11/5/69

Dear Gary,

Before getting into today's work, there is a general comment I should have made in the too-hasty and too-long response to your letter, also long and valuable, of tMXXXXXX. Friday. Every letter I got yesterday should have reached me earlier. None was dated later than Friday. Some should have reached me Saturday. Today is Wednesday. All but two should have been delivered Saturday. Of course, the mail is inefficient, but when something like this happens, plus some of the contents of your letter, it does make one wonder.

You explained your feelings about and deep belief in Mary and how careful she is to keep secret what she should keep secret. I've had the same impression of people in the past, the same strong feelings. And disappointment when they breached confidence, not intending the damage they thereby caused. You should have little difficulty recalling a few cases.

What I am leading to is the suggestion that this work should fit into a few separate compartments. The ideal situation would be if we could all of us share everything with everyone else. I began that way. You will see the names of 6,8, sometimes more people on some of my early files. Gradually, as I learned, I reduced their number. In remarkably few cases did anyone every follow up. You and Paul plus have followed up behind me and vice versa, but now no one else does. Each has his own likes and dislikes, beliefs and refusals to believe, and friends and collaborators with whom he works. And, as xx each becomes the repository of more knowledge, it becomes increasingly difficult to hold it all in mind. I am endlessly surprised at what I have forgotten. For recent example, Poffman had a print of CE740 with him. As soon as I saw it, I recognized a special significance in it. Lo and behold, when I consulted the pertinent testimony, I had a large red line drawn alongside it - and had forgotten it. With it so difficult- really impossible- to keep in mind what is important to the work itself, it is absolutely impossible to recall what is to be kept secret, especially if it is contrary to ones general approach and philosophy and, as with Paul and Dave, is ones custom.

There should, I believe, be one special separate compartment among several of this kind, reserved for what the spooks call "Need to know" data. There are some areas where those to whom we may give sensitive information will do absolutely nothing with it, often because they cannot and other times because they will not. In these cases they should not be burdened with it. It is a vanity, when this is appropriate, to send it. These often coincide with what we have every reason to believe are especially sensitive areas of federal sensitivity. The Davison case is one such. It can be a very serious blunder to scatter this like buckshot. One of the more obvious reasons is that with the enormity of the material to be selected from and parts hidden, those who did this may not have been aware of its significance, or slipped in a few cases-perhaps only one. If there is any chance a carelessness on our part can alert them, the possibility of this kind of carelessness should be eliminated, to the degree possible. It is not possible to accomplish this in all cases, but the effort is essential. I have found cases where what I have asked for, after seeing it, has been reclassified, cases where what I ordered has been "forgotten" or "overlooked" in the copying, and a number where it has been withheld until it could be leaked where the emphasis destroyed its value, where it would be misused and not understood. One case of this kind is referred to in my letter to Rhoads, enclosed.

Other cases are autopsy material, the GSA-Kennedy-family contract and some of the executive sessions (I had asked for all withheld transcripts, but had neglected to do this in writing). All were improperly withheld at a time I was getting maximum attention, and all were given to those who took the edge off, usually by converting what is much against the government into pro-government propaganda. I chose not to regard a single case as an accident.

Lifton and Newcomb are only part of the existing problem. Plain blabbermouthing is another, as with Hal, who is great, and that letter he flashed when he never should have, had no reason no matter how obscure for doing it-really should not have had it. There may or may not have been consequences. I believe there have been. There are cases involving Bud, as you know, and this was an especially foolish one. Others in N.O.

Some of this is also true in our public speaking. There is so much effective material available, it is childishness to use that on which any of us is working or has any hopes of developing additional data, for it can flag our interest and understanding and close doors that may yet be open. Right now this is also true of what may get into court, through John or me. You know of one serious leak there. It is foolhardy not to assume that now there will be some kind of answer contrived in those areas. This cannot but be hurtful if and when John gets into court.

It pleases the ego to flash such things, but it is contrary to sound research, mature approaches and is a futility - self-defeating.

Think about this. We have more than enough problems without making burdens for ourselves we need not bear. Think also of the worsened political climate, the capabilities of the present administration whose mere existence would have been impossible without the basic changes in national policy that are the direct consequence of the assassination, if not its purpose.

H