

13 July 1971

Dear Harold:

On July 10 we sent you a large envelope containing NO clippings in hand as of that date, and now here's another batch.

We find no disagreement with your feeling that something much bigger must be involved. We were conscious of the unusual number of visits by Agnew, but never have seen the slightest hint of what they were about.

One angle does look interesting: the unannounced ~~xxxx~~ retirement of the IRS chief in NO and the arrival of another one who refuses to comment on the Garrison case. Perhaps the old one wouldn't go along? We'll watch for anything further.

In Milton Brener's "The Garrison Case," (Potter, 1969) he says on page 6:

"Garrison picked Frank Klein as his first assistant; his top investigator was Pershing Gervais, a controversial figure, previously dismissed from the Police Department for misconduct, and a former witness against fellow policemen during a graft-system scandal of major proportions. The appointment was to cause Garrison embarrassment and complications throughout most of his first four years. But the two men were fast friends and Garrison has always repaid loyalty with intense loyalty of his own."

On page 36, Brener refers to Gervais as "Garrison's ~~Swiss~~ Achilles Heel," and on pages 38-9 describes Gervais' resignation during Garrison's campaign for reelection against O'Hara.

I don't cite Brener as an authority on anything, but this is the only reference I find immediately to the effect that Gervais was dismissed from the police department for misconduct.

Correction: IN Plot or Politics, James and Wardlaw say on page 21: "Gervais had been discharged from the police force some years back and Police Superintendent Joseph I. Giarusso made it clear he didn't like the idea of his men working under a man who had been fired from the force." Again, I don't accept this as authoritative, but the story at least has currency in certain circles, whether true or not. If we spot anything further we'll send it along, although it may be academic now.

Like you, we are unable to explain the sudden swooping down by the feds on a situation just at this time on a situation which is anything but new. Like you, we feel they must have had enough on Gervais to put him away for life, but why use him now? Some time back you made an obscure reference to something cooking in New Orleans. Could it be they wanted to use Gervais before he was used in some way by the DA? Could he have been so used by the DA without all sort of suicidal fireworks? I do suggest that a big factor in this situation parallels the southern dislike for federal interference. The feds seem equally to resent resistance by provincials, and this seems even more apparent in this administration.

More elsewhere,

  
jdw



7/16/71

Dear Js,

Too many things press upon me, too many with deadlines go undone, so I reply to your valuable 7/13 without having read clipings enclosed.

I do have the official copies of the affidavits. But if it is not too much trouble and too much cost, there is a value in having the copies you are sending. I can mark them up as I read them. The actual clippings are sent on too sporadically and are incomplete. The stories also are valuable, so despite what I have recently said of not doing it, I'd appreciate it if you could continue. I read what I can twist and tweek other things.

The Brener quote is accurate (p.6) as, tragically, is the prediction (36). I ask you to consider the prediction further, for as used in the book it is inaccurate, Garrison winning that election big and Gervais hurting him not at all. Brener's book did not appear until the end of 1969, quite some time after Gervais became a fink. Brener represented a number of those in whom Garrison was interested, most not able to pay his usual fees, and I never could figure how he could afford to take the time off to write a book for which the prospects were not good except in an effort to have it figure in the pending election or in pursuit of unseen interests. It may have been political rhetoric, but history shows the Garrison rejoinder about police investigators to have been right. Only he also ignored it. Pp. 38-9 also fair and accurate. I think I have clips someplace on police misconduct by Gervais, and I certainly believe it probable. So, I think you can also accept Plot or Politics as correct. It is without doubt that Gervais is as described and it is probable the descriptions are understatement. But he is no fool, only open. So, in retrospect, I presume that once JG started sounding off, JEM started looking into PG, and the senior agents in NO should have had a good beginning without doing any work, from just knowing him and scuttlebutt, for PG is and always was very open. I suggest that it took them until early 1969 to build a solid enough case, and then they moved.

We share the same perplexities, but not the more pointed one on haste in the enclosed carbon of my letter to Ivon. Haste is hardly the words for the last part, and I can see no ready explanation, except perhaps an attempt to defuse the Pentagon Papers and the adverse press on threatening to suppress and charge the press with espionage-act violation. Unless there had been an unreported leak and they had to, without having a real case against Jim. The transcript of the last tape, PG and JG's home night 5/29, shows even his great haste, his out-of-character conversation, perhaps betokening fear. There could have been clerical leaks, perhaps not intended as leaks, merely indiscretions. There had to be much clerical help on this, and never forget that N.O. is sui generis. Only an outsider can understand now much. I predicted the last election better than he or any of his did. I predict he could be re-elected tomorrow, sick and disgraced, without a runoff, for he will be regarded as framed and a victim of federal intrusion, there hated more than anywhere. Not one of his enemies, not one of the few of Shaw's friend I tried to see (in no case from interest in Shaw) declined. The media was always helpful. Even Rosemary James, who saw to the suppression of printed reporting of the appearance of O in NO, helped me get the N.O. Press Club to announce it. And TV covered well. WDSU-TV let me have a copy of their footage, trusting me to take it to the film lab. WWL showed it to me. Etc. Couldn't happen elsewhere. But this does not explain federal haste.

If reading stories, affs, discloses anything, I'll write separately, for I may be able to mail this tonight. Again, many thanks. By the way, please watch L.A. developments for me. I have a tip the PD has started a re-investigation, quietly, and that they are after Blehr and one Buick, just released from "McNeil's Island pen. Got as assassins. And of Mafia tie, which I'm not ready to buy, of Sirhan.

Sincerely,