

JLJW JP

July 30, 1971

Miss Barbara Walters
TODAY Show
National Broadcasting Company
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10020

Dear Miss Walters:

Jerry Ray has written me of his attempt to interest you in airing ~~and~~ on the situation of his brother and my book, FRAME-UP, from which James's defense stems. He and James had both earlier written me, each asking that I background you prior to airing the Petros sequence with Jerry. I did make this offer to NBC News Washington.

I knew from long experience that Today would not air me on any aspect of the political assassinations, that having been made explicitly clear as far back as 1966 when one of your staff, in some embarrassment, offered to air me on anything else on which I am expert, such as cooking and waterfowl. Because as I always have I shun personal publicity as distinguished from responsible attention to responsible work (as members of NBC News Washington can tell you going back for more than ten years), I declined this offer, even though the mere mention of my name when I had books for sale would tend to sell those books.

This is an introduction to what follows, ^{not} an appeal for airing which, in the last analysis, if we are to have freedom of the press, must be your decision, a decision experience shows is too often made on the lower level of the production staff or on the basis of ignorance or prejudice.

I address this letter to you for two reasons. First, because from Jerry's letter I am not a stranger to you as I was not to the staff that produced him. And second, because Edwin Newman goes on vacation today. My real purpose in writing is to express a sincere appreciation for Edwin Newman's highly principled deflating of George Jessel's vicious, mindless and disgustingly cheap political propaganda in attacking the New York Times and the Washington Post as "Pravdas", a cheap paraphrase of the former Neanderthal Congressional designations of "uptown editions of the Daily Worker." Mr. Newman's temperate but skilled and incisive deflation of your pompous guest's bad taste and stupidity is in the best tradition of American journalism, important because of the large number of people whose opinions you help form and particularly because too often too many hosts remain silent in the face of such anti-American abuses. Since I can't get this appreciation to Mr. Newman, I do want the show to know. We are all in your debt for it.

I tell you this despite what I regard as personal abuse of me and my work by both papers. The Sunday Times Book Review, for example, finding no competent men on the Times' large staff, reached all across the country to find an old adversary who had made himself my enemy, a man who was simultaneously engaged in propaganda for the USIA, to "review" FRAME-UP, a book severely but quite factually critical of failures elsewhere in the federal bureaucracy. From his "review" the book is unrecognizable. It is a personal attack on me, inexcusable when presented as an impartial literary review.

The Washington Post, which has never acknowledged the literary existence of any of my books, in this case decided against a review because it has unjustified right-hand margins. Regardless of the cause, in this case legitimate and outside the publisher's ability to influence, the right-hand margins are hardly the responsibility of the author or in any way a measure of the content of the book.

I tell you these things because they should let you understand that, in writing to commend Mr. Newman and your show for his exemplary behaviour this morning, I do not write as partisan of either newspaper. I would appreciate it, if it presents no difficulty to you, if you could convey to Mr. Newman after his vacation the sense of gratitude at least one viewer felt. And if you understand that, after seven years and at 58, I have slowed down to an 18-19 hour working day, you may better understand my genuine sincerity in taking this time for nothing but praise.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg