

7/2/70

Dr. James Shields, Archivist
The National Archives
Washington, D.C. 20408

Dear Dr. Shields,

Mr. Angel's letter of the 30th is welcome not alone because it is the first time in so, those many months, that there has been any response in anything like a month's time. I am grateful for the worthwhile enclosures with it. They do contribute to knowledge. That this coincides with my having filed the form makes me wonder if I have been too patient in filing such forms.

Unfortunately, the letter is not without blemish, not without self-serving statements also suggesting awareness of the filing of this form for the Ferris documents, not strictly in accord with the facts or the record, and a reminder of long-unanswered and, I think, quite proper inquiries that may have escaped the recall of the employee who originally drafted this letter.

Taking the least first, I quote this sentence, "We have previously informed you of the material in the name files (sic) for Ferris that is withheld from research". You have denied ever giving me a list of such documents, have refused to give me one in the present, and are completely without response to the letter I wrote after accepting your suggestion to examine this file. I then wrote you the file was gutted, that there was virtually nothing in it. There certainly are no tags slips you do require to show the withholding of documents. But possibly it is only that a mere seven months has elapsed since my request that you have not responded to it. My letter was dated 11/24/69. Would you please tell me where you "informed" me of the material the identification of which I have for so long and so fruitlessly sought? Aside from your assurance to me that you have no manpower shortage, there is interest in this sentence, "We are unable to devote the manpower needed to examine the thousands of pages of material in the Commission's files in order to prepare a complete list of material relating to Ferris". On the one hand, you claim certain things must be withheld to preserve them, and on the other you permit files to be gutted, make no effort to restore them, and do not bother to respond to inquiries about this. Now, if you have been true to trust, if your had not permitted the Ferris file to be gutted, had not removed documents from it without the requisite form replacing them, this problem would not exist, for the Ferris name file (you showed me but one of Commission origin) would have 100% of this.

Moreover, you have a record of everyone who has ever had access to this file. As you once informed me, it is a criminal offense to remove anything from such a file. If the inconceivable happened, that someone other than a Federal employee or agent, burglarized this file, have you taken any steps since I informed you of it to bring him to justice? Have you, for example, informed the FBI about it? Or, if these pages were always withheld, how could anyone other than a Federal employee have been in a position to remove them.

Despite the obvious interpretation of your silence following my letter

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seven months and eight days ago, I would be interested in any explanation, no matter how long delayed, for I have this continuing interest in Ferris, as I also do in suppression and the sanctity of our institutions and the integrity of the public's property, which is what every paper in your custody is.

One of the valuable pages you sent me bears a file identification, to REF #, I would appreciate knowing the origin of all the others. I realize these may all come from that file, but the only page marked is not, chronologically, the first.

I note an inconsistency in the deletions, by which I mean that which was deleted from the long memo, not the transcripts. In some cases, where the word "deleted" is written in, the description is marked, apparently by the over-laying of a piece of paper in marking. In others, as with the O'Sullivan case that is of interest to me, it is not, yet in the printed transcript this was, indeed, been excised. Would you please tell me whether you did this deleting and, if you did, the basis for selection and the legal justification? Also, if accurate in some cases, where the notes on this memo indicate there was deletion, the printed transcript does not so indicate. Yet, if you did this editing, how did you know what to remove?

Mr. Kelley's letter of May 11 does cite two Secret Service Control numbers for Ferris documents, but the Commission identification is missing. My request for this has not been responded to. It may well be that I not only have but have written about these documents, but because the Commission used its own numbers rather than the Secret Service's identifications, I cannot be certain, nor can I be certain that the copies I may have may be complete. Supplying the SD numbers could be helpful and all I need.

However, this serves to remind me that you have not responded to my request for copies of all covering letters with which you were sent material in response to my requests of others, material I was led to believe had been sent you for me. I would still like these, and as soon as possible, please.

There remain other letters that are without response. It is in no way my responsibility to see to it that you take care of your mail before it gets lost or mislaid, and it is an apparent futility to accept your invitation to refresh your recollection, for I have done so, at great cost in time and effort, to no purpose. However, I think in fairness to you I should remind you of the seriousness of my purposes, the fact that you do have responsibilities, including to me, and to see to it that there is proper and expeditious response to proper inquiries, for this is your function, for which I bear my part of the cost. I therefore do expect that these inquiries will be properly and completely responded to, as they should have been so long ago.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg