

Dear Gerry, copy to Dennis,

12/5/95

The headline on this story in today's Post Style section caught my eye by triggering the past. I read the story half a day ago and do not recall if it identified that steel corporation, Youngstown Sheet & Tube. It was one of the most anti-labor employers in the 1930s yet was one of the last of the Committee's investigations of those corporations that I recall. We could have had a much more sensational hearing but LaFollette chickened out. When he saw my unhidden contempt he decided to get rid of me when he could. He had decided that he had gotten all the political good he could from his committee and feared continuing it would hurt him in the money department.

As best I can now recall those hearings were on the "little steel" strikes of 1937. All my bound hearings are now at Hood and my are they rich in thesis materials!

The Committee lawyer in charge of that hearing was later famous and then had been placed there by Felix Frankfurter, whose clerk he had been. Ed Pritchard was a very bright guy who was also very lazy. He had done nothing to prepare the case, known as the "brief," for the Senators to use in questioning the witnesses and the hearing was for the next day when late the night before I learned that the two investigators working on it were hopelessly lost. Both fine men. One, Charles Falto, a dwarf hunchback, had a desk in my office. The other, Charles Clift, later on the FCC and then on the Washington staff of the ^{since} defunct ^{weekly magazine} The Reporter, was working it over with Flato when they asked me for help. They had all the case records and when I went over them I saw what they did not. We could pinpoint where in the plant the shots that killed strikers had to have come from. That could have meant murder cases if the Commission brought it to light.

And I organized it to work out that way, to build to that climax.

Clift and Flato started putting the case together in the form of questions for LaFollette to ask the coming morning. I woke Ed Pritchard at home and told him he'd better get the hell in and finish it up as a lawyer should. He fussed about being awakened and did not come in early to do the work he should have done. And LaFollette had to hit it all cold.

At the hearings he sat ~~at~~ the dais and I below him at the witness table handling the exhibits and getting them into the record straight, things like that. And when he saw where it was going he dropped it cold.

In the end it was not the lack of political funds that defeated him and gave us Joe McCarthy. It was his and his governor brother Phil's political changes. They abandoned their father's party and started their own that was soft-of toward fascism. (Their sister Suzanne was a well known New York City Trotskyite. If she ever attended a hearing I was not aware of it.)

Pritchard later was a DJ lawyer and a mover and shaker in the Democratic National Committee. When he went back to Kentucky, where legitimate politics were crooked as hell, he thought he'd be immune, too. But he ^{was} too liberal. He was caught,

charged, tried, convicted and served his sentence. That was the end of his career at least to my knowledge.

Youngstown again.

When I started putting together what I intended to develop into a new King assassination book, The King Conspiracies, I wondered how to make it comprehensible that people not intended the wrong thing go ahead and do what if they thought about it they'd recognize as very wrong. As I had done and decided to report and did in the preface that has to be around somewhere but was not in that box when I checked it some years ago,

Although it was all very strange to me I prepared the Committee's first hearing. I'd been working in Akron, has just served a couple of subpoenas, the last on the head of Goodyear, when I was called back. I got an overnight train Friday and when in Washington learned that the friends I lived with had gotten us a new apartment, moved my stuff with their's, and left no word for me. So I did not know where I lived and had to live with what I'd travelled with.

The hearing, as I now recall, was for the coming Tuesday. I had part of Saturday, Sunday and Monday to prepare it, what I'd never prepared before. Somehow it worked. It was a good hearing, got a decent press for those days, and at the end of that hearing I was made the committee's editor. I'd then edited a high school and a college weekly but nothing else.

I was just settling into my new office when the investigator on the case to be heard the next day came rushing in. He was looking for one of the two witnesses I'd used, the head of the Atlanta office of a labor-spy agency that called itself The Railway Audit and Inspection Company and his chief labor spy, a wretched apology for a man named W.H. Gray. Before going south Gray had worked as a labor spy operative in the Mahoning Valley. That is where Youngstown Ms. LaFollette had goofed and excused Gray and his boss, a real stinker named Eugene Ivey. The investigator needed Gray, he said, for the next day's hearing. Would I please try to find him so he'd be there to be questioned?

I don't know what others did to find Gray but it was simple. I suppose the others were too excited to think clearly. I phoned Union Station and asked when the last and the next train left for Atlanta. They could not have made the previous train and had almost an hour for the next one. So I rushed to Union Station, learned the track on which that train would be, on the lower level, went there and lo! there was Ivey smoking a cigarette walking back on forth on the platform. I asked him where Gray was, he claimed not to know, so I went into that car, saw no Gray, went to the wash room, opened the door and there Gray was, sitting fully dressed and also smoking. I asked him to come with me, he declined, I grabbed his jacket at the neck and physically took him off the train and back to the Senate Office Building. With no luggage and no Ivey.

Even if I had had a subpoena, which I did not, that would have been wrong.

Nobody bothered to tell me, then about 23, that I had done wrong. And that on the Civil Liberties ^{committee} committee. Not one of the lawyers chided me or undertook to explain to me what I should have known for myself, why it was so wrong. It was only some time later that I thought of it other than in terms of the committee's immediate objective and realized how wrong it was.

The next day's hearing was again cut short by LaFollette and Gray was not even called as a witness on his labor spying and provocations of violence in the Mahoning Valley, in Youngstown in particular.

This came to mind when I saw the headline, "Steelworker's Song! about Springsteen's song based on the book about the physical destruction of that steel plant that had failed, Journey to Nowhere."

Sitting and thinking a bit after writing this something else about Youngstown came to mind.

Despite the odds and without a penny to spend in promoting it I had made a success of Whitewash. It was getting attention in the media even when the media ignored it. I was phoned by a reporter for a Youngstown radio and TV station. He was that year's president of the press ~~org~~ organization for the state. He asked me to be the main speaker at its convention that May or June in Columbus and to speak about the book or the assassination. I now do not remember which. All the media bigshots were there and were they antagonistic! The editors of the papers in particular, in particular one from the Taft paper in Cincinnati. The poor man who invited me almost lost his job of I think news director of that station. He phoned to tell me he could not speak to me again. And he didn't.

Dell, which had rejected Whitewash three times, came to me to reprint it in late 1966. The first print was for a quarter of a million copies. In the accounting I got later it never sold more than half of that first print but it had reprinted, by its own accounting, twice—with 125,000 copies on hand if the accounting is believed. Three printings in all. I asked Dell to send me a box of books to distributed at that convention and it did. I had a few left over. When I got them home I happened to look at the copyright page. It was a fourth printing never mentioned in any accounting. And I never got more than the advance or any explanation of why, with 125,000 copies on hand Dell reprinted two times that it acknowledged and a fourth time that it did not acknowledge.

Best,
Harold