

9/29/71

Mr. David Frost  
Westinghouse Broadcasting Co.  
90 Park Ave.  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Frost,

One of the inevitable consequences of presenting an entertainer in an entertainment format in a discussion of serious issues he neither understands nor wants to understand is the deception of your audience and, as with Jim Bishop tonight, the defamation of more people than you or Barbara Walters detected.

Only those who know these complicated subjects can begin to understand how little Bishop does once he gets past anecdotes. For his purposes he does not have to know. He need only entertain and smear the schmalz. For example, his idea of understanding the autopsy performed on President Kennedy was to demand to be shown that particular room - and to raise a stink when his ghoulish insistence was rejected. But he knew so little of the fact of the autopsy report that when we did a show together in New York several years ago and he accused me of serious error only because he didn't understand the very plain English of the sworn testimony, and I read it back to him, he got so upset he spilled a cup of coffee on a jacket beritting the swankiest Park Avenue doorman, whose taste it would have suited. And three officials of the Secret Service have told me that he lied about what he attributed to that agency.

Calling Martin Luther King, Jr. a coward will sell his potboiler in the south, but it is as shameful as all the other trash that makes him rich. This is too serious a subject for such treatment, and I deeply regret, especially for your sake, that your response to my request for equal time for response was to have him back again so he could use you, your stations and your audience for such foul vilification.

Every one of King's close advisers tried to keep him from returning to Memphis. They knew of threats against him. I had to withhold publication of some to avoid inviting the murder of my sources. (Privately, you can hear the taped interviews.) King alone insisted on returning. There was a bomb threat on his plane, but he did fly there. How cowardly is that? His reaction to the violence of the frustrated young blacks in Memphis was not terror, as Bishop said, but horror. It was his own people who removed him bodily, fearing he'd be killed, not because he cowed or feared. And after that a coward insisted on going back? You should speak to some of those there, as I have.

If, as I again request, you have me to give the other side, on this point I would like you to invite the Revs. Kyles and Smith of SCLC, both of whom told me how close to getting killed at Selma they and King were. As their eyes wet, so did mine. It was the use of a Department of Justice car only that saved his life. That the goons were afraid to attack. They were there, as they were with him on many occasions when he persisted in marching when they expected all would be killed. How fitting an accompaniment to the false insistence that the man who fired the deadly shot is captured.

And Rosa Parks' protest, where King's life was repeatedly in danger, was only because she had sore feet? That is why transportation got desegregated? For shame!

again, the commercial Bishop eye on the southern market. And you his foil.

He defamed the Secret Service, too, blaming it for that over which it had no control and misrepresenting what it could do in advance of the President's trip there. It did not then have computerized records. Not until after the assassination was it so equipped. It did not and could not sanitize Dallas, and if you believe Oswald the killer, as he says, why no mention of the silence by the FBI about Oswald to the Secret Service? It is an obvious impossibility for a police force much larger than the Secret Service to "sanitize" any large city. What you permitted him to say without challenge is that the Secret Service was deficient, inherently to attribute the success of the assassination to its deficiencies. In no sense is the assassination in any way the fault of the Secret Service, which could have done nothing to prevent it, Manchester also to the contrary notwithstanding.

As you said, there is something terrifying about our great men being killed. One of the reasons it continues is because the investigations are inadequate and in too many cases palm off a "pat" but false solution.

It is also terrifying to one who has deep concern to find that the vast audience of the electronic media is available only to those who commercialize these great tragedies and is denied to those who make detailed, persistent, vigorous and accurate investigations. Is it less that terrifying to you that you and others present only fiction about these great crimes? As my last week's letter proves, Bishop doesn't even know the most elemental evidence of the King assassination.

Was this all your staff needed to bring him back to add defamations to falsification?

One more word on King's cowardice, as Bishop describes it. If you will consult the appendix of my FRAMING-UP you will find a transcript of an intercepted conversation in which a virulent racist talks of the long effort of an associate to get close enough to King to kill him without getting caught himself. My OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS brought part of this out in late 1967. It was also in the papers. What is laid out in that transcript amounts to a blueprint of what happened. King knew of it. Did he stay home thereafter?

I now request enough time to respond to Bishop on both shows. And I do hope you will also invite this two ministers, who marched with King, to tell the Selma story as it was, not as it sells books in the south at the cost of the reputation of a man who was great in every way and when he can no longer defend his name. At least one, the Rev. Tyles, can tell you the true story of King's very real bravery in Memphis. He has his church there.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg