "Sicil Dicitur Sciam "on Habet".

You have always been very fair and if for no other reason I would accept, I know this is what you intend as a continuation of your presentation of both sides to your audience. I care so little about what this fink has said of me that I have not gotten a copy of his book or his record. He promised me a half-dozen of the first records (I asked for none) and went further and offered another half-dozen to an actor friend in L.A. who would transcribe him onto tape so I could hear it. He has done neither. I have heard one side of the record. It is not that I express giving anyone all the opportunity to be heard on all sides of this vital question, for as you know, I'll debate anyone anytime on it, and I will not use this willingness to their detriment and will not and have not done what I consider to be wrong to promote my book or my side. It is simply that Larry's work is not on the subject and airing it will inevitably damage innocent and very decent people.

So, I'll be there, whenever you set it. I would like to suggest a format but I'll agree to any you want or prefer. I suggest that he get the same time I am, that he be allowed as much time for criticism of my work as I have for his. If you have the larger part of your audience the first half of the hour (and if you do this, could you not devote all four hours to it as we can settle it once and for all and give Larry the opportunity he has until now shunned?), then let us devote the first half at least to his work. If that goes to your satisfaction, I am willing to let his part go as long as you want, even the entire show. And I promise you I will not be with him as Curtis Mitchell was with me. No fillibusters.

Radio is admirably suited to the spoken word. His work is essentially his record. His "book" is possible only because of the deception in which he engaged to be able to do his record. He told some of us about his book or anything he intended aside from a record, and he entirely misrepresented that. He phoned me, trading on Penn Jones's name, and told me this was to be a work of scholarship, aimed at the colleges or for them. The one side of that record I heard would give me a pretty big hunk of the show if we could play "stop the music" with it. I would like to be able to play it and stop it at every lie and distortion and show, as I will, entirely from the evidence, that it is a lie or a distortion. There is a young man in your audience who has often written me and who I have never met who I think would be willing to find those things about which there might be dispute in the 26 volumes.

By using the record, which is the beginning of his finkery, even though I was present at some of his interviews, I think it will be more than possible to show exactly how his dishonest design and intent is expressed. I think it also will be exciting. I am willing, at any time or place, to stand on my work. I presume he is, too. Also, I would hate to have to take the time to read all that crapain his book for I have no time for what I have undertaken. Except for the last show I did with you, I have done not a single show on WHITENASH II. I have had to let it sell itself. I have not taken the time to approach a single bookstore with it. I am happy that it is selling, sorry that I felt a continuation of my work without interruption was more important. My third book was declined by the publisher who contracted it and I am almost finished the fourth. These are not, really, new books, but are additional parts of the same work.

In fairness to him, you and your audience, I will get his book and read his chapter on me in advance of the show. In fairness to you, I want you to know that he and Capital records broke their contract with me and I presume with all of us, that as soon as I saw this I wrote Livingston demanding that because of this he return to me every copy in every form of the parts of the interview with me that they taped and he did not answer and did not return it. I called upon him to make no further use of it and to allow no further use of it, and thereafter the vilification in the World Journal Tribune and the book. Before appearance of the book I again wrote Livingston, told him he was part of a libel, and again called upon him to honor his obligation. In response to this I got a note from Larry in which he almost apologized for not being killed by monoxide, protesting his innocence and saying he would respond further. That has been months and he has been silent. Larry's innocence, he assured me, dealt with his having taken 35% off the top when, because the blood dripping from his generous heart, drove him to help poor Jack Ruby once Jack was arrested. Only Marvin was milked as thoroughly. I'll send you a copy of this in advance if you want it. You will find it in Earl Ruby's testimony that Vince can give you over the phone.

The night of January 8, after a very long and tedious day, after I had flown to Chicago to debate Jenner on WHM-TV and he suddenly discovered an office union party prevented his debating me, I had agreed to do a show with Steve Allison. This began at 11:30. He confronted me, cold, with that one side of Larry's revolving whitewash. I began by challenging him as I ask you, to let me stop that record at every lie and distortion. There was no time then. He said Larry was coming to town and offered to do a part of his show for the next week in just this format, if Larry would care. I was then very angry at what Larry had done to decent people. I think he said nothing about me but took out of context what I had said about Holland. Steve did not accept. Larry did not accept, although he was with Steve and on other shows and made personal appearances. If he mentioned my name no one told me. I would like very much to do this, and I'll do it cold, for I cannot play the record. I think it would be fair to him and might interest you/audience. WADC

Perhaps you or Linda or Henry have read his book. If there is any part of it you would like me to read before the show, please let me know and I will. I'll be in airports this weekend and probably can get it there. If not, I'll be in Washington next week or the following one and will get it then. I'll bring the correspondence. I have some of their puffery that, courtesy of some of your colleagues, I can also bring. Herewith is a copy of the letter of contract. I intend no suit, but I think in fairness to you and the station you should know this. They never made the arrangements with the Kennedy Library and did not and cannot make the contracted 5% royalty gift in my name.

Do not misunderstand me, Jack. I am not unwilling, I am just unhappy that such vermin do not stay under rocks and that answering him may hurt decent, honorable people like Penn, Shirley Martin, Sylvia Meagher and Maggie Fields.

Because Penn is a man I shall write him and ask his responses by letter or on tape, to two of the vilifications of him, the bit about the bourbon (which he went out and got for Larry and his accompanying dog) and the pictures of Fabin and Satron (put up by his young sons). I think this will serve to inform people quite adequately about the scholarlyness of the Schiller approach.

As you know, I tend to go on autopilot on this when I find the Presidency farther dragged into the mud by those who have already hired it. I promise to try and restrain myself.

Larry spends a lot of time commuting between the coasts. He should be able to give you a date after June 25, when I return from an existing commitment, and as of now, I can accept almost any one. Because I am so deep in work, with a new private printing (I seem to have no alternative) in the works and two more simmering, I'd appreciate as much notice as possible. However, if his plans undergo sudden change, all I really have to have is the time to get there. I hope you will give it the whole show and give Larry an exhaustive airing, but if you do not, please give it the earlier part because I'm still averaging only five hours a night sleep and I am sleepless for some time after these shows.

Reluctantly, I'm looking forward to it. If he declines or defers, please let me know. On March 3 he acknowledged receipt of letters to Livingston dated January 7 and February 19 in which he said "I have taken note of your statements and comments in both letters and will act upon them in due course". Whatever he intended, he did not mean by June 6!

inda indicated you might like to read the speech I'm making to the Ohio W AP News Directors association this weekend. Here is a copy.

Looking forward to seeing all of you again.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg