

Dear Paul,

8/27/74

Jim told me of your conversation. Thanks for phoning him. I think it will be helpful, I am entirely in accord with being bypassed out this, and I'm deeply sorry you did not follow this suggestion when I made it so long ago. We had only a few moments, while the man with whom we were working was on the phone. So, I have merely a brief summary.

This was a day of minor disaster, one on which I found mechanical mistakes of such a magnitude that everything mechanical done to date requires doing over. Knowing that this could happen, if I didn't expect this one, the worst I've experienced, is one of the reasons I kept telling you as completely truthfully as possible, save for your reluctance to believe, that I could not give a date. So, forget what Jim estimated and go back to the beginning, the only honest thing we can tell you, it will be printed as rapidly as possible. If you had been willing to accept this absolute truth to begin with much of the unpleasantness would have been avoided. As I also told you/~~there~~'ll let you know.

Jim tells me you feel I misunderstood you. I'll let it go at that. But a more precise formulation would be that you wrote what you did not mean to. Again, for this I am not responsible. I'm sorry about it but I did not believe you said other than you meant.

However, this area of misunderstanding has other ramifications that I feel you must know. Whether you believe me or not I will tell it to you exactly as it is.

First of all, regardless of how good ones intentions - and I do not doubt yours - as a generality one does not butt into a project that at best is complicated by deciding this is what I can do to help and because I intend it as help it certainly will be. The subsidiary rights can be more important and more valuable than some books. However, their usefulness often depends on the backstopping of the book. Think Thompson, for example, reached more people with his single Post article than he did with the book and all its extensive promotion. So any subsidiary use can't be self-starting without risking great jeopardy. Jim mentioned one to you, the situation in Congress. It is now much worse, which I'll ask you to see on Faith and a simple statement: executive branch doublecrossing and effective dirtyworkings. Jim knows about this fully. I had spelled its inevitability out the week before to the politically naive Reader people, who are both very bright and very good and concerned, but also inexperienced in dirtyworkings. That something like what happened was inevitable was obvious. They didn't see it and refused to believe it when it was spelled out because their sources were that good. True. But their sources are the doublecrossed politicians.

There are other efforts this far encouraging that I do not even work on on my own phone so I'm not going to tell you. If I can complete it it will be as nothing we have ever had. With all the bad stuff that is currently being pulled, the odds decrease but until there is an answer and with the existing reason for encouragement, it is important that nothing that can in any way interfere happen, no matter how slight it may seem. There simply is no way one not intimately involved can anticipate nor can we communicate any of this or make the kinds of explanations that would be required. Moreover, were this to fail, that does not mean such efforts elsewhere ought not be made. Jim will not respond if you ask him any questions so please don't and please leave it where it is. He is cued in in all of this but not yet personally involved. He is the only person who knows. Of us. It has his wholehearted agreement and deepest and sincerest hope.

There is also something else I hope you will try to understand. In a sense this gets back to helping. When one wants to help it is not uncommon to ask how one can. More valuable in terms of sales in your area would be distribution. I can reach more people with one 15 minute phone conversation with Jim Eason than the Nation will. But if the book is not available in the Bay area, what good will it really do? Ditto for the Nation, and merely having the books in the wholesaler's warehouse means nothing. The largest one in the West is Raymar, at Covrovia, near LA. They had 500 copies for several months and

did not put a single one in a single store. So, when Hal asked me to do 10 minutes with Joe Dolan that first broadcast and it ran three hours and set the whole area on fire, had I not told Dolan that afternoon that Raymar had them and had he not phoned and given them hell, the loss would have been greater. Raymar shipped all 500 to SF and the first day, which was, unfortunately, several days after the broadcast, they all sold. Raymar ordered twice more in a week, each time another 1,000!

The largest (in ~~sales~~ volume) wholesaler had only 100. He is in NYC. I did one TV show when there wasn't a single book on sale in NYC and by the end of that week Whitworth totally unknown the ~~first~~ last day of the week before was the best selling single book in NYC. Another way you can measure this is from the fact that Inquest was remaindered 10 weeks after publication date, for all the steam behind it, all the prestigious reviews. Individual bookstores in Manhattan sold as many as 500 in a single day. There is no doubt in my mind that for all its handicaps if the book had been in the stores when it received attention it would have sold more in the original format than Lane's. Tragically, most stores in Manhattan never ever had a copy, even when it was the best seller. /ww

While under the circumstances I was happy, it was also a disaster compared to what could have been. And that was where I had attention. There are so many large markets where I had none. ~~Shall~~ saved LA for Lane, for example.

Remember Oswald in New Orleans and the Hal/Christian story that the wholesaler they spoke to in the Bay area had 5,000 copies he was paying for the Garrison trial? He didn't put them out. They were a total loss. Christian seems to have put some out of a 5,000 supply he got, but nobody ever saw a penny from it.

There are other stories I could recount. But I switch to other subjects because I take this time to try to inform you of the multitudinous problems into which there should be no intrusion and to give you an understanding of the things that must be tried.

Paul Elder sold lots of books. But he owes me much more money than my profit from those for which he paid. Brantano's wife promised to pay after they bought his out. They didn't. Even the LA Free Press bookstores never paid a cent and stuck me with the freight in addition. If this is not bad enough, add the San Diego committee.

By nature publishing is a very crooked business. With an unknown title as it is more so. I used most of the major distributors for the first three books. All but one cheated me, of more than \$15,000. Much more, as I recall. So, we can't use them. This means working around them. I have made a decent arrangement with that one exception. It also means that we have to begin with the assumption that the best distribution is not going to be available. Yet we can't drop dead. So, I'm trying in those ways I can conceive and in the time I can find to work out what I can. This also takes time under the best of circumstances. The normal time spread with the average publisher is three months from printing to publication date. Obviously, there will be nothing like that. Our timing depends on other factors, one of which was explained to you as I think I had earlier. This is the slowness of normal book distribution, but it also means that when a book gets any attention and can be sold it is on the shelves. If this is not the case, there is futility and considerable loss, in money and in audience.

So, any attention has to be keyed not to someone's good intentions but to the nuts and bolts. But what good will it do to have a Nation story about a book that nobody can buy? And when I talk of being able to buy, I'm talking about people we want to reach with more than the transitory, a magazine piece as well as getting back the money ~~is~~ borrowed and I have expended in other ways.

Suppose this Nation piece were to kill what I have not sought, an NBC special? Would it be worth it? Or suppose the other way, that there is an NBC special and they opt for most of what is in your piece. Do you think the Nation would then touch it?

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You'd have to do a new and different piece. Thinking that beginning with the Nation and is independent and allows for no developments is not consistent with the way any kind of publishing really is.

We have to contend with very real situations, not an amateur independence that with the best of intentions could have been ruinous. Nor should we with all this great load have to worry about understanding. I had written you earlier and repeatedly about this fearing what eventuated and you ignored what I wrote and refused to make the efforts I suggested to learn for yourself independently. Another example: I have arranged for a very touchy things that can at any point be killed, a story in a major paper. Anything like a Nation story would kill that. But what I'd rather have time to worry about is how to get books out in that market ^{and} the local wholesaler beat me out of something like \$750 on Whitewash alone (I never thereafter gave him more). Having learned with my own money, I'm not about to piss Jim's down the drain.

Let me try to put it another way. The life of a book merely begins with the printing. As a baby can be smothered and killed by a single unintended carelessness, so also can a book. Lane's people made a really professional effort with Whitewash (I have no reason to believe he was part of it) that, with good luck, I was able to turn around. If they could almost pull this, can you imagine what, say, the feds might be able to if it served some of their interests. Or the interests of some of them?

Worry have this book printed for two or three weeks and make no public use of it. That may then be the indicated need. If it is, we'll do it. So, don't every query the Nation and if you have let me know immediately.

We daily have to contend with many and serious problems. Those with this book are merely some. Jim is younger and more patient and has fewer but I think he would tell you that he would do it fewer had he the choice. We can't begin to tell you or anyone all of them. Or any, really, because this adds to the problems by taking time from dealing with them. I do this again tonight only because the strain of what I found this afternoon was such that I felt, once I got home and had a late supper, that I ought not try to work on the other things I must. My purpose is to try to give you an understanding in a different way of how you may mean well and do the opposite simply because you are unaware of the realities and to give you enough of a sampling of the realities to keep you still and quiet until there is a time when you a) can help and b) won't risk endangering what you know nothing about.

And there are so many things of which you have no knowledge yet to be done, besides all the work we should be doing on the upcoming Kay case and the State's appeal from the really significant victory Jim won a week ago, one that may be an important legal precedent. I have to get up a multipurpose sheet, to give you one and a not really simple example, that can serve all purposes from a trade-deal ad already worked out in a wholesaler's catalogue to an insertion in our own correspondence to a suitable piece for a mailing to my mailing list where the postage alone will cost perhaps \$200 we really don't have. One that we can use again if we can arrange for other wholesalers to insert in their billings. Appealing to a right-wing wholesaler and a right-wing bookstore and left wing kinds with one piece of literature is not an uncomplicated endeavor, but we can't afford one so how can we afford more than one? I'm writing these book chains with which I've dealt in the past. But each requires an individual letter. I could go on and on. There really is much more to this business than as magazine articles regardless of the magnanimity of the intent. Had the intent been communicated in the form of a question such work and anguish all around would or at least could have been saved. So, please be patient, please don't assume your good intentions are enough and can't be otherwise if you go off on them as a self-starter and please believe me that were this not a taxing enough load we both now carry others of some weight with no one to relieve us for a moment. Touchy stuff that is bound to get touchier, to say nothing of more dangerous, in the next two months. So please also try to think our way and give us the benefit of considering that what we represent is real, not exaggerated, and ought not be increased. Best regards,