

1/25/67

Dear Sylvia,

Had thousands of sheets of various kinds of paper give us by a friend moving abroad. Look what my artist and a nephew did for practically nothing.

Sorry you reacted as you did to the Nizer bit. May I suggest that you suspend judgement until we learn more? I've been through this before. And I disagree. I prefer a quiet format, and what I've done on the Jack McInney and other shows prove I can handle it effectively. Some times there is no alternative to heat and passion, and although most intellectuals do not acknowledge it, the average persons suspects and dismisses those who are not heated and passionate under provocation and when there is abundant cause. I had misgivings on the Knebel and Burke shows, but I haven't since then. This came up on the McInney show last Friday. He had heard WOR. He pointed out that what really steamed him and his audience up was nothing they had done previously, not my quite competent performance when Vince and Curtis shared that show with me, but what I did in the last half hour of the four to Curtis.

Actually, half the intellectuals I've spoken to following the WOR thing agree with me, and all of the nonintellectuals. The station now says this was a historic thing (I do not so believe). It apparently gave them more phone calls than anything else they've done. The vice-president and program director came up to me alone at the end of the show, and he wrung my hand warmly and spoke only praise.

Aside from all of this, there was no other possible way for two reasons: I go on autopilot and can control myself but little, and one more flat, emotionless voice would have made the program dead. On our side there was Sauvage, who in his quiet way was brilliant and effective, especially so by contrast. He also can be no other way. There was no other way of interrupting Nizer, who is non-stop without interruption. Without this heat and passion, the loaded character of the show would not have been clear, as it was to everyone to whom I've spoken. And by the end Nizer was shaken, so deeply disturbed he was silent when he had two public and unlimited private opportunity to comment on my direct assault on his integrity at the end, and that I did quietly.

The professional reaction, meaning that of radio people, was exactly the opposite of yours. I've heard from them.

Personally, I hate it this way. It takes something out of me I cannot begin to describe. I prefer a calm, relatively dispassionate discussion of the evidence, and whenever there is the opportunity, that is what I do. Those who heard my west-coast shows can tell you this. Even where I really lost my temper and blew on camera on Lomax, despite my misgivings, the reaction to me was 100% my way. It was also the reaction of Lomax's own staff.

Aside from the fact that this is drama and radio listeners want drama, what most of us working in this field do not realize but what the thousand letters I've gotten clearly reflect is that the average American feels this just as deeply as we do, and they expect and respect people to have feelings to show them.

There is even the mid-west poet who wrote me after seeing the Metromedia special, where the editing was brutal to me, who said that passion is the ultimate expression of the intellect.

So, while I do not at all like this, hate to suffer it, for it is, to me, a real suffering (the little finger of my right hand was numb and paralyzed for five or six hours, that is the effect on my nervous system), I cannot avoid it because of the kind of person I am and I am quite convinced that it is, on balance, what gets over to the overwhelming majority of the people who hear and see it. Time will tell. We will also see what this has done to Nizer's reputation and his future appearances, if any. I will not be surprized if he is not at the new special, and I have already written, insisting on the presence and availability of the 26 volumes and on the moderator controlling the program and stopping him when he lies and slanders, promising that I will if he does not. And I mean it, and they know I do. And I will, too. If this was not Nizer's last program in opposition to me, that one will be! He's sold enough of his books that way, anyway. I do not take offense at your candor. I asked for it. Less is not friendship. I was hoping that this time the quiet intellectuals might react differently. I knew the reaction of the staff (aside from Deane) before I left and during the show. My subsequent phone calls, few because they failed to keep their promise to give my address, were also long, also passionate, also all my way, excitedly, and not one from "ordinary people". Unless there is tight control from an informed and fair moderator, you will find there is no other way of handling Nizer, for he permits no other. He is a remarkable able, intelligent, unscrupulous, slippery man, entirely without conscience, and entirely aware of what he is consciously doing...And now you understand more of why I was so subdued on Barry Gray, what I didn't more forcefully stop the interruptions, diversions and evasions. I knew this would follow, having already taped it...Had I not antagonized the moderator, this would have been a popular victory for Nizer. There was no other thing to do when she behaved as she did, for he and she had corrupted the entire show beforehand, giving him control over what would be discussed and the first half-hour of ^{what} they really planned for only a two-hour show. We were told we'd tape from 10 until 12, but possibly we might run longer. I was told I'd be able to leave at the latest by 12:30. So, in addition to the minimum of a quarter of the show he had to begin with, he'd have had all the rest by simply taking it with her active help. It was

so raw that while Nizer was making his closing remarks Deane and Roberts were cooking up a deal to give Roberts final say. It should have been mine, and it was, I suppose, while I was speaking. Until the very end, we went from Nizer through the others to me. At the end she called on me to follow Nizer. When I caught on to what was happening I made violent signals they read loud and clear, and Leo, really we, were not in this additional way further cheated.

I'd be interested in the reaction of lawyers.

What you have been told about maintaining a calm and clinical attitude is true where there is an honest show and an equal opportunity. Here Nizer would have talked and lied for almost 100% of the time. What little stopping there was of him was because of my insistence, not all of which was verbal. They didn't get the stopwatch out at the end until they saw me looking at the studio clock and noting the time. Even then they didn't interrupt his three minutes until he got to six, and after much gesticulating by me, when they announced we'd have as much time (and we didn't).

But we'll see. I believe it will go far toward kindling even greater interest in the subject.

Dick Sprague went out to California without speaking to me first, so I was of less help than I might have been. But as soon as I heard from him I did much more checking into the DCA-Wolper film that I had discovered last summer, and I have a pretty complete story, including the obvious omissions. It is all being Xeroxed for me. I now have the names of all the photographers who film was used, the names of the organizers, processors, distributors, etc. I also have where each was standing save for those near the TSBD. Here the FBI reports are Warren. Among the other new material I have that I just cannot go into now is the original Lovelady shirt FBI Report of 2/39 (it is actually dated 3/2). It also indicates the pictures were taken in the FBI office. I have a memo quoting Doctor Light as saying 399 could not have inflicted Connally's wrist wounds without great deformation, hence could not have, and many others, in the words of the commercials, "too numerous to mention", that I'll use in WHITEWASH III, which soon will be at a size that will preclude not only profit but the possibility of breaking even. I have discovered a number of other photographers who were known. Where the pictures were examined the FBI looked only for actual photographs of the actual assassination and nothing else. I've proved the theory that they didn't want Willis's pictures until he published them, that even J. Edgar Hoover knew so little about Zapruder months after the assassination that he called him "Adrien". The CIA has a print, made my LIFE. Many other things I now cannot recall. The end of ~~last~~ week and the early part of this I expect I've asked for the Xeroxing of 100 documents, which costs (fortunately, Dell has promised a little money, although the accounting is not due for several more months) and the money with which I pay for it still is not my own. I'd be getting more, extra copies of some, etc., if I could afford to, so you all could have it before III is out. And now I've more interruptions. Good one! I'm making a ~~has~~ short speaking trip. It includes a good day at WNAAC (which didn't approach me until after the "can show" where I've been

crowd for radio for two hours by phone and am to appear there for a live, two-hour radio show and both radio and TV tapings. They're so interested I'm taking extra materials from which they'll make slides for their future use, and they're paying my expenses. This permits a stop at Hartford on the way up, to speak at Trinity college and on WTNF, Mike Heid's show. Then I got to the Univ of Vermont for a lecture. Dell may line up something in New York going or coming. I've suggested the Farber show. They think it unlikely because of this recent special. I do also. But if he accepts it will give me a measure of the effectiveness of the special, for his acceptance so soon will be unusual.

These things I have to do, but it raises hell with getting work done.

Never expected to write this long a letter or I'd have used regular paper. Thanks for the letter and its frankness. We'll just have to wait and see. Be up there 1/30 unless the show pops out again. By the way, are you aware of any writing by Scobey and Dell other than her ABA piece?

Best,

21 January 1967

Dear Harold,


First, I want to thank you very much for your letters to me, the copies of your letters to other persons, and your telephone calls while you were in New York. I am sorry that still another visit went by without our seeing each other personally but these difficulties seem to be inevitable, given such crowded schedules as we both follow. Harold, your letter to Jones Harris describing the shirt (CE 150) was really a masterpiece in its care and detail. I am quite intrigued by your description of blobs of wax-like substance on the shirt. You remember, I am sure, that a similar bit of waxy material was found inside the paper bag? (See 4H 77 and 4H 74) Stombaugh testified that he submitted the wax from the shirt for spectrographic analysis but nothing is said about the results thereof. Have you seen any report in the Archives?

I was able to hear part of the Martha Deane discussion on my transistor radio at the office but with many interruptions and then I had to leave for a lunch appointment so that I missed the last hour entirely. I am told that the whole 4 hours will be replayed on Tuesday night the 24th from 11 p.m.

When you called me before setting out for home, the morning before the broadcast, you seemed very pleased and felt that Nizer had been demolished. Harold, please do not take offense if I tell you that several people who listened to the discussion did not agree. Nor did I agree. Nizer actually came through very deceptively as a calm, judicious, authoritative speaker—although as we know he is in reality an arch-faker and ignoramus who should not dare to open his mouth in public on this case. The really sad thing is that you were entirely right on every factual issue, and he was entirely wrong, devious, ignorant, and dishonest—yet it did not come through that way, at least, not to the people who commented on the discussion to me, because your attack was so vigorous that Nizer assumed the aura of a patient, temperate, and virtuous martyr. I think it was a mistake to antagonize the moderator, however arbitrary or unfair her rulings in guiding the discussion.

Please take these comments as they are intended, Harold—in friendship and the hope of being helpful and constructive. I view you as a real powerhouse and titan of factual detail and precision unmatched by any other WR critic. I know how enormously effective you can be on TV and radio. It requires a terrible degree of self-denial, of course, to abjure protest against real misrepresentation and real unfairness—yet the discussion of evidence must not be eclipsed by dispute about the formalities of discussion and the critics, if anything, must present themselves as even more measured, objective, confident, and unemotional than their opponents. I have been told repeatedly that the maintenance of calm and clinical attitude on these radio and TV appearances, as much as the weight of the evidence itself, makes a strong impression on the audience. Sometimes a more aggressive approach is successful, as was the case on the Alan Burke program—but it is risky and in the case of the Nizer/Roberts affair, it was unsuccessful.

Again, my grateful thanks for all the trouble you have taken to keep me in the picture on your activities and correspondence, and especially for your offers of help with my ms. Warm regards, as ever,


Sylvia Meagher