

11/23/71

Dear Mr. Sidey,

There is an aspect of legally-proscribed intelligence intrusions into private lives that I think will not likely be touched in Senator Ervin's upcoming hearings. I have been sitting on this and the proof of it for several years, hoping that at some time interest in an article might develop.

This involves the use of "fronts" by the agency, so that it will not seem to be the agency that is interested, and of existing commercial organizations to do the actual work, reporting what private citizens say in public.

Several years ago an employee of one such company, a former reporter, didn't like it when he had to do such things. So, when he transcribed the tapes, he made a set of carbons for me. I have an entire box of them. He then got in touch with me, although we were total strangers, I found it possible to meet with him in the city in which he then lived and worked, and to have more data as the result. From recollection this includes a tape or tapes of his conversations with his home office about their and their client's interest in ~~me~~^{me} the identification of the client and the front, of several of the names used by those in touch with this company, their letterhead, their envelope, and at least one check in payment for this spying, thus where they keep their bank account.

I have several transcripts of the appearances of others, when what they were then saying was of interest to this agency whereas what they had earlier been saying had not been. The conjecture to which this can lead is fascinating!

The inevitable consequence of this kind of spying on what people are saying in public is that this agency alone must have an enormous file of what writers and others are saying and doing.

When I got reports that the FBI was sending agents around behind me when I was out investigating, something that, frankly, I found hard to believe, I wrote ~~xxxx~~ and so informed the Attorney General, whose response was only that this would be improper. I agreed it would be improper, repeated that I found it hard to believe, but asked that in both our interests there be at least a pro forma denial. In two years it has not been forthcoming. The enclosed copy of the Publisher's Weekly pre-pub review of my forthcoming book may indicate how the FBI feels about me, and why.

I leave for Memphis this afternoon, for a Friday hearing in the Ray case. I'll be back the end of the week if the foregoing interests you. And if there are developments at the hearing where my knowledge can help you, I'll be staying at the Albert Pick.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg