March 14, 1967

Mr. Eddie Gallaher
c/o WTOP
Broadcast House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Gallaher:

The night of May 9, 1966, I left a copy of my first book on the Warren Commission at WTOP for you. This was more than ten months ago. In all that time, although I am a local author and you import many who are subsidized by their publishers, you have not seen fit to interview me. This is your right. You have had no complaint from me.

The exercise of your right, however, imposes on you an obligation that you have not met. That obligation is to represent me and my book fairly, and in a way that is not damaging to me.

Last night and again this afternoon you presented Charles Roberts and his mistitled book, "The Truth About the Assassination" (which neither he nor I nor any other writer can honestly say he knows today). This, too, is your right, and I do not dispute it or complain about it. What I do insist, however, is that you hold your guests to what is accurate, what is not defamatory, and let them engage in the perfectly proper pursuit (the propriety of which Roberts denies others) of selling their books.

I have sat next to this eminent journalist for four hours in what was billed as a debate in which he and Louis Nizer, for the purest and least commercial of motives, defended the Commission and its Report on the spurious ground that "that side had never been heard". I can provide you with a tape recording of it. In all this time Mr. Roberts had remarkably little to say (virtually nothing that can be considered fact about the assassination), made open McCarthy-like threats, and wound up trying to corrupt the order of speakers to get last word for himself. I refer you to the tape for the superb comment of my colleague, Leo Sauvage, on Mr. Roberts' suggestion of what should happen to a writer who, in a democratic society, criticizes the government.

It now turns out that this sudden need to defend the government and its Report just happens to coincide with the need of these gentlemen to promote their own books. This need did not exist from the time of the assassination, although both here and abroad the government since then has been criticized for what it did and did= not do. Nor did it exist when critical books and articles were more recently published. It did not exist beginning in early May of last year, when my first book became generally available, nor the end of

June, when Epstein's came out, nor in September, when Lane's and Sauvage's appeared. Not until Mr. Roberts' book was ready for distribution did he feel this urgent civic duty, not until Mr. Nizer's book was battling Mark Lane's on the best-seller lists, did this gross injustice to the government pain him.

Yet in each of your programs there were the nastiest and most dishonest of slurs by Mr. Roberts, encouraged by you, about our "motives". The evil motive you attribute to me is to "make money". I'll be happy and unashamed when that day comes, as I hope it soon will. But may I ask you if it is somehow right for you to be paid, for your station to show a profit for its owners, for Mr. Roberts to be paid by Newsweek and his book's publisher at the same time, and wrong for Lane, who has made money, and wrong for those of us who just hope to?

We have recently been treated to a parade of public officials who demanded to be heard and credited as authorities. They began their remarks with the confession, "I do not know what I am talking about, but ...", having read nothing, and on this basis attacked those who declare the government erred in its Report. Now we have the "scavenger" embellishment. Only I, who have made no profit, am a scavenger, and those who are in general accord with my writing. Not Congressman Ford, who put his name on the cover of his own private and entirely commercial "Warren Report", even if he did not write it, and who likewise had a private "Warren Report" in Life coinciding with the appearance of the official one. Not all those former associates of the late President who have written books, in some cases with fantastic financial reward. Not the former nanny, the former secretary, the former advisers, speech writers and other appointees of the late President. Not that literary lickspittle, Merriman Smith, who libels with impunity those who have a high regard for the institution of the Presidency, secure in the belief they will not sue, and so cowardly he fears to debate them in the auditorium of the National Press Club, before his peers, or in writing, on the subject on which he won the Pulitzer Prize. Certainly not Manchester, for how can an initial $665,000 and a probable $3,000,000 be classified as "scavenging"?

Obviously not Mr. Roberts, with his motive so white it darkens the driven snow.

Only I, who without a cent of income or subsidy have devoted three years, three of the most unpleasant and intensive years, to the most disagreeable task an American writer can assume; only I and my colleagues are "scavengers"; only we have the dubious "motive" which you and Mr. Roberts attribute to us from those angelic heights on which you live without incomes, without "money".

So much for your lofty pose, and Mr. Roberts'.

Now for the question of fact which, coming from one knowing as little about what he writes and speaks as Mr. Roberts, is more aptly called slander.

Last night Mr. Roberts said that I misused the impromptu press conference of the Parkland doctors an hour after the President's death tq promote a "theory" of a front-entrance wound. This

is false. My format, entirely in WHITEWASH and almost entirely in WHITEWASH II, is to use the Commission's own evidence to invalidate its conclusions. In this specific case, I refer you and Mr. Roberts, of whom the kindest things I can say are that he either did not read my book or did not understand it, to the chapter on "The Doctors and the Autopsy", the index, and the unburned handwritten draft of the autopsy (page 198), where my reference is from neither a press conference nor of an hour after death, but from the altered autopsy report, written two days after the assassination and revealing what is suppressed in the Report, that Dr. Perry did, the day after the assassination, tell Dr. Humes that the President was shot from the front.

The other reference to what the doctors said, coming from their testimony, is in the context of raising the questions of perjury and the subornation of perjury, and again, not with reference to the 2 p.m. November 22, 1963, press conference.

Aside from repetitions of slanders today, you allowed me to be charged with taking "early rumors and dignifying them as fact" and of taking things out of context. At the same time, you broadcast the false statement that nothing was suppressed. I challenge you or Mr. Roberts to prove the first or at some convenient time in the future, grant me the opportunity to disprove the latter. I will, before too long, have a book documenting the suppression, which my already published work, to an uncontradicted large extent, already does.

Mr. Roberts, whose modesty is on a par with his purity of motive, assured you and your audience, a very considerable one, that he had religiously checked what I said against the Commission's Report and evidence. If this is true, and I do not for one minute believe it is, I call upon him to prove it. Or, what I do not expect, to apologize.

Mr. Roberts, from my own fortunately brief association with him, has had less association with the evidence than the garlic wafted over the soup. If he is prepared to deny this, I am prepared to face him on it. Further, I will be happy to accept, if you offer the opportunity, an invitation to debate with Mr. Roberts, and entirely extemporaneously, the Commission's Report, his book, mine, or any combination of his choosing. I propose, should you arrange it, that we test Mr. Roberts' vaunted knowledge of the evidence (based upon which you have assured your listeners that he is a dependable, honorable man and I am dishonorable and of dubious motive) and mine, by each of us being entirely empty-handed on the occasion of this debate, should it ever take place. Let us see how strongly Mr. Roberts is interested in the integrity of government, how studiously and completely he has prepared himself, and how pure, indeed, his motive. And let us have in the studio any member of your news staff, with a set of the Commission's evidence, to check, if the occasion arises, what each of us says. We can soon arrive at a determination of fact - and motive.

Until this day which will not come, may I suggest to you that when a President is murdered and consigned to history with such a dubious epitaph as this Report; when there is an assassination and

an investigation that leaves unanswered questions that it is within the capacity of man to answer; or worse, an investigation that fails to ask the questions that should have been asked or call the witnesses that should have been heard and were not; then no president is ever safe and the institution of the presidency and with it all our institutions are in jeopardy.

May I also ask you wherein lies the greater dedication of a writer to a democratic society - in, without subsidy, researching and writing and then at his own expense going further into debt and publishing his own book that says official error must be corrected, or in a commercial sycophancy, well publicized and, it would seem safe to assume from the norm, well subsidized and compensated to say otherwise?

My purpose in writing this is not an attempt to solicit time for response, time to sell my books, for I have recently declined the considerate offer of time from your station on another aspect of this enormous subject of which none of us knows enough (and you and Mr. Roberts too little). I am not now in a position to accept such an offer because of existing commitments. It is to get you to think of this subject, to consider that it is one of the vital issues today, and that if and when you approach it again you do so with more responsibility and without needless or unjustified defamation of those who, like me, you have damaged.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

P.S. If you have any curiosity about why Mr. Roberts' publisher declined WHITEWASH in 1965, I'll show you the letter. You can then, perhaps, better understand the publication of his book.

cc: Mr. Dennis
Mr. Roberts