

NEWS RELEASE

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, 156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10010

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JOHN de J. PEMBERTON, JR.
Executive Director

(212) 675-5990

Ramona Ripston, Director of
Press Relations

FOR RELEASE: FRIDAY, A.M., AUGUST 4, 1967

The American Civil Liberties Union announced today that it had called upon Attorney General Ramsey Clark to order an immediate investigation to determine whether Jim Garrison, District Attorney of New Orleans, is misusing the powers of his office in an attempt to intimidate those who disagree with his theory that the death of President John F. Kennedy was brought about by a conspiracy located in New Orleans.

In a letter sent to the Attorney General, Lawrence Speiser, Director of the ACLU Washington office, charged that "actions by Garrison indicate a gross misuse of his public office in infringing on constitutional rights. District Attorneys must, of necessity, have wide discretion in utilizing their offices for law enforcement and prosecution purposes. Nevertheless," continued Speiser, "it seems apparent that Mr. Garrison is indiscriminately using his power to bring criminal charges in order to intimidate those who disagree with him. Such activities do not appear to be an effort to arrive at the truth, but, instead, to silence critics."

Speiser urged that if an investigation of Mr. Garrison and his associates indicates that there have been violations of the provisions of "...either 18 U.S.C. §241 in conspiring to injure, oppress, threaten or intimidate any citizen in the free exercise of enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution and laws of the United States, or in violating 18 U.S.C. §242 in engaging in such actions under color of any law, statute, ordinance, regulation or custom... the matter be presented to a grand jury for indictments."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL:

Ramona Ripston in New York
(212) 675-5990
after hours (201) 865-6881

Alan Helseth in New Orleans
(504) 522-5825

Press Release #295

19 August 1967

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Md. 20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Please excuse my tardiness in replying to your letters of July 21 and August 5. I have been out of the office for several weeks.

In reply to your major charges and allegations, I have nothing to add to what I said in my first letter to you. I have no apologies, corrections, or retractions to make.

In regard to the host of subsidiary matters you advance, I regard them as either groundless or utterly irrelevant.

If you have some question about why the Texas ACLU affiliate did or did not do thus and so in regard to Lee Oswald, I suggest you contact the affiliate directly: address, 3007 North Lamar, Room 203, Austin 78705.

If you question the actions of the national ACLU, you should write to that office.

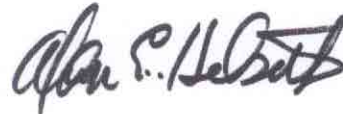
In regard to lawsuits filed in New Orleans, I fail to see how or why we should act to prevent a citizen from filing a suit no matter how frivolous it might be deemed by the defendant.

Nor do I see how or why we should act to force a news dealer to handle certain publications any more than we could or should act to prevent him from handling certain publications.

Regardless of how you view them, these are simply not civil liberties questions.

And, while I cannot imagine why it should be of any concern to you, you can see from the enclosure that the most recent ACLU release regarding the Garrison probe was issued by our national office in New York.

Sincerely,



Alan E. Helseth

1 enc.

cc: John de J. Pemberton, Jr.
ACLU of Texas

August 24, 1967

Mr. Alan E. Helseth
Executive Director
Louisiana American Civil Liberties Union
1911 Terpsichore Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70013

Dear Mr. Helseth:

Your letter of August 19 is not really responsive. It continues the evasions that you have consistently practised.

The record of the ACLU is much too good to have been thus contaminated. It is also too good for me to battle with it.

However, I must correct you when you say I made "demands". I did not. I intended to point out that, where the other traditional interests of the ACLU, as in a free press, were immediately involved and by actions of both the federal government and the most radical fringe of the irresponsible radical right, you were silent and found an ally (to whom you are welcome).

But it must be obvious that in this case frivolous suits were filed for the ulterior purposes in which they succeeded, suppression of book and intimidation of witnesses. Here you have a real case of the intimidation of a witness in the Garrison investigation. It is on the other side. You are silent. The character of the suits is without question.

The suit against me was tossed out of court. It cost \$1,000 plus to defend this action. The distributor has not decided to offer the book. His fear is clear. So is the loss of one freedom and the denial to the people of Louisiana of access to information.

I really have no complaint against the Texas ACLU, as you would know if you had read my books. I pointed out the difference in ACLU attitudes and the consequences.

You persist in a damaging dishonesty, the utterly false charges you made against me. If you had the slightest idea of what you talk about before you sound off, then you would know the opposite of what you charged is true. The record shows I made available to you the proof of your falsehood and you did nothing.

On the essence of the charge, which certainly did not originate with the National ACLU, again I am confident that you have no personal knowledge of what the NBC personnel did and did not do. I do, I offered it to you as I did to NBC. You declined. That is your option. Also your measure. And if you want the name of a responsible newsman who recently spent some time with Beauboeuf (who voluntarily told him no effort was made to corrupt him), I can now give you that.

Mr. Helseth - 2

If you knew anything about the fact, you would not be proud of association with what NBC has done.

You will ultimately learn the truth of the New Orleans part of the assassination story. Until then, I assure you my work is my own and that my book was written and in the mail ten days before I went to New Orleans. The additions after I was there will be obvious. They are labeled, at the beginning and the end.

I hope the ACLU will have as much interest in the persistent and continuing interferences with my mail, especially on this aspect of the subject, part of which is documented in that book. For the rest, I refer you to the Washington office of the Times of London, which has yet, after more than two weeks, to receive the copy of the manuscript mailed by my agent in New York.

Above all, I regret this intrusion of the ACLU into a court proceeding that is not only in itself entitled to independence but constitutes an advance prejudicing of all potential jurors and, to the degree the good name of the ACLU means anything, a conditioning of the minds of the judges. Need I mention the already biased press?

Your failure to get the available tape of what I really said when I left the grand jury room permits me to say that I think we understand each other. You are not man enough to face what you have done. Especially because I did exactly the opposite of what is the essence of your accusation is this disreputable. That you should know from the New Orleans papers alone.

And you have added another shameful chapter to the already too-sad story of the assassination, its official "investigation" and the total abdication of the lawyers and the other intellectuals when our society needed them so badly.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Mr. John de J. Pemberton, Jr.
Texas ACLU