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New York Times Bureau
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8/10/78

Dear Wendell,

If from lack of trust or any other reason you can't tell me what kind of story you are working on please do not call me again. Prior to yesterday I twice cautioned you about this and about the possibility of getting sandbagged. After being sandbagged you phoned without indicating more than that you were looking for information and even when I was again cautioning you ignored the caution. As a result your latest adventure in leak-scoop journalism is neither accurate nor honest and is still another bit of Times propaganda for those who have become the current Congressional McCarthys.

I phoned you after receiving a number of calls from reporters who within my experience are good reporters. In your absence I spoke to Tony, whose representation of the story is other than what had been given to me. After speaking to Tony I drove into Frederick, got a copy of today's Star, read the story and by this have been made to feel unclean.

This is not from any inability to deal with those who do not agree with me. Most of the reporters for whom I take time do not agree with me. ^{Disagreement} This has nothing to do with my willingness to take the time they require and as you know I do spend the time.

You did not tell me you were working on a story on the committee, its appropriation, the police tape or tests of any kind. If you had then you would not have been able to write what you turned in and the Times put on its wire to deceive and mislead the Congress, which will vote on the appropriation, and the people, who have been sorely abuse by all sides.

Your second graf states that "the committee has found," a false notion ^{repeated} ~~repeated~~ in other ways. The only thing the committee found is a Penn Jones newsletter of a year or more ago with the identical story from the identical source, that tape. You then credit to these stumblebums "This new evidence..." and "the new evidence" and "the only tape recording of the assassination known to exist" (have you confirmed it is genuine?) plus secrecy for more than a year, which serves to justify its star chamber life.

If there is an authentic testing that proves what you without qualification say has been proven it will do no more than confirm what I have said all along. I would welcome this kind of confirmation, not object to it.

Your (plural) story states that "the committee has found 'acoustical evidence' that four shots, one more than was identified by the Warren Commission..." Another reporter, who spoke to Bolt, Baranek & Newman, tells me that the company believes an echo is possible, among other things. And the Commission did not "identify" three

shots. It concluded there were three because more than three means conspiracy. It "identified" more than three from a number of witnesses. Thus your penultimate graf is inaccurate in saying that the committee "would produce the first dispute of the Warren Commission's findings from an official source..." Most people will, I believe, agree with me that J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI and the Secret Service are official enough-and all disputed the Commission.

What you did check with me, if not in this context, is not reflected accurately. You say that the FBI "reported that it required 2.3 seconds between shots to operate the bolt and reload the weapon." The FBI did not provide this representation of a variable and it is not what I told you. You follow this with what is not true and what I did not tell you, "This conformed to the time estimates made from a film of the shooting and with statements of witnesses."

The propaganda gets wild with what you did not check with me, "...though the existence of ~~the~~ the police tape may have been known to the commission, the types of acoustical tests now possible were not available in 1964."

The last ~~tax~~ statement is equivalent to saying that until man reached the moon he could not fly. In fact Bell Laboratories, at Whippany, N.J., made such tests and reached conclusions with what I believe it found was a fabricated tape. In 1964.

The Commission had and published three contradictory versions of "the police tape," the last, an incomplete one, by the FBI. (I believe there was a record as well as other police broadcasts that were taped, like those of the state and the county.) Are you saying that the Commission "may have known" of the existence of what it had transcribed for it? If you do not say this you omit something.

There is more inaccuracy and infidelity but I take no more time for it.

If the Times wants to puff these junior Keystone [^]ops the place for that is on the editorial page, not in what is falsely represented as news and is inaccurate to boot. I regret that the Times has seen fit to allow itself to be seduced by leaks calculated to result in the propaganda that resulted. I regret any misleading of the country on this subject, which I do not regard as a whodunit.

But if the Times believed it had decent journalistic hold on a story, where is any reflection of the failure [?] of all official investigators, including but not limited to the Commission and the FBI? Can this be because the Times has been steadfast in its support of both with regard to that assassination? If this is a new tape or an old one, can the earlier official investigators have done their job?

How you could conclude that four shots would "bring investigators no closer to actually determining a conspiracy" I leave to you when there is no question that four shots could not have been fired by any one man with that rifle. Or do you end in the belief that more than one person does not mean conspiracy?

When you called me could you not have asked me if thi is a new story? If any work has been done on it in the past? (Actually, all the committee ^{tests} represent is also a duplication of the last piece I saw in the Jones newsletter, the second on this.)

You could not have called the company that made the tests? Even So fine did that.

You surely did not believe that under any circumstances I would give your story to another reporter, did you?

I am left without any rational explanation of this paranoid supersecrecy which emerged as cheap propaganda. It is not the personal or professional standards I would ordinarily expect of the Times or of you or of anyone else connected with the story, outside the leakers.

There is, as far as I can perceive, no rational explanation for your ~~error~~ failure to check the important parts of your story.

Your own earlier reporting of this committee's representations should have filled you to overflowing with misgivings.

Of course if your failure to check the essential parts of your story with me when you phoned comes from a lack of trust in me then on this basis alone there is no reason for you to ask anything of me. If you can't trust me how can you possibly trust anything I might say?

On my part I believe I should know what I am being ~~asked~~ ^{asked} about, what I might be getting into and as is also true with your story, if what I provide is going to be represented inaccurately, even if not attributed to me personally.

This simplifica, I believe, into observance of normal, tradition I use respected journalistic practice. For my part I believe the ethical minimum is the scrupulous observance of ^{these} ~~this~~ accepted and I think proper standards. I have yet to receive a complaint that I do not abide by them. Nobody has to ask me to and I regret having any cause to feel that I have to ask any reporter to do so.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg