

July 22, 1967

Dear Hal:

Here are the preliminary details on my abbreviated conversation with you last night; I'm sending a carbon to John Starr.

In late December, 1963, a San Francisco lawyer walked into the offices of the Hearst Corporation here in San Francisco. He was ushered into the newly occupied office of one Amory J. Cooke, a VP and Director of the Hearst Corporation and President of its Sunical Corporation Division, this entity managing Hearst's real estate, mining, cattle and timber interests domestically and internationally. His wife, not so incidently, is Phoebe Hearst, the namesake granddaughter.

This lawyer, whose name escapes me, was in possession of some revealing information about Jack Ruby, which he thought might interest the Hearst editors, assuming they still had open minds about the assassination. He spun his fascinating tale to Cooke, the details of which I will forward in another letter later. Why he went to Cooke and not the editors? Don't know, although I imagine it was merely a matter of referral by friends. Cooke in turn told the same story to Richard Berlin, Hearst President, during a Board Meeting in New York a few days later; He then thought the statements of sufficient merit to call in his friend, J. Edgar Hoover, to whom Cooke retold the lawyer's story.

Hoover, according to Cooke, listened intently, but seemed more interested in details about the lawyer, his associations and his relationship to Cooke and Hearst et al. He thanked Cooke and told them he would look into the matter immediately.

Cooke never heard any more about the matter. However, before he returned to his San Francisco office some five days later, several FBI agents had come to his offices, unannounced, and taken "prints" from every typewriter and teletype machine in the place. And never was there any explanation forthcoming, at least not to Cooke directly. It was later stated, unofficially, that the bureau had received a message from an anonymous source, were making sure through the prints. (Perhaps all this will be much less fuzzy to you when I forward the exact details.)

Cooke's attitude toward the bureau's unorthodox move to "test" his office equipment is that they were making sure that there was no past or future collusion between himself and this same lawyer. There wasn't as he let the matter drop, never heard from the lawyer again.

I met Cooke almost immediately thereafter; we have since become good friends and political putterers. (The Cooke's hosted the Goldwaters at their Woodside Estate during the 1964 Republican convention out here.)

Jack (Cooke) and I have also worked together on several business deals, within and outside of Hearst aegis; he is an astute observer and an asset wherever he treads. I have asked him to join me in the business entity I have formed to conduct discussions for the sale of the motion picture et al rights to your works.

During my backgrounding of Jack about your problems in publishing, the phenomenal sales/circulation in spite, to say nothing of hours and hours of theory orientation, he became fascinated by your hassle with Avon over Popkin's pilferage; he thought it weird that Avon should have missed getting its hands on a property with such marketability, especially in the face of a highly competitive paperback market today. (As you no doubt recall, Avon is wholly-owned by Hearst.)

On the occasion of the annual Bohemian Grove gathering this week, the guest list includes Richard Berlin and Hearst's head of its Publishing Division, Richard Deems. On Thursday afternoon, these two gentlemen went to Cooke's office for a tate-a-tate, during which Cooke broached the same background matter earlier referred to. Berlin was most interested in both the substance of your contentions (which are now openly conjectured by Cooke) and the details about your problems in publishing and distribution. And, when Berlin is interested, Deems is too, automatically, if for no other reason than Avon just doesn't have many paperback properties that can sell a half million copies.

The matter now stands this way: Cooke has asked me to meet with Berlin and Deems the first of next week; he feels my relative depth and verve would tend to make the cheese more binding. My call to you was to ask your permission to open a dialogue, then pass whatever positive outcome to the direction of John Starr in New York. In other words, I would whet their appetite, if possible, then let the business details evolve under the aegis of Starr, at the Hearst main offices in New York.

So, unless otherwise instructed, I'll do just as suggested. I shall make it absolutely clear that I have no legal authorization to negotiate any terms and/or conditions that will in any way commit you to anything; rather I will use Jack's entre and endorsement to feel out Hearst's level of interest and potential within the business/fiscal phases, which I will then communicate to you (and Starr) in detail. I view this as potentially a unique opportunity to sit at both ends of the table at the same time.

Let me say now, considering Berlin's past proclivities in the body-politic, if Hearst grabs hold I'll be ready for another crow bake; but, they tell me it ain't bad wrapped in fresh greenbacks.....

My fondest to that notably nice lady that runs your swithboard.

Best Personal Regards,

JGC:bm

cc: John Starr


John G. Christian