

10/27/71

Dear Gary,

Today's mail, which was heavy, fills me with dismay. There is just too much stupidity by those who are stupid and too much carelessness and irresponsibility by those who are not but also haven't kept up to date. It is not a criticism to say that anyone hasn't kept up with knowledge, but it is intended as criticism, including of you (nothing personal) when I say that those who have not ought not be making judgements as though they were au courant.

I'm not going to reread your letter of the 25th. I'm not in a state of mind in which I think I should be doing regular work, so I'll clean up the mail and get a little more time in with overdue outside chores, on which I spent an hour before and another after lunch.

Where your letter deals with generalities, I have no criticism. Beginning with my first contact with any other critic I always had others read everything I intended to publish. You know the extent to which I have gone.

Let me explain as simply as I can two things. First, Ned tells me you have given him certain advice on what the book I have written, my work, lacks. Now this is not at all intolerable if you know what you are talking about. It is the kind of thing I have, to your knowledge, solicited. But I was disturbed by his call, for what he said makes no sense to me, and I do not have this opinion of him or his intelligence. Now you tell me it is so far in the past that you have no recollection of the first part (you have even forgotten that there are two and I am under the impression that PH supplied you with copies of both) and haven't yet received the last? What in the hell do you know about the book based on which he can quote you as giving certain advice.

There has to be something wrong here, and not with me. Either you are talking about what you know nothing about or there is some kind of mistake with Ned. Yet I find it hard to believe he would misquote you. So, on this core I'm just plain baffled.

The second part has to do with what you call "interesting possibilities" and he now seems to be making a new and fixed condition, his interviewing some of the whores. If he wants to do that on his own, although I think he is ill prepared for it, and wants to write his own book on that, that is his affair. But superimposing it on my work is intolerable as it is arrogant, and I simply will not accept it. This has nothing to do with my hearing him out and in full, which I will do. The rest of what you say here is, as I recall it, the kind of horseshit I'd not expect from you. Granted that there may be a little more willingness on the part of these wealthy and established scum to talk to one of Ned's background, what the hell do you expect them to do? Fall down, cry and beg for forgiveness? Claim they are little babies and didn't know what they were doing? What in the hell can they do except con Ned? The rest has to do with a reluctance, alleged, to talk to me. I have written some of these letters, for the record, but there are very few I have sought to see who have refused. I could for example, just walk into Teddy's office. But I haven't. Let me tick a few off, and not for any comment, for I don't advertise it: Kelley of the Secret Service; Russell of the Commission; Loran Hall and Larry Howard, both of whom went voluntarily to N.O. when they had gone to court and didn't have to—and both asked me to go with them—after what I alone had written of them; Colonel Astor, again after what I had written—and he and his wife were very helpful; Henry Wade, who remains on a friendly basis and has done much for me as he will again if the opportunity offers itself; Jesse Curry; Zapruder; Machann and the Faines; Dr. Perry; any number of people in N.O., including Shaw's close friends, the management of the papers, etc; WDSU, which even let me have a copy of its film; Harrison Salisbury, and as a result the second if aborted Times investigation; Dean Torey, who kept a board of directors waiting and waiting. Well, do you want a longer list. Can the combined critical community—all added together and include all the Neds and would be Neds—come even close to this record? What kind of pap are you giving me, and what kind of nonsense have you talked yourself into? Let me put this another way: you show me one person I really wanted to see and tried to who refused me. Just one! Rather has the converse, in a few cases, been true.

= Far from saying my judgement was in those cases correct, after what Penn ones had been saying, if not others, remember, H.L.Hunt wanted to see ~~Trison~~ and off? Remember, he paid my way to Dallas? ~~and I begged~~

Now look at the other side. You have spoken to how many of the politicians? A few? What has been the beneficial result? Remember how terrified he was when I took Herb Jasper to the Archives and showed him only Zapruder?

Seeing and talking to people is not in itself an end. And a couple more names just popped into my mind. Leon Hubert and at LIFE, when they refused to let Bud see some pictures, they were fully cooperative with me. I saw them, as long as I wanted, and found what they didn't know they have. Did I tell you that while NBC won't air me of the subject they did arrange for their staff counsel to see if he could help me with my Freedom of Information suits? If I took time I could add to this list. But get with it, man, you're dishing out the propaganda of the other side, not the reality.

So, you can see I'm disturbed. And I find myself asking myself for explanations of Ned. I have none. I like him more, as does Lil, each time he is here. That means only that he is a nice guy. It doesn't explain the present. I took him on faith, remember, didn't even ask him what he'd include when he had your accrediting and your promise to help him. Could I be more selfless or less vain? But when the problem with a really hot book is what to leave out and where there is immediacy in it, what is the point of adding anything? There is a clear and present need for this book as fast as it can be made available on the chance, slight as it may be, that the government wises up with what they can do now that the five years are past. And you and he are talking about going to the whores who fucked everything? Why? Wait until you read the last part of the book alone. I'm talking about content, not media attitudes, and everything must begin with fact. Now I'm sorry I made some of the cuts. I did not only because they took so much time (I wanted the parts on the media and the ABA to be less of a problem for Ned), for with the appointment of Powell, it turns out that my instincts were good and there is relevance in the overall context.

What is slowly forming in my mind is unwelcome and unpleasant. Ned has money, he wants to be part of it, he has decided that editing a contraction and making possible the appearance of the full work is not enough, and he wants to cut himself in on more of the action. Or, less politely, a polite kind of ego trip. I'll have none of it on this basis alone. I turned down an offer to do a book on what I did on the Ray case. If it is not for me it is no for anyone on my back.

Ned was explicit. It is a package deal. He has no commitment to pay for the printing of the full work unless he can get the contraction published. I think he has a better chance in the reverse order, with the full work attracting a little attention to the possibilities of an abridgement. But it will be a stroke of lightning if he does any kind of decent condensation of that book if any publisher gives it serious thought. If he is a literary master, nobody will believe it. However, there is no lack of clarity on his part, I have no illusions. But of the very few conditions I attached, one is that none of the contents would be disclosed. I have a number of reasons I'll not go into. One is that I'd like to live and continue this work. I've enough enemies without advertising for more before I can bring out what I have. If Ned wants to back out, I'll invite him to. And I think I'll be a little bit closer to becoming a hermit. Long ago I realized that without people of means coming forward and helping I'd have to be content with the role of the man who makes as much as possible of a record for the future. That I'll do. How we'll survive to do it I don't know, for I'm hooked to the ears now. But I'll try. And I'll not be inclined to waste the time I have with any more Neds. I'm being blunt, but I'm killing myself with work, have let my own serious and personal problems slide, and for what? If you knew how much work I have to do on my damage suit alone, you'd have a better understanding. And there are many other things I just haven't taken time to attend to, lie collecting, or trying, from the crook OGD, or for the insurance from a fire at our old place, or from people who owe me money. I like Ned, as does Lil. It is always pleasant having someone we like, if only briefly. But that is not, emphasis NOT what I've made all these sacrifices for, made ~~five~~ Lil live like a dog for. I hope in my haste I give no offense. Or say what I don't mean. Best,

Dear Harold,

Oct. 24, 1971

Thanks for your mailings of Oct. 8 & 10. I have difficulty adequately reacting to what you say of Cyril. I can imagine that he has the potential to be impulsive, not having spent many years dealing with the political ramifications of the various bodies of evidence in the case. Use of any prominent piece of evidence, especially something like the X-rays and photos, should best be done after consultation with others, including perhaps a few politically sophisticated non-critics. No one of us could possibly think out all possibilities. When I wrote my newspaper series and magazine article, even given that they would reach comparatively few people and covered little ground, I had a number of others read them and make comment as to alternative theories and as to how readily understandable they were. Cyril would be foolhardy to do anything public, or even view the X-rays and photos without considerable consultation. As for any personal vendetta against Fisher, I cannot comment. After what I learned from Jaffe about what Fisher said about Wecht, I can imagine some anger. Sylvia has just written me that to her knowledge Cyril has not gotten permission. While she may be uninformed, it is also possible that what info you have gotten from Bud's people is inaccurate. In any event, if Cyril is to see the stuff, I think that it would be good to involve Sylvia in the action since she has known Wecht for some time. It is important to remember that the ability to influence each other or other people varies, depending on the people involved, and there are many people who may respond to you, and not me, or Sylvia and not you or me, etc. Furthermore, when one deals with political ramifications of the case, it is essential, in my opinion, to have all the serious critics involved, esp. people like Sylvia who have been with this thing from the beginning.

Ned is working hard on the condensed version. I am just going over it this weekend and will be meeting with Ned tomorrow morning to discuss it. I have many questions and some disagreements.

One of the interesting possibilities at this point is that Ned may be in a position to do some interviews and learn some things. Someone who is not an identified critic and who is of the social and financial status of many of the principals in this case is in a remarkable position to interview them. Furthermore, he can be assured, through his contacts, of getting in to interview people who can easily ignore people like you and I. He is no where near as threatening as someone like you who has published so much and confronted so many in letters and books. What he lacks in knowledge could be made up for in Briefings. Furthermore, he might be able to set up future interviews between some of these people and you, whereas you might write letters yourself for the next hundred years without reply.

I still have not gotten the parts of PM you mailed, but look forward to them. I have forgotten which parts I have read--I first read it when I visited you after it was done three years ago. But I am way out of date insofar as that manuscript is concerned. I look forward to being able to go through it.

Another thought about the Wecht thing just occurred to me. If Bud's committee (or Bud) is heavily involved, it would be important to have a number of us involved on the end asking for a careful approach to the photos and X-rays. Otherwise, Bud et. al. will dismiss it as "Weisberg wanting more literary material or wanting to be in the center of things." Again, it is hard to pin a label or ignore the points we want to raise if a wide variety of people are asking this. For instance, has just you written Paul about the melon piece in the tones in which you wrote, Paul might well have disregarded questions raised, or at least could have. When a number of people, who do not always agree, raised different issues, however, it provided a more balanced feedback. Well, I'd better go.

Gary