

12/25/76

Dear Jim,

From Lardner's story in this morning's Post at the least my yesterday's efforts have resulted in smacking more of the fake story out. I have trouble believing that Jimmy said anything like this. More like Freed than Lane, too. I believe Lane's denial of being the source, I have asked someone who is coming to look for a Times. If it did not come to town today I know you'll get it.

I monitored WAVA for a while this morning. A little after 8:10 they carried an item about Ray allegedly - they did not say allegedly - receiving both money and instructions from what was called by the word "accomplice" in Portugal. It was attributed to Fauntroy.

The Fauntroy part was big on the 11 p.m. Channel 4 news last night, delivered by a black reporter. It, like all the others, has Ray confessing guilt and admitting he had accomplices.

One of the visible effects of what I did is the emphasis on "unsubstantiated," unless that began with you and Martin, whose story I still have not seen. ("Fauntroy acknowledged in a telephone interview that the report was unsubstantiated." But he insisted "it came from someone he regards as 'a reliable source who has spoken with Ray.'" Later in the story there is more from Fauntroy on this, "but Fauntroy said the source of the story "is of such reliability that we feel confident the lead is worth following."

The most obvious reaction to this is that if it is unsubstantiated and if it is only a lead who go public with it? Doing so is defamatory and extremely prejudicial to Ray's rights.

On the face the story is not credible. It is not even within reason. While the average reader will not take it this way and will be prejudiced against Jimmy by it the story is still another proof of the utter and uncontrollable committee irresponsibility, and of course another evidence of its abysmal ignorance even after several months in which to learn. (Lardner, by the way, had Frame-Up in front of him and tried to give other than the obvious meaning to my passages about Portugal. My talking him with not only prevented that, as he understood once we discussed it - it got him to get Fauntroy to take a stand and be more specific. It also resulted in his picking up the limitations "Martin omitted, not a member of Ray's family or a lawyer.")

Lane's comment is not bright, whether or not intended, as I think it was, that Jimmy was a conscious part of a conspiracy: "He told me that when he fled the United States he was fleeing from everyone." Everyone is not just cops. Co-conspirators.

Two things are very clear: they are using this crap to get an appropriate, which is exactly what I predicted they would do; and they are assuming Jimmy killed King. There is no way around that in any version, beginning with yesterday's Anderson column.

Now this is exactly what I learned from inside the committee second-hand - one of the members blabbing to reporter friends of mine. More than one member, as I think a memo I gave you shows. This is exactly what Sprague told them, exactly what Ozer did.

There is a fuzziness about the form of the committee's "information." While all earlier account convey the idea it is sworn testimony this story says "has received... a report..." Remarkably enough here is where you phoned. I agree that it could have been Avery. I would not rule Russell or Cliff out

This is specific enough in what I warned Jimmy they would do, use him as a means of getting continued and a large hunk of money: "These are among the leads we'll be able to pursue if we succeed in getting the basic budget requested." "Basic budget requested" - the largest in Congressional history. Fauntroy has learned his Orwell.

I'm sorry to have been so correct in looking ahead but I think before long this will kick back. It is irresponsible, it is raw, it is without any credibility and we can certainly say they never made any effort to check it with us. Now you can see the kind of rotten stuff they planned. Even a Jimmy denial of this would have made a headline. They are no less out to get him than I have felt from the first. We should find out if this was Ozer. Best, HW