

8/26/69

Dear John (cc Bernabei, Schoener, Hoch, Fensterwald),

Today I went to the Archives, having written Johnson first and detailing my interest in the cartridge and comparison pictures and telling him I'd want to examine the FBI negatives and the prints. I have had my own hangups on Frazier and his evidence and testimony, I have never been satisfied by the testimony and it with his exhibits together, without the technical knowledge you took to it. I've had in mind going back since Dick described the pasted-up negatives. I got to thinking about your experience with the photoengraving screen and that impelled me to let other things go and check this out.

You and Johnson are both right. You are right, you got prints with the screen in them. He is right, they did not photograph the page for you. They did use the negatives they have.

They do not have any FBI negatives. When he told me this, I asked to see those negatives Dick saw. (I did not then see them, being with Simmons in the next room when Dick looked at them.) I asked Johnson the source of the negatives, and he told me they had been made for the Commission by the Government Printing Office. Once I saw the negatives, I didn't even take time to examine them with my engravers lens that I had with me (I think it would have frightened Johnson if I had anyway).

The only negatives they have are the offset negatives, those from which the plates used in printing the book were made. The offset camera builds the screen in when it takes the picture. It is that simple. They printed your prints from these negatives, without doubt. But they printed only the exhibits, not the type that was added for purposes of the book. Otherwise, you'd have seen how the negatives with the exhibit numbers and page numbers were added.

However, I didn't let it rest here. I was explicit with Johnson in insisting they ask the FBI for the negatives for the Archives. I invoked the Clark executive order, the correspondence Paul got setting policy and the executive sessions all to show that it was the Commission's attention and the Departments that every bit of evidence that did not require withholding be in the Archives. I asked him to ask the FBI for them and I told him I'd put this in writing, as I shall as soon as I can. I made clear this was not original evidence and that it was now not possible to check for simple error, etc.

Bud was out of town, so I couldn't check with him. I wanted him to go there with me, and I returned to his office afterward and left word for him. I expect he'll phone me tomorrow. However, I am writing you now, before retiring, so save you the possible embarrassment of a false accusation in your brief. Also, as I indicated, Bud has agreed to handle certain limited suits for me, if necessary, our objective being to get the material, not file suits. He has already written the Attorney General a very kind letter saying that if I am not supplied a couple of things he will file for me. I will ask him to include this. I think it is better this way, because this is an action not against the Archives but against the DJ, which drew up the regulations, prepared the guidelines (or approved them), stipulated public policy, and has physical control over what I seek. We'll keep you posted. If Bud is unwilling to add this, we'll be in touch with you and if you want to add it to your suit, I'll help in whatever way I can.