

6/29/66

Dear Sylvia,

Thanks for your note. The reaction has been good. In the studio it was a bawl. Those guys just quit on me, with even Long John so disgusted he didn't even say good night.

With too much haste I've been working in the archive whenever I can. I spotted something on the gun prints that I do not recollect too clearly but I'm getting copies and will let you know in more detail. There is a report from Day on the location of prints alongside the trigger guard, two of them, not good, that I seem to recall from the 26 vols. but wasn't sure. Something else along the same line that I'm getting but have forgotten.

Apparently Salandria was there Monday but we didn't meet. I didn't get there until, close to noon because I was on TV earlier.

I become more apprehensive about the ultimate effect of the Epstein book and his the longer I think of it. He admitted to the Washington Post that at least some of Knobel's criticism was justified, as all of us working in the field certainly know. He just does not know the material, and he is quite right in avoiding public appearances, for he'll get clobbered and hurt us all.

Nonetheless, though my opinion of his contribution diminishes daily, I did forego sleep on my return from Long John to write a response and a challenge to Look and I sent a copy to Books for their use if they so desire. I had earlier given them a general defense of the book.

The Viking fleckery that he "ransacked" the 26 volumes, that is getting wide acceptance, viz. New Republic, will hurt us all, for he is only too unfamiliar with the evidence and reflects only what the self-seeking staff told him, including their opinions which, as you may agree, are largely self-justification. While I agree with your literary comment on Salandria's review, which I have been able to read but hastily and am not certain I got all of it, I am in sympathy with his criticism. Sauvage, I think, was not at all unkind. The book just isn't going to be in a class with any of the others, regardless of the fine emotion you may feel toward the young men. As you possibly observed, I ignored it of Long John. Not having read the Knobel piece by then, any other course was too dangerous. Every thing any one of us says in public affects us all.

Actually, Sylvia, as soon as I started to read Inquest I informed Viking of the pitfalls and offered to help in any possible way. Their attitude, which they make explicit in the trade, is that as long as the book gets mentioned they do not care. You may not be willing to believe this, but it is unfortunately true. They care nothing about you or Epstein or me or any of the others. They care only about what they can make. They have had the book up for grabs in paperback for a while. Except for the few large Times ads, they are not even spending what they normally do on a book they regard as important. They are depending on the press and those of us working in the field to do the job for them. And they are even cheap. Three people at Viking, including Tom Gervasi, promised to mail me a copy. None has. Expect nothing good of them unless it serves their mercenary interest.

Hurriedly,

26 June 1966  
Sunday

Dear Harold,

Just a brief note to congratulate you on keeping your composure on the radio discussion of Friday, in the face of the crudest kind of tactics by Laski and O'Dougherty. You showed considerable quality in refusing to be provoked, and sticking to the facts. Of course, they had no interest whatever in the facts, and disgraced themselves (again) on the intellectual and moral level. There is a lesson in this--the danger of entrapment in discussion with ignorant and vicious persons whose purpose is at all costs to divert attention from the real evidence and the real meaning of events.

Again, congratulations on performing with dignity and forcefulness in discussing the evidence despite all the dirty-pool by your opponents.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

  
Sylvia Meagher