

March 17, 1969

Mr. Aaron Kohn, Mg. Dir.
Metropolitan Crime Commission
1107 National Bank of Commerce Bldg.
New Orleans, La. 70112

Dear Mr. Kohn,

C I do welcome your statement that you had nothing to do with bringing Guy Banister to New Orleans. My information was from not fewer than two local reporters of good repute. I had no reason not to credit it.

O There are some things on which we seem to agree. Crime is bad. Officials are no more privileged to violate the law than ordinary citizens. Crime should be punished.

P What troubles me is your selective basis for setting yourself up as an expert, your selective interpretation of crime. In context, you have become one of the more articulate defenders of the greatest crime in a modern society, whether this is your intention or not. You say, "Mine is not the kind of ego which can lead me to believe that my investigative capacities exceed those of the combined federal agencies". You add, "Nor have I the cynicism to believe, ~~that~~ without clear-cut proof, that a vast conspiracy existed to delude the public about the murder of John Kennedy."

Y These are not really proper formulations. They are the evasions of a gifted mind. For example, the question is not at all one of "capacities". What does it profit us for the FBI to have conducted 15,000 investigations if they failed to conduct the right ones? They had the capacity for more than 15,000. One of the more elaborate inquiries was intended to prove that Oswald's pubic hairs were on Oswald's blanket (as though this should have interested anyone other than his wife). To prove that Oswald's blanket is Oswald's blanket is like proving that noon is midday. But how the learned yokels cooed and aahed over the "science". This is not investigation; it is deception. The question, rather than capacity, is of work done, the product of the investigation. You have the intelligence and you have the means - more, you also have the technical skill - to learn for yourself. You have failed to. You refuse to and you will continue to refuse to. Yet crimes were committed in your city, where you pretend to lead a fight against crime. Federal power was involved in these crimes. Unfortunately, there are so few who will fight against any federal power. How clearly I recall the result from Germany. Perjury, for example, was not only committed, it was then protected by federal power, which wanted that perjury and therefore protected it. One of your more respected members was a loud party to one of the grosser frameups in which history and the future of all of us, in my belief, ~~was~~ ^{will} also framed. Need I assure you I do not expect you to tangle with him? To me, he and you will never fight a crime as great as he helped commit - and I know he had no such intention. But that is immaterial. What he did is what is material. He today finances and in other ways helps criminals, those who make a career of slandering the innocent for their personal gain. To me, this is a crime, a great criminality. You work for him. You say you fight crime. I find these things inconsistent.

there was a "vest" (pull your elbow back, Mr. John!) conspiracy to "delude the public". Is that all that was done if the Warren report is not beyond question 100% true? I revert again to your formulations, for they are not forthright. The question is not one of cynicism but of fact. Have you looked for the "clear-cut proof"? What will you do if I deliver it to you, personally? Let me limit that to New Orleans, to make it easier for you. Will you do anything at all? Next I should ask if you'd survive the effort, should you make it?

I assume from your statement that you would agree that any official misrepresentation of the fact, known when made to be false, is both morally and legally wrong. Yet look at what you have accepted in total silence, save for joining the pack against Garrison again:

Dean Andrews swears he committed federal perjury in your city and the federal authorities do nothing about it;

One of the doctors who performed the President's autopsy perjured himself; some of your more prominent citizens perjured themselves (and large numbers, knowing it, remain silent).

Perjury is a crime, no less if committed in federal jurisdiction. Andrews voluntarily proclaimed his. How can you be a crime fighter and silent? How can you fail to denounce the federal crime authorities who are silent and by their silence and tolerance compound the crime - and protect it? It is this I fix on because it is so clear, so open, so well-known to you. Here is a crime of which you have knowledge. How can you pretend fairness in your approach without doing every single thing within your capability to fight this crime? How can there ever be respect for law, justice and their administrators when everyone in your city knows this man has bragged about his serious crime, firm in his belief he would not be punished, and he is not punished? Is this the way you indoctrinate your youth, teach them what is right and what is wrong? Your members include the clergy. Is this their belief, that of their religions? Their concepts of fighting crime?

I do indeed seek truth and fact and justice. Unlike you, I do it without support of any kind, without income, at my own expense. I recognize your words says this is what you also seek. But I see a difference between your words and your performance. I would like very much for you to join me in public demand for the punishment of this so loudly bragged about crime.

I go further and give you this challenge: Garrison has charged Shaw with two counts of perjury. I will therefore not address these. You may be unaware of it, but once he was charged I practically never mentioned him and then restricted myself to what the papers carried. This was not the sum of my information. But I ask you what would you do if I deliver to you documentary proof that he did perjure himself and was not alone in it? You are his defender. I tell you his decision was achieved by false testimony. What will you do? Is this also not a crime?

You conclude with fine words: "I shall continue to fight injustice and corruption to the limit of my abilities". This is what I, certainly, want. I have cited crime, injustice and corruption to you. I welcome your joining the fight against it, no matter how late in those areas of closest interest to me.

I would like to expand a bit on the corruption. What will you do if I deliver to you credible evidence of massive efforts to corrupt the recent case?

I can do it, with evidence you can produce in court. This will include the statements of participants, those of reputable strangers who overheard some of it, those of people consulted. This is not merely corrupt, nor is it only wrong. This is what strikes at the very soul of justice. But will you tangle with those very powerful offenders? Dare you?

C
Garrison and I are not now and never have been close personally. I am not his blind defender. I am, for example, not at all satisfied that the best possible case was presented. And I am in possession of no information that warrants your use of these words: "allegations of crimes committed by Garrison and members of his staff". I know of one carefully-contrived phoney the falsity of which has already been established and I can, by entirely different means, for you. Entrapment is also a crime, even in New Orleans, Mr. Kohn. I have yet to hear your denunciations of Mr. Ennico and Newsweek. However, if you by some strange misunderstanding believe the chief of police is close to Garrison and do not trust his investigation, which shows that the tape was edited, I will give you the name of a reporter not from New Orleans who was voluntarily and in detail told by Besubeauf that no effort was made to either corrupt or pressure him.

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Garrison also has charges against Layton Martens. Martens sought me out in November 1967 to enlist my aid for him in copping a plea. I told him I would not speak to him without his lawyer's assent. He phoned back, pretending he has this assent, and renewed the request. I refused to see him. I told him only that I would tell Garrison of his call. I did, Garrison would have nothing to do with it. Later the police charged Martens with attempted murder. He did plant a knife to its hilt in another's guts. With the police placing the charge, with his already having a case against Martens, why did not Garrison then really throw the book against his enemy? He did not prosecute. Those same "criminals" against whom you inveigh did not and would not because they were satisfied that, within the meaning of the law, the man was not guilty.

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So, having in all the many stories I have read, seen only this contrivance by an on-the-make opposing lawyer as even an unsubstantiated "allegation", the word you are careful to use, I am interested in what other "allegations" you make against which "members of the staff". I happen to hold some high in my esteem.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that if Garrison is wrong he must be immune from retribution. But I am saying that those who utilize a situation in which federal power is so heavily involved, one in which it has been so openly misused (as you certainly should have learned without difficulty, had you tried), to hurl political charges at him, make unsubstantial claims none of which are ever detailed, become partisans of the greatest crime in modern society: abuse of federal power. This is a kid-gloved Hitlerism, no matter what the literary and legal commentologists do with it. With an election so close, there is a proper way. With the election so close, the other and dubious efforts serve what do not, to me, seem to be honorable purposes.

I have answered you at some length, despite the lingering of a debilitating fever, for I would like to believe and dox look for meaningful assurances that you and your group are nothing but genuine, only impartial, not part of the enormous campaign to which Garrison has been subjected only because of his position on the Kennedy assassination. I very much want truth and justice. I will show you what I believe to be crimes in New Orleans if you will show me the determination to do what is proper about them. Until then, for whatever it is worth to you, from my observation you are defeating yourselves.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg