

1/5/71

Dear "009,

You/ por, poor, afflicted people, all laid low at the same time by writers' cramp, laryngitis or both! What a horrible affliction!

Due to the low climate prevailing, no doubt.

Were I not, as you so well know, a man of infinite finesse, I might suggest that if it had to happen, to bad it didn't happen sooner.

But being, as you also know, renowned for my tact and diplomacy, I content myself with modest expression of the sincerest regrets.

Were I not so tired, had I not been preoccupied with other things since the nasty States editorial, including another blessing, a foot of snow and the highway 500 feet distant, I might have written a better letter than the enclosed. If you see fit, please give it to Alcock after you read it.

By and large, I don't think I've ever met any men about whom it is as difficult to preserve an impartial opinion, any more prone to cry "enemy" unless they see a hanging tongue.

Or any quicker quitters.

I've just filed two more DJ-118 forms for suppressed New Orleans photographic evidence. I report this not because I presume any interest, but as proof of two points:

Everybody hasn't quit;  
My consummate discretion and agreeableness.

Meanwhile, one of the preoccupations reported above is the solution of two of the perhaps more significant New Orleans mysteries, mysteries that could and should have been fathomed earlier.

But who in Newcastle lacks for coals?

What little contact I've had with New Orleans will soon lapse, for I'm not renewing my newspaper subscriptions. However, I note the absence of letters-to-the editor in those issues that have reached me. Corrupt papers, surplus of dedicated friends - or both?

In spite of everything, for I never knew any to deserve or earn it less, my best personal wishes to all of you.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

1/5/71

Editor, States-Item  
New Orleans, La.

Dear Sir,

Your recent editorial eruption against Jim Garrison is what I am confident you did not intend, a deeply subversive appeal, an incitation to the young to take to the streets, and a denunciation of the American systems of Justice and the possibility of justice in New Orleans.

You say that Mrs. Garrison controls half of the ~~justice~~ judges. I know those you named, two slightly, three well. I believe this is not only not true of any but, if you had the slightest basis for your accusation, you'd have bannered it on the front page.

All but Judge Alcock have been sitting long enough for you to cite the record in support of your allegations. Your failure to do so does not persuade that the existing record is consistent with your charges.

I think I know Jim Garrison and Jim Alcock pretty well. We have had disagreements and, as befits men of strongly-held belief, have expressed them vigorously. I am nobody's partisan.

You quite falsely and without the suggestion of basis for the charge accuse the new judge of "persecuting" Clay Shaw. He did his job, no more and no less. You printed substantial excerpts from the official transcript. I challenge you to cite a single excerpt exactly supporting this claim.

During the time I knew him and was in New Orleans, I saw Jim Garrison lean far over backward to be fair to those who had been accused and charged. Consult your own files on the case of Layton Martens, then already charged with contempt in the assassination case, for what Garrison did when the police accused him of attempted murder - and Martens had planted a knife in another man's bowels. This is not the only such case.

If there is any reason to believe Judge Alcock is other than dedicated to the law and skilled in it, I do not know it and you do not cite it.

You have proclaimed there is neither justice nor its possibility in New Orleans. For such strong language, with an abundance of court records, you are without a case in support of a playably false accusation. Were your claim true, you owe it to your readers to print the proof. If you cannot, you owe everyone an apology.

How would you react editorially if another paper, in another city, were to tell its citizens that their courts were corrupt and print no instances in support of this? Would you call it other than rabble-rousing? How can you expect your young readers to have respect for or confidence in the law when you print such an editorial? Have you not, in fact, intruded into the judicial process, in effect demanding that all judges satisfy the owners of the only newspapers rather than their judicial obligations, serve your preconceptions rather than justice? An editorial should be more than the venting of spleen.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg