19 August 1968

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Route 7
Frederick, Md. 21701

Dear Harold,

Upon returning from a week's absence, I found your letter waiting. I appreciate its tone and spirit, although I am all the more regretful that we remain in fundamental disagreement on the basic issue of the Garrison campaign and its offspring questions.

As regards Lifton: He is not my sole source of information on Thornley. I agree that he may not be entirely free from psychiatric problems, but perhaps none of us are, living as we do in a negative, frustrating, and sometimes mutilating environment. Some time has gone by, and perhaps you have understandably forgotten that I took a very uncompromising stand on Lifton's fraternization with Liebeler as well as on his reported abuse of our colleague. Indeed, I terminated contact with Lifton in the summer of 1966 on that very question, for which I earned rather unpleasant reproaches--not only from Lifton but also from Vince, who then defended Dave quite warmly. I have in no way changed my mind about fraternization with Liebeler; but this does not mean that I automatically reject any information that comes from Lifton--the more so when he can and does document it.

As regards Thornley: my assistance to him was for the limited and specific purpose of obtaining legal assistance in defending himself against a perjury charge which I have reason to consider cynical, unfounded, and persecutory, on the basis of information from a source other than Lifton and quite independent of him. Even if I believed that Thornley might be guilty of perjury as charged---which I do not believe---I would still regard him as entitled to the best possible legal representation, in the same way as any other accused person is so entitled. I cannot ever forget that Lee Oswald was deprived of legal counsel and that many people were ready, on the basis of the apparently damning "evidence" to see him executed without a hearing and to applaud the crime.

Let me emphasize that in assisting Thornley, or anyone else in his position, I do not in any way "associate" myself with his beliefs, writings, or activities, and that I am rather surprised that such an assumption should be made. The more I dislike his political views, the more I am impelled as a matter of conscience to extend support for the explicit and circumscribed purpose of legal representation against a charge which may or may not be warranted but which I have reason to regard as false, knowingly false, and based on the very fact that Thornley lacks funds to secure an able legal counsel. And, Harold, there is no need for inference on your part, or self-scrutiny on my part, to determine that "in what I have done I was really fighting Garrison": I am an avowed critic and adversary of Garrison, which I have openly declared in conversation and in writing and in print for over a year. There is nothing subtle, secret, subconscious, or Freudian in that--and I have also made it clear that I am fighting Garrison for the very same reasons that I am fighting the Warren Commission, and regard him with perhaps greater loathing for his unctuous pretense to be on the side of the critics. Incidentally, since you suggest that Thornley's sins include his being an Ayn Rander, I think you should know that Garrison, too, is an ardent Rander, according to a number of Garrison's supporters and admirers who took note of this when they visited his office and/or home. Thornley may be all the unpleasant things you suggest (Oswald was supposedly a wife-beater), but he is still entitled to legal defense, and I absolutely refuse to entertain the notion that in assisting him to secure a lawyer I am thereby an advocate of woman-beating or of Ayn Rand or any other Thornley proclivity.

I am frankly surprised by your discussion of how my money might better have been used and appalled by the innuendo that it may have been used to injure you. It never occurred to me that I required approval from anyone on how to dispose of my own money--which is sufficient,

fortunately, to provide for research tools as well as for purposes of conscience. Even less did it occur to me that my unsolicited contribution to Thornley for his legal defense might be utilized for any other purpose whatsoever. I made this donation in good faith and unless I find any substantial evidence to the contrary I will take it for granted that it was received and used in good faith.

I will say again, in order to be as clear and definite as humanly possible and to eliminate any risk of misunderstanding, that the more I may dislike the Shaws, Bradleys, Thornleys, etc., the more I feel obliged as a matter of plain decency to lean over backward to be fair and if necessary to provide support when such an individual, largely because of his unpopular or repulsive ideas and activities, becomes the victim of manufactured and unconscionable charges. It is tragic that this country of robotic anti-Communists did not have the fairness and decency to insist all the more on the physical and legal protection of Lee Harvey Oswald, because his alleged political coloration was offensive, and still permits the dirty fraud of the Warren Report to sit as "history," in large part because of prejudice against the falsely accused Oswald.

I have no intention of becoming the mirror-image of such a school of ethics and morals, and no intention of depriving any right-winger of a single iota of the legal rights or the presumption of innocence which Oswald should have received and which I myself would wish to receive if ever the subject of an accusation. And I have no intention of accepting or supporting any "investigation," however much it may parallel my own conclusions about the nature of the conspiracy that engineered the events of Dallas, which resorts to methods as bad as those of the Warren Commission or worse.

While I am no less alert than you to signs of insanity and to indications of the fascist mentality, I see the site of these dangers as New Orleans primarily, in the context of your letter, and it remains incomprehensible to me that any critic of the Warren Report can endow an unscrupulous charlatan like Garrison, clumsy and transparent as he is, with the attributes of heroism and sanctity.

This letter, too, demands no reply. As you say, we are both occupied with other things, and should not belabor this question if it is to be of no avail. I am sending this reply, despite your thoughtful stipulation that it was not necessary, because some of your assumptions were unfounded and a clarification seemed essential lest those assumptions should seem, by default, to be valid.

With personal regards,

Yours sincerely,