

8/24/67

Dear Jonn,

It seems to me to be a pretty safe assumption that the Avon enterprize will continue to be a concern to those in the Haast organization anxious to make it profitable. Your worthwhile effort was a waste of your time and that of your friends. I saw no one; no one wanted to see me. And I have the assurance of the man who returned my call to Deems, Peter Mayer, that he and Avon will not do anything they have never done before. I do not, however, presume all are bachelors.

I was rolling all the time I was in New York. I was in John's office the first day long enough to get the message to go to a radio studio (where I had the most fun). When I got to that studio and the show's star and producer had not arrived, I was permitted a single call (policy). I made it to Deems, who was in conference. The first free time I had thereafter was 7 p.m., too late to call Deems. I left my name and the purpose of the call the first time I did call.

The morning of the second day I was tied up with Dick Gallen and John from before most of those people are in their offices until the moment I phoned again, which is the moment we got to John's office. He was in conference again, then he had to rush to lunch. John and I went to lunch, returned, got the answering-^{message} service to phone Mr. Peter Mayer, and I did. He at first said he didn't know why, then said he had the file of correspondence when I explained what I thought was the "why" (rather, started to and was interrupted with this explanation before I began, really), and then he volunteered the explanation that if he were asked for his opinion, which, because he is the boss, presumably he would be, he would say he wanted none of my books. I "whyed" and he said because Dell had done two and not more. If Dell didn't want to, he didn't. At my prompting he conceived it possible I might want no further relationship with Dell but that was immaterial.

So, we chated in a friendly fashion for a while. It turns out that Avon will not and cannot do an original work. The closest (soap my mouth) is Popkin's, in which the NYReview was co-publisher and Avon regarded that as reprinting because the book is an enlargement of his piece in the NLR. That book sold what Mayer called very well (news to me, especially for its period, when paperbacks should have done spectacularly). IT SEEMS AS THOUGH Popkin is talking to them about a New Orleans book. Now it happens that late the night before I heard that Popkin has been in New Orleans and hanging around Garrison's office.

At this point I pleasantly but rather pointedly told the important Mr. Mayer what he said could not have happened without his knowledge, and he being the boss, would have had that knowledge, that prior to the appearance of the Popkin transparency I had received a message in which Avon sought to get me to file a suit, perhaps an injunction, in advance of publication. He didn't do this, therefore such a letter had not been written. Letter, I asked, did I say letter? Hadn't I?

No, not letter:message. Oh. I told him I'd never thought of it, never intended to, and so told the message bearer. (phone, taped).

No other department would have done such a thing. Only if any other Avon dept had, the editorial boss, also the boss boss, would have known and doesn't.

Briefly I expressed my ~~xxx~~ happiness and offered my assurances that I will not be pleased at any more feedbacks. So little pleased that I just might do something. As you know, this is now my intention. These people through whom you tried are either friends of yours or friends of friends of yours and, if they consider doing a Popkin book on New Orleans, where he apparently has done no original work, they might better understand that carbon copies sometimes smear.

It was an uninspiring conversation. I can understand, will not require any assurances, that Avon is not as prosperous a property as it might be. I asked, before saying goodby, if they might be interested in distributing the New Orleans book. No. Any special reason? Yes; they never have distributed the book of another (he should have added under the name of another!), therefore they wouldn't. Apparently what is good for S&S is not for Avon.

It was not sharp, biting, unpleasant in any way. Except, to me, by content.

But I wonder what Deems wrote Cooke, why he in any way encouraged him? Do not these top executives have better things to do with their time? I did, and couldn't. I finally got out of the cab on the way back and walked the rest of the way to the railroad station, thus making better time and the train. Sort of typical.

Had a little fun, though. Did 2½ hours on the Barry Forman show with the man who so helped me more than a year ago, when I did my first. He is the head of the (misnamed) NY State Conservative Party (~~misnamed~~. They're just backward). I had on the first occasion so close to murdered him, when he was with his pal Victor Lasky and their radical-right pal Long John Nebel, and all three pooped out on me (when they could—and did—gang up) after 3½ hours of a five hour show, I never expected to see him again. Brave - or foolish - there he was - alone. This, of course, put my boy scout training to the maximum test. I only nibbled, lightly. ~~But~~ ^{It} was enjoyable. But it was too easy; like on a training-season swing of the ball clubs.

I had told Harv how to get me if he had a free moment. Glad he didn't try for I didn't.

From what I heard of the Garrison foreword, it is appropriate. Didn't see.

The book should be out in two weeks. Know any lady^s who serve good tea and want to be talked to by men who do not wear beards or silk? I want to go on a trip after the wholesalers have a chance to have the book in stock. Chi, N.O., S.L.C, S.F., L.A. I could make music in L.A. Maybe sing some Liebelier. Doesn't really have to be ladys. No word from Bowen.

I go to Boston Wednesday to do a talk show for a guy for whom I did two phoned guest stints. This coming week is his vacation. I think it'll be fun. I also think they regard it as an audition, that they want me to do a regular one. I doubt I will want or be able to, unless they wait until I finish my writing.

I haven't had a chance to go over your long letter since the hasty reading when I got and answered it. I have been thinking about it, though, and I think these are parts of it that we should talk further about. I gave John a copy. He'll read it. You and he had spoken before he and I lunched the second day. I'm glad. The first question he asked me was, is there a "before accountability" clause? From what I've heard of movie bookkeeping - and seen of that in publishing - I think this is desirable.

Gota copy of the Magnet, the paper of the Berkeley radiation lab. They interviewed Dr. Alvarez, who dates his work (after Thanksgiving 1966). I think there is little doubt this is more than a CBS booboo. CBS read it from me and in my work much earlier. This transcript of the show has them claiming it as their new and original discovery through their discovery of him. The Magnet is pleasantly ridiculous, as we all can be when we talk about things we neither know nor understand, and attributes this new glory to pure science. Call me Galileo, shum!

Too tired to think of what I've been forgetting. Looking forward to your call. I'll be gone part of Sunday p.m. only, from what I now know.

Sincerely,