

7/3/66

Dear Jerry,

This has been such a crazy, mixed-up, fast week that last week seems far in the past. There was one night entirely without sleep and another of but two hours, which I enjoyed tremendously, for they accomplished things; there was the loss of certain documents I regard as important I shall now have to spend hours locating again in the hope the people who process them will not again make the same "mistake"; the heat, which helps the weeds grow, with their height discouraging the beautiful birds whose visits are always an early-morning delight; other interruptions in that which I want most to be now doing. And over all the problem presented by Ineptstein and his book. Not the problem of the competition but that of its weakness and the harm it does and his weakness and the harm he can do.

On "Today" Friday he was like yesterday's unrefrigerated milktoast. I hope he succeeds in avoiding all future public appearances, for he is by neither makeup nor knowledge of his subject equal to them.

The focus on his book, which is even more vulnerable than his critics understand, has given me a little respite that I'm trying to use. It will, I believe, and soon. The problem is to not spend my time in the negative, defending myself and others working in the field by defending him, but to work positively. Does it sound like a slogan? I think I am beginning to work out a solution. It will require a reversal of positions to what they were before it began to seem as though critics of the Report are on the defensive. This is wrong. It is the Report that will have to be defended.

I do not for one moment believe LOOK will accept my challenge. Rather I believe they will ignore it. Nonetheless I am preparing for acceptance, with the intention of using that material elsewhere when LOOK does not want it. It will be not a defense of Epstein but a vigorous attack where he fumbled and retreated. I expect the opportunity in less than three weeks and will let you know, if I can, in advance of the expectations. I am using two things: A radio appearance on a large station and another Harwood piece, this time by a UPI writer named Fox, a piece about as long as Harwood's, that wasn't used in any Washington paper. Fortunately, this one quoted Arken Specter, the bete noir of the magical bullet, and he was, as you might expect, as wrong and as inexcusably wrong as ^{any} a man accustomed to getting away with murder can be. I have written a polite and limited letter to a vice president of UPI to whom I gave a copy of WHITEWASH a month ago and have, with too many interruptions, completed the first four thousand words of documentation of this error, addressed to the single thing that is central in the Report and in Epstein's weakness, the magic bullet.

It is not easy to answer Knebel's attack, especially after Epstein himself acknowledges the justice of ~~some~~ some of it, which he did, to everyone's detriment. It was not easy when I rushed into the letter to LOOK as soon as I got home from the other Nebel. It was, in fact, as I could understand it, not possible to do within the time I had, one of the reasons I seized upon the letter, which is also an attack rather than a defense. I hope it could do what you wanted. I regret not having had the opportunity of reading Knebel before Long John, for with the spoken word it is much easier than with the written, to make response. If you used my letter as a story, which is what I intended, will you please send me a few copies as soon as you have them? (Also any extra copies of the TIMES review you may find, please.)

The other sleepless night was a pleasure. For a long time I've been trying to sell one of my surplus freezers because we so desperately need the money, no matter how little it is, and because I needed the space to improve my working conditions. A purchaser was just finishing loading it when I got the first of three phone calls from California. It was, I believe, Wednesday afternoon. It was from a freelance writer with an interest but only slight knowledge in the subject. We have been in correspondence. He has read WHITEWASH. Would I be interested in being on a west-coast Nebel by phone, if even for a short while, if he could arrange it. Natch. Then the call from the moderator. We spoke for a while and he said he thought they'd like to use me for about 10 minutes. I agreed to anything, whatever time and whatever format. Well, almost as soon as I was on the air their switchboard started a spectacular performance which I gathered from hearing what he was telling the audience. First he told them it was jumping on all four legs, then that it resembled a well-decorated Christmas tree, etc. While keeping on apologizing to me and exciting his audience by repeating he has expected to keep me out of bed for but ten minutes, he aired me for two uninterrupted hours (save for a five-minute newscast and half-hourly commercials). Between the afternoon and night calls he glanced at the book, phoned my distributor to complain that none were in San Francisco (getting the promise that would be taken care of early this week), and asking that copies be sent to all his competition in his name, with a note saying he thought they'd get good, fresh material from it! What a nice guy! He concluded by saying he'd have me back again soon (and like with Nebel, I was able to hold back much fresh material from his audience so I'd be able to repeat without rehashing). But again, he would not allow me to give my address, so, like with the New Republic, the Washington Post and others, those who know about me and the book do not know where to get it. This ball ended at 4 a.m. and I was wide awake.

(your no address)

There has been no letter from NAL, although I had been told one was drafted before I left New York. This past week we had 46 mail orders, a number attributable to Nebel and some of undetermined inspiration. Publishers' Weekly did use part of something I sent them, which should help with the bookstores, for the distributors clearly do not. They apparently wait until their bookstores come after them with a club. Despite promises made me at ABA, there had been virtually no distribution in NYC for the Nebel show. Who is Popular Library, by the way? They wrote the printer for two copies. Saturday Review, which apparently lost the copy I sent Cousins May 9, wrote and asked for two also. The letter was from Neid Sofian, assistant to Rochelle Girson, book-review editor. I urgently need a Philadelphia distributor. My ideal NY Washington distributor on Thursday promise to phone one, but thrice earlier he made the same promise...Next week I address my first college audience (those in Calif. who asked me to come after September are now thinking of possible for the summer session also) and some Rotarians...When you speak to your WBAI friends, someone in Washington has been speaking to WAMU, the American University station, about a program, which may be on books for a half-hour or one of general discussion for an hour. Perhaps if this interested WBAI a word from them to WAMU might get it speeded up...Any word or rumors from NY Review or LIFE, both of whom phone me and both of whom, like SatRev, had copies they didn't have?...No word here from Paris Match and London Standard, both of whom interviewed, but change of attitude by BBC, which I'm to see although they declined a month ago...Another hour on a yack Washington program soon...Ethel Levine returned the ms of Dubious Inquest with the explanation it wasn't for them...But on my return from that Nebel I found a brief note from Fred Graham confirming my analysis of the situation at the Times, that they have to work out the problem of their own previous positions. He also had a copy of Dubious Inquest. It reads, "The Times Magazine people tell me they cannot consider your piece until they know whether it will be accepted for publication elsewhere. I hope you have luck with the Saturday Evening Post, but

Sincerely,

I guess this is already long enough to be a further abuse of the time you and others have so generously used for me. But it brings you up to date. If there is any reason for me to be in NY, I have to be in Phila., which is half way, on the 20th and possibly on the 21st... If your wife liked the earnings, I have more, for any others you know who might like them, with or without the tiepin, or for the tiepin with or without the earnings. Sally seemed to like hers... Her father did a strong review for the National Guardian, which, like the Times, does give my address. I can use any extra copies of any reviews that cost you neither money nor time to get. Copies of your piece were quite effective in Europe, even though they have led to nothing. I'm still giving them out, but only where they might benefit one of us. Don't throw any extras out. I'm down to only nine copies... No bill from the condor printer yet, but by now I've got about a sixth of his bill put aside for him. Under the circumstances, I am happy about this... One of the disappointing things is that no one has yet seen how WILLIAMSON addresses itself to the "crisis in credibility" and related problems. Except the publishers, that is... If you got a free copy of Lorenz's "On Aggression" I'd like to borrow it. Eventually I'd like to buy it. He is a wonderful guy, if you know his earlier writing. I hope you review it. For it says much more about people and current society than about animals. I wish I could offer to review it, but I really cannot take the time. It is now two weeks since I did any writing on the sequel, three shells, which is important right now in ways other than as a sequel. I've really got some quite shocking stuff. Animals, especially Geese, are one of my specialties. I have the poor draft of a book "On the Human Goose" that requires, I fear, extensive editing by someone with a lighter touch and warm heart, and a half dozen other books on Geese in various stages.

Not quite the same approach as the review, is it? I replied saying the piece was not elsewhere in the US but as if not, they would like to see your manuscript. Not quite the same approach as the review, is it? I replied saying the piece was not elsewhere in the US but as they have not yet responded to my proposal of three weeks ago that they use Part 2 of WILLIAMSON in the context of the recent Supreme Court decisions, which I had at the end of April, forecasting these decisions as the book does, in a previous letter to Appleton.

in reply

I have now finished a careful examination of the Knobel piece. There is not a single element that can survive. Even where Epstein is wrong, as with Howard and the autopsy, Knobel is more wrong. He does all the things of which he accuses Epstein, including the elimination of evidence not to his liking, and he quotes the Commission where it misquotes its own evidence. I hope now to complete a rough draft of a lengthy answer this week, but the final form or any potential mass use are not now clear to me.

It also seems as though Knobel labelled me, aside from pretending I do not exist. In the second column of page 66: "These are sensational charges, many of them, of course, have been advanced previously by lurid and irresponsible writers..."

Sunday night I had a telephone call from California which reported receipt of a Xerox copy of BOOKS for June with a picture of JFK from the lead and a caption indicating his suit was not in sufficient disarray for the bullet to have punctured it six inches down and to have entered the neck. The copy I have has no such picture illustrating the review. Assuming my information is correct, was there more than one edition of BOOKS? If not, shall I seek a copy of the Xeroxing?