

# The New York Times

TIMES SQUARE NEW YORK NY 10036

November 28, 1966

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I have already written in public and to you what I thought of the transfer of the photographs and X-rays to the National Archives. To repeat, I think the transfer is an accomplishment, at least in terms of the opposition to such a transfer that had to be overcome; it was the first forced move (and I hope not the last) in a process that may lead to a full scale reexamination of the assassination. Personally--and I am not an expert--I think a reexamination is necessary. Professionally, I was interested that the transfer seemed to have been forced by a book--and I was interested in exploring why this was so. As for the transfer itself, it may be what you call it; I rather suspect, however, that the pressures will grow and that the severe restrictions will be modified.

In crediting Epstein, I do not want to detract from your own, Mark Lane's and other efforts. But I wasn't passing out laurels on this, I was trying to analyze what it was that made Epstein's book effective with readers who had, by and large, accepted the Warren Report's findings and who, I believe, have a lot to do with shaping public opinion and influencing official action. Two factors which I thought were important in this--and which distinguished Epstein's book from many previous books, including "Whitewash"--were calmness of tone and respectable credentials. The audience I am talking about does not, I think, often read privately printed books; nor is it often persuaded by righteous polemics. I do not say this is a healthy or good or just condition, only that it is a condition--just as I think (for example) that Mark Lane's sarcastic jokes on TV about the Warren Commission hinders rather than helps his argument. The sarcasm may be warranted--I think it is--but I think it is politically insensitive: people listen to the sarcasm, are offended by it, and therefore do not listen to what he's really trying to get across. Perhaps manner shouldn't count for so much; but I have no doubt whatever that it does. One more example, my own: I read "Whitewash," but it was "Inquest," not "Whitewash," that persuaded me--that in a sense allowed me to be persuaded--that much of what you wrote in "Whitewash" might be true and worth listening to. You can judge this as you will; but I think the example is not atypical. It is in this sense that I think "Inquest" paved the way for "Rush to Judgment."

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'ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT'

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Again, and finally, I do want to emphasize that I am trying to talk about how something (books influencing opinions of readers who influence public policy) works, not about how it perhaps should work. That the credentials, say, of a book published by Viking are more likely to be accepted as "respectable" than the credentials of a privately published book is, rightly or wrongly, capriciously or not, a fact; and this and similar thoughts were the burden of my piece. That Epstein's book got far more newspaper attention than "Whitewash" did is part of the evidence. The correlation between sales figures and effectiveness (in the sense I've been talking about) seems virtually non-existent. (Example: Ralph Nader's book on auto safety sold almost nothing until after it had already been credited with effecting Congress; ditto Michael Harrington's "The Other America." On the other hand, effective books often sell very well. The point is, there seems no discernible correlation between effectiveness and big sales.)

I hope this answers some of your questions, at least as to my own thoughts. It is of course, and as I have written, largely a matter of conjecture. I have tried to be as frank with you as I can, and as complete as time allows, and I hope you will accept it in this spirit.

Sincerely,

*Eliot Fremont-Smith*

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