

NEW ADDRESS: Rt. 7, Frederick, Md. 21701:::301/473-8186

2/27/68

Dear Bob,

I got the message that you had called about Thornley's remarks while I was in California. My wife understood you to say that you were sending me a copy of that tape so that, if I see fit, I might respond. I have also heard from some of the fine people in your audience of your offer to Paul Scott to respond to my refutation of his slanderous, inspired column.

Whether or not it is necessary or desirable to respond to Thornley-for I think it essential to protect his rights and not lead him into an involuntary abandonment of them-I would very much like a tape of what he said. I would like to hear it and I would like it as a matter of record. You see, it is I alone of those writing in this field who understood the significance of his testimony. It is possible he did not.

There is a background to this. When I was in New Orleans immediately after publication of OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS, among those I sought out was Clint Bolton, Thornley's mentor, friend and "agent". I urged Bolton to impress upon Thornley the importance of his coming forward with either the information he had or the willingness to provide it to those who might understand what he did not. I told Bolton to tell Thornley that I'd be glad to talk to him, that if he preferred to speak to Garrison, he should do it voluntarily while he could for it was inevitable that if he didn't he'd be under compulsion to do so. I further suggested to Bolton that if Thornley were to engage in a genuine exchange with one who really knew the subject he, as a writer, might suddenly find he had material of which he was unsure.

You may recall that I said and wrote that the FBI and the Commission misrepresented the evidence on the Oswald handbills to state that it was Oswald who arranged for the printing whereas 100% of the evidence is that it was not Oswald. My own investigation consisted of interviewing the owner of the printing company, Douglas Jones. He confirmed that it had not been Oswald. I gave him about 100 assorted pictures and asked him to pick the one that most strongly suggested the man who made the arrangements. Confidentially, the picture he selected was Thornley's. Now, this does not mean it was Thornley. It does mean Thornley looks like the man, whether he was or not. Of course, I gave this to Garrison. There likewise is no question of the fact that Barbara Reid says she saw Oswald and Thornley together at the Bourbon House. She told me and I told Garrison. (No one had ever asked her. Richard Townley, then with WDSU-TV, was with me.) While I was not at liberty to pass all these messages to Thornley - I would have in a person-to-person exchange - through Bolton, I think it is an evidence of the fact that I seek only the truth and was looking out for his interest in acting and saying as and what I did.

Bolton wrote Thornley a rather snide letter, with indecent humor that has suggestions of anti-Semitism. He has rather poor taste. He used this letter as one of his columns in a small French-Quarter weekly, hence I know about it. But he did suggest to Thornley that he follow my advice.

There are other things I have been told about Thornley by people who say they knew and worked with him. Garrison doesn't know all of them yet. They do not encourage belief in his total purity.

Last week one of the assistant DA's in N.O. phoned me about another matter. He then told me that as he left, Thornley said he'd like to speak to me. I am willing, but I cannot afford the toll charges, "scavenging" being what it is. I dare say it is still to his interest to do this, but as I haven't bugged him, I now shall not.

Like most people of the radical right, Thornley is the captive of the strange notions he seeks to will into reality. He has, I think, blown his chance.

However, I would like to know what he said of me and my comments about him. Also, my work is to wind up as an archive in a major eastern university, and I'd like to have the tape for that purpose also.

One of your listeners tells me you have offered Paul Scott the chance to deny my refutation of his officially-induced slander. I hope this is true. I am also told that as of the end of last week, he had been silent. I am not surprised. There seems little doubt that this slander, or rather, a combination of them, is being carefully spread by the radical-right (I think fascist is closer) committees of both houses of Congress. What they seek to convey is entirely false. Of course, this is a cheap way of saying what they dare not, that I am some kind of Communist. To anyone who has read my writing or heard my speaking, this is obviously false. But, like all earlier fascists, this makes no difference to them. They want it to be so, so they act as though it is and write dishonestly to convey the idea that it is. One of the devices is to use falsehood that seems to have the imprint of officiality. Another is to take inaccurate news stories and pretend they are accurate. I think it is unlikely Scott will make himself vulnerable to suit, and I'm getting to the point where I've had a bellyfull and just may start filing some. However, if I may, I'd like a tape of your offer to him and, if he accepts, his response.

Glad you took my fat hint about Fenn Jones. He is a very brave, honest and dedicated man, subversive enough to crusade for an elected school board in a climate that got him burned out for doing it. His wife is as wonderful.

But I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to thank you for the offer on Thornley. The day after I got home my wife tore all the ligaments in her left ankle. Doctor says it is worse than a break. So, aside from what I usually do, I've got the house and her to take care of and some of her work (that of the shipping department) to do.

There are two favors I'd like to ask of you. If you recall the chapter of Oswald in New Orleans entitled "Preliminary Postscript from Miami", I have for some time had an interest in the National States Rights Party. I now have similar but not as explicit data from the other coast. If you come across anything on them or ever interview any of them, I'd be very interested in seeing or hearing what you have. And second, there is a man who may figure in one of the offshoots of the story who lives in Tampa I'd like someone to interview for me, in strictest confidence. It is a CIA thing. I do not know if it is for real. That is one of the things I seek to learn by this interview. Do you know a good newsman (esp. a radio one who could tape it) who might be willing? If yes, I can tell him the story over the phone.

Thanks for everything.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg