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Frederick, Md. 21701

January 13, 1977

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.  
Majority Leader  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. O'Neill:

News accounts indicate a belated House awareness of problems with its assassinations committee. The seriousness of these problems is, I believe, much greater and certain to be longer-lasting than Members may now appreciate.

There now is no simple or easy solution. Aside from the responsibilities the House bears to the nation, it has created a situation in which, whether it decides to grant its creature all the money it asks for or to abolish it, there is no vote that now cannot be hurtful to the Member, in the present or historically. Neither of these extremes will solve the problems of the House and of the nation. Nor will a pretended compromise of merely cutting out the more outrageous budgetary proposals. None of these alternatives solves anything. Each creates new problems.

It is not my purpose to please you. It is my purpose to try to be helpful. I cannot be helpful if I am not forthright. In my youth I was taught that forthrightness is proper and honorable conduct. In my seniority I have learned it is often unwelcome.

There is virtually no subject on which any Member cannot be well and rapidly informed if the desire exists. Aside from what is possible through Members' staffs, the Library of Congress does provide dependable services. On the subject of political assassinations, the Congress has sought out only those with obvious personal interests to serve, those who have well-established public records of undependability and those who are obviously neither rational nor informed. The resolution was passed on the basis of absolute nonsense - nonfact. I mean this literally and I am quite prepared to prove it.

Whether or not those Members pushing enactment and those supporting it believed they were genuine and that they were informing the House honestly and fairly is immaterial. Mr. Downing's sincere representations about the JFK assassination are the fabrications of Robert Morrow, a convicted felon whose newest effort at commercializing this tragedy is a reprint of his fabrications by Warner, due soon if not already out. Warner's puffery includes Mr. Downing crediting his film with causing the House's action. Mr. Fauntroy's representations about the King assassination are a combination of improvisations and incompetent theft by Mark Lane who has already parlayed his newest commercialization into a publicly-reported six-figure deal and a movie glorifying himself as "The Investigator." The added tragedy is greater with Mr. Fauntroy because the commercializers and self-promoters deceived Dr. King's family and followers and because, prior to this, Mr. Fauntroy was on ample notice and ignored the warnings. Mr. Downing's judgment was as poor although his staff was well enough informed to have helped him avoid the discredit he brought upon himself and the House.

There are few authentic experts on the political assassinations. There are many whose expertise is self-proclaimed and otherwise nonexistent. That no committee and no Member undertook any checking of the representations made to get this committee established is no credit to either these Members or the deliberative process.

This is a simplification and an understatement with which I begin an effort to present



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the current actualities to you and any other Members. Almost anything you now do is going to hurt the reputation of the House, give new pain to the country and cause more anguish to the survivors of the victims of the crimes that in my view nullified our system of society.

The aftershock of these great crimes is from the failure of the basic institutions of our society. Without this the House would not be in the position in which it now is, as it will soon learn.

For more than 13 years the country has been torn by false reports and charges on the one side and official dishonesties and disinformation operations on the other. One of the consequences is that of the majority of Americans who are deeply disturbed some will continue to be no matter what the House now does or does not do. That the Congress did nothing for so many years cannot properly be laid to the present House. However, it is a situation this House does inherit and cannot deal with in a satisfactory manner.

Because of all these years of political abdication, countless mythologies have been created and popularized. Many Americans believe them. If the current committee had avoided any of these nuts and self-seekers, I have not heard of a single instance. Indeed, it has constituted itself in a manner that makes discrimination impossible for it.

Whether or not the Members realize it, the House is already a laughingstock.

The report of this committee represents the avoidance of actualities. It is a brazen effort to scare the House into continuing it by callous use of such fabrications and diversions. If the House accepts this, it will perpetuate agonies and distrust in government still more Americans will believe are justified.

If on the other hand the House abandons the investigation there will be permanent dissatisfaction and discontent, particularly among the young. New vile conspiracy theories will be hatched to justify each new sensationalism and each publishing contract, each offer of a public appearance. The House may create a self-feeding pile of suspicion, discontent and antigovernment feeling far into the future if it now drops any investigation.

The realities are even more complicated. If the executive agencies, especially those with intelligence and investigative responsibilities, did not discover sex or invent the wheel, as the paranoids and self-seekers would have believed, they also are not without grave responsibilities ranging from initial failure to extensive and continuing disinformation activities. In their deceptions of the courts on this subject, official perjury is commonplace - and immune. These agencies, with this record, are certain to continue the disinformation activities that to date have not failed them. This committee in particular was amateurish and was suckered into an obvious series of them.

To date neither House has been able to cope with these agencies having much to hide. In fact, these agencies have been able to use the Congress as their forum in dribbling out bits and pieces of once unimaginable scandals. In this they have inured the Congress, the press and the people while still shedding no light on the essential facts of the crimes.

Through its committee the House has so many problems! Sincerity is immaterial when some of the individual committee members are in positions of personal vulnerability from their records of the past. The agencies will have sport with them and the House will be ridiculed, I think extensively.

There are still other and serious problems. Congressman Edwards detected the visible manifestations of a much deeper contempt for rights and proprieties. This committee

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has practiced and persisted in them. Its report is a clear statement of conclusions prior to even the pretense of an investigation. The explicit committee conclusions of guilt in both crimes is made even less equivocal by its deliberate leaking designed to pressure the individual Members, in effect, to blackmail them.

Whether or not you believe me, I seek to serve no selfish purpose in this. I seek no position on any committee and would refuse one if it were offered. When my advice was sought, for neither the first nor the last time the day the Rules Committee acted, I declined any position in advance of any offer. Whatever the House does, I will continue to do what I have been doing from the day the President was killed. I will soon be 64. My ambition is to complete the work I have begun and to complete a deposit of it in an unofficial archive for the future values I can see in this. There has been no financial reward and I anticipate none. In the midst of the controversy and the mindlessness that characterize any effort to go down the middle on this subject, to establish fact as fully and as honestly as humans can, assures unpopularity.

If there is one chance of personal gain for me in this mess the House has made for itself, it lies in the perpetuation of the mess. Yet it is in the hope that I may be able to help you and other concerned Members reduce the harm inherent and unavoidable in the existing situation that I take this time to write.

From my personal experience, which is extensive, I assure you that the discontent and dissatisfaction on this subject crosses all political lines. Whether Americans consider themselves conservative or liberal, their feelings about the assassinations and subsequent government failures are deep and genuine.

I realize you have no reason to trust my word or my opinions. However, you can easily learn the probabilities on both. One means is by getting the Library of Congress to give you a report on the extent of my publication and analysis of my use of the Freedom of Information Act in these assassinations. You will find that I am the one person the Department of Justice has certified knows more about the JFK assassination and the investigation of it than anyone now in the FBI. You will find that I conducted the investigation for the successful Ray habeas corpus petition and the subsequent evidentiary hearing. You may find those who are incapable of understanding, or a first-generation American for the sanctity of our basic institutions, but you will not find anyone who will say to my face that I have ever knowingly lied to him or on this subject. It also is not probable that those of whom I have been critical in this letter will confront me.

I do not envy the position in which you are. I hope whatever you decide is best for the country. I will help you in any way I can if you so desire.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg