

RUSSELL W. GIBBONS
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15230

August 3, 1966

Mr. James Boylan
Editor
Columbia Journalism Review
Columbia University
New York, N.Y. 10027

Dear Mr. Boylan:

In that one of the purposes of the Columbia Journalism Review is stated as "to call attention to the shortcomings" of journalism and related forms of communications, I am suggesting an exploration into the area of alleged government pressures on the book trade.

While I am not equipped with the background to make any judgments, I found it quite disturbing that an author with an apparently excellent manuscript, a title that those in the book sales field acknowledged would move and a background which suggests responsible research- should find the book publishing field closed to him.

I am referring to Harold Weisberg's book, "Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report." This privately-published volume is both convincing and responsible, and where it has been reviewed this has been a fair assessment of its contents.

Mr. Weisberg's arguments or his evaluation of the Warren Report, while disturbing, are not my particular concern in writing you, however. I do feel that it is the concern of those who are critics of our communications industry to look into his experience- detailed in the book's preface which is devoted to the author's 14-month effort to find a publisher for "Whitewash."

The book's cover says it is "the book that couldn't be printed" and the author quotes one publisher as saying that no one in the trade "will now touch this subject." That Mr. Weisberg made the rounds of 63 U. S. publishers by his own count, with fully a third of them declining to read his manuscript, would itself suggest one of two things: he has a lousy book or it is indeed "too hot."

(more)

Considering the titles which are weekly brought out by the name houses, and from reading the reviews of the Weisberg volume in the New York Times and elsewhere, I do not feel that the former is true. Thus Mr. Weisberg may not only have a subject "too hot," he may have also produced an unintended but just as disturbing commentary on the freedom of the press.

For it was not just the book publishers, but magazine and newspaper editors who passed up "Whitewash" and all its documentation. A well-known New York house that broke into publishing with popular sexology titles and has now cracked the best-seller list with a flying saucer opus- and which has made much of its coming out with "banned" books- also declined "Whitewash."

I hold no brief for Mr. Weisberg or the thesis of his book. I do believe, however, that when a well-researched volume on something as significant as the assassination of a President of the United States encounters such problems, it should also be the concern of those who wish to maintain a free press.

Incidentally, everything I have been able to find out indicates that the author is anything but hungry to make a dollar out of this undertaking, although like all authors there is no reason why he should not realize the accepted rewards of the trade. He has brought out at his own expense a 200-page book, offset from a single-spaced typescript, in his own words "the least desirable of forms."

Anyone familiar with the costs of printing and book publishing, distributor's costs, retailer's mark-up and the other headaches which publishers normally assume must conclude that Harold Weisberg is a man of dedication and conviction- and that he has something to say. Even if the trade will not allow it to be said in print.

I hope that you might find it worthwhile for some commentary in the Review.

Sincerely yours,

Russell W. Gibbons

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PUBLIC RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT

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Dear Mr. Weisberg:

This will supplement our very enjoyable telephone conversation of the other day. As an old fan of George Seldes I thought the Review would be a logical place to make an appeal for some dispassionate investigation of your experience.

If he shows any interest I will let you know.

Warm regards,

Russell W. Gibbons

Russell W. Gibbons

Mr. Harold Weisberg
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