

10/29/70

Dear Gary,

Ned and I were up until 3:30. It took me another half-hour or so to fall asleep. I had to get up at 6:30 to be sure he was off in time to catch a much earlier plane than he had told me (and I have just heard that all the airports are socked in), so I really ought not be writing now but should be taking a nap. Except in clarifying things this was a counter-productive meeting, only in part because there was none today because he had changed his plans before getting here. Instead of not having to get to NYC by 4, which was his original schedule, he now is supposed to be there at noon.

In any even, my central purpose is to give you some understand of the present situation and of Ned and his attitudes, as he understands them and as he does not. It is and I expect you to keep it confidential. If I did not depend upon this I would neither write you nor be as blunt as I will be. And if I am not, I am not honest, not his friend.

The disturbance I felt after his phone call of Tuesday night, about which I chided you because he had invoked you as one authority and I then got a letter from you in which you really said you know nothing about the book, is more than justified. The instinctive conclusions I reached are precisely accurate, and he not only admits it but actually believes what he seeks to assert is a matter of right. He had changed both his concept of the joint project and his role in it, unilaterally. He has changed the doctrine and focus of the book (and never did understand its central theme and purposes, which he has also late ed). And he has decided that his is the only dependable judgement in virtually all areas. As a consequence of these and other things that were immediately clear, I had to address them and his attitudes with the bluntness of which you know me capable.

There is and he in part soon admitted an ego involvement. After some time I asked him how many people he knew who would sit and listen to what he was saying for as long as I had without asking him to consider whether or not he was a bit arrogant (I did understate it). His response was he supposed he was and he guessed his answer is that was his right.

I can't, of course, go into all of our discussions, and all I can try and do is give you a taste of their real flavor because you are his friend and I think you should understand these things. I also am his friend, and I think after a rather unpleasant interlude of some length it finally got through to him that my purpose was to prevent him doing what he would later regret and might, perhaps, find difficult to live with.

He was astoundingly selfish and never thought of anything but his position and interests. For example, there was this big spiel about laying his thesis aside and what kind of great sacrifice that is. After he went on and on about this for a while I asked him to equate that with what I had put into this before he even knew about it and then asked if he had since our agreement put in as much time as I have. What he has written is two days work for me. Among other things, I have done the enormously tedious job of repaging a book longer than Spstein's, in both wordage and pages, and that is only about a third of this necessary chore. Eventually I might have done it anyway, but a large part would not have been necessary without his proposal and my acceptance. Even when he became aware of this he shrugged it off by saying I'd have done it anyway. Not so. Possibly, maybe probably, but not necessarily, I did not have done it with the intensity I have, Lil would not have done her part as rapidly as she has (which means a number of real sacrifices by her). I'd not have done it at the cost of neglecting important personal needs that confront me at this moment. It is, of course, irrelevant, but what I am addressing is his selfishness, which he neither intends nor understands, and his concept of self, which is more lost on him.

He has an exalted concept of his abilities, capabilities and skills, one of his understanding that is exaggerated at best, and is entirely unaware of his limitations or that regardless of his intelligence and any skills he does have, are an inevitable by-product of the short time he has had an interest in the field. To give you one example, and it can mean nothing to you until you have read the new last part of the book, he thinks it at

best minor that the irreplaceable evidence that has been destroyed was destroyed. He was prepared to leave it out entirely. So you can fully appreciate it I will not expand on it. I'll tell you merely that it is the entire bit about the shirt-slits and the tie, and when you get to that you can form your own evaluation. I am not prepared to even consider compromising the belief that this is one of the major points of the work, one of the major breakthroughs of the several it contains, nor am I without serious apprehension about his judgement this attitude reflects. He was, as a matter of fact, rather cavalier about the entire matter. The significance of it was and to a large degree remains lost upon him.

His central objective is acceptance and he is prepared for any sacrifice his concept of acceptance requires. I will not give this a second thought and I told him bluntly I regard it as dishonest. He wants to produce what those he knows are prepared to believe, not what the evidence says or, for that matter, what the author says. He has recast himself in this that much. He no longer conceives of himself as an editor and is talking in such terms as what he cannot agree with. I asked him when an editor had to agree with anything he edited, if that is an editor's role in publishing, and what the purposes of a condensation and popularization are. His answer is, in effect, that he has changed all concepts and regards what he is to do as other than a condensation and a popularization. In short, as I earlier told you, he now conceives this work as his and what it is to say what he wants it to say. All of this is entirely separate from editorial judgement, what of the many things that must come out shoud, what must remain, and the relative emphasis of the parts.

One of his hangups, as I was able to isolate and address them, is the Kennedys. He really wanted to get Bobby, and ~~get~~ is the word he used often. He really wants to defend the Commission, in both senses. I spent quite a bit of time getting him to prepare an indictment of Bobby, which is the secret feeling he was hiding. I led him with some care, suggesting charges and shortcomings he had not, and addressed each, individually. His immaturity was astounding to me. His preconceptions are rigid and without valid basis. On this one he was left naked in his own eyes, and the one thing he mentioned in the few minutes before he had to dash off is his changed attitude on this. He now sees it enough, and what he must see on his own is his own shortcoming and the deficiencies of his judgement. He has such deep faith in it and its perfect that he will not consider that anyone else, including me, can or should challenge it. This took some rather extreme forms, as when I tried to get him to understand that this is a rather unique subject to which one can't apply the normal standards in assessing political, media (in the broadest sense, including publisher) and popular attitudes and reactions. One point on which he was inflexible is that in less than six months of having a chance to evaluate this (and without any media contact to mention), when by his own estimate he has been able to get reactions from perhaps 200 people at most, he has been able to get a better appraisal of this than I have in seven such years as I have lived and when I got that many reactions more than once in a single day. It meant nothing to him that I have gotten perhaps 2,000 letters from total strangers, that I had been through all those talk shows in so many parts of the country, that I had dealt with so many publishers, so many newsmen in all the media. In the relatively narrow stratum of his contacts he has gotten what for him is the one and only true measure of these attitudes and that is all that counts. I went after this with some vigor. He ultimately described it as a putdown he'd not take from anyone else. But he refused to face what this reflects of his own thinking and self-concept. This was only part of what I had in mind when he displayed this belief and I pursued it. I don't want him to hurt himself or to be hurt, either by kidding himself or by doing what and acting as he will later find intolerable.

He seems to be introducing whole new concepts and contents, which I find hard to believe when his major problem is cutting stuff out. I may ultimately agree that he is in this correct, but I find it hard to believe that he didn't think to discuss this with me at the outset. He had read two thirds of the book and had a pretty good idea of what the other would say. In fact, he sketched it when he was here last time and had since read it with less care than required and had gotten less understanding from it than he should. One seems to be the role of the media. One of my points here is again his self-concept and his gradual conversion, whether or not intentionally, to an entirely different proposal, one that I would have rejected without a second thought had it been his initial one.

One new and unacceptable provision he has added is that everything is conditional not only on his getting a publishing contract but that it be accompanied by an advance of \$10,000 put in escrow. He hasn't yet understood what this means, and I had detected what it does earlier and had addressed it in a different way. This is the rough and possibly (as he clearly understood) inadequate estimate of printing 5,000 copies of the finished complete, unabridged work. His original proposal was that he was willing to make this investment in it if, in return, he could bring out a condensed popularization of it. This new formulation is that he will be insured against having to spend a cent of his own money. And, moreover, that I am hung up and immobile for as much as more than a year. Regardless of any developments, those that might require immediate availability of the content. He hadn't thought of the possibilities that are available that he admitted might in themselves be worth this sum to him in terms of what he seeks. He admitted, for example, that a major story in the New York Times on the content of the book, its new evidence, he would consider worth this. But not to the extent that he would consider changing this new and remarkable immature condition, one I'd never have accepted to begin with and can't now. I then spent much time with him doing the simple arithmetic he hadn't even thought of, and of trying to explain how OGD had brought this financial disaster down upon themselves by a similar and really irrational attitude. We had agreed that the book had to sell for no more than five dollars. With a ten percent average royalty, for there are some books that earn no royalty, what this means is that the royalty per book would be 50¢, or that just to repay the advance the publisher would have to sell 20,000 books. That is an exceptional sale for a book. Most sell fewer than 5,000, even those of large publishers. I know of no publisher who will advance more than 50% of their estimated sales, and most will not go that far. This means that the publisher must anticipate a sale of 40,000 books to meet one of his initial terms. Do you have any candidates on this subject? How rational is he, how mature? And what is he then really contributing to a major effort the extent of which he can't even understand academically, as he says he does. He has no way of measuring its real cost. He can't understand either the cost, in the broadest sense, or the time required, and I warrant it is more than required to earn a Ph.D. None of this was in his mind, and after I raised it gently none of it remained in his thinking, although he perhaps would prefer to believe it did. His reactions and comments are more meaningful than anything he will say about it.

Aside from the surprising ego and kind of ego he showed, I think I detected a kind of latent paranoia. One of the faint clues of this was in his reaction to one of my efforts to get him to understand that he can't address and expect reactions on this subject as he can in other areas. Because a copy of WILKINSON was by the side of my chair, I picked it up and read excerpts from the excerpts of some of the letters of rejection I got for it. They are short. Reread them. There are others like in, more than that many in writing alone, as you may recall, and an astounding number verbal. I asked him if he regarded these as normal rejections, if they didn't require the writers run certain risks to pen them. And I quoted a few of the customary ones and reminded him that all a rejection need say is sorry. His response was that he had believed - had faked them, and not until he came to know me had he changed his mind. He hadn't even thought about it, not even to ask himself if I were faking if I couldn't fake better and use more excitingly, as on the outside back cover. I told him quite frankly that out of all my contacts with people, including a not inconsiderable number of opponents, only one had even hinted at that. It was Long John. The whole thing, long as the day was and tiring and emotionally draining, kept me from falling asleep promptly, and one of the things I found myself wondering is what conflicts he may have. Because I know him to be a man of decent and sincere concerns, because I do like him, this was all very troubling to me. And one of the thoughts that suggested itself before I did fall asleep (and in those few hours I was awake several times) is that he may perhaps have a secret guilt feeling about having all the money he has without having done anything to earn it. I am not suggesting that he should feel guilty about it, and of all the people who could enjoy this accident of birth, of those with whom I have had contact I can think of none I am happier to have sustained this fortunate accident, for he is a decent and concerned man and is more likely to take decent social use of part of it than almost any others. It is not at all that I think it is wrong. I don't. I think in some way he may and that this may account for some of his hangups, several of which were easily detected and one or two of which I pointed out to him.

This leads to one of the things that may later bother him where I was as pointed as I thought I dared be, much less so than what he actually said justified. He may at a later date be asking himself if without understanding it he was seeking a moment of what others might regard as glory at the expense of a desperately poor man and could do it only because he enjoys wealth. At first I was concerned only that he might at some later time come to think this way, whether or not it is true, and how this could hurt him. That, as I told him I wanted to prevent, I wanted him to think through in advance, for I would not be party to anything that could have this consequence. I never returned to it. I know this cannot be a conscience intent with him. If I thought it for a moment I'd have nothing more to do with him. But as the night lengthened and pressed its pain more, it gradually dawned on me that this may be the unconscious reality, and that does worry me much. Not that he is conscience of this or does or could intend it but that it is the unrecognized underlying thing. If I decide in the end that this is the case, I'll give up prospect of bringing the work out rather than have him have this later hurt.

Let me here in part digress and note my previous and uniform experiences with people of wealth. He is one of only two who have ever helped me in any way. He had helped pay some of the costs of getting things that in some cases I would not have gotten without it and in other cases would have gone deeper into debt and would have gotten. However, despite the couple of nominal contributions of this sort he has made, my real costs in these joint acquisitions have exceeded his. Let me give you a couple of illustrations, one current. He really required a corrected copy of the third, meaning the new last part, of P1. That meant I had to xerox it. In order to protect it, it had to be copyrighted. He is the one who was subjecting it to jeopardy by talking to people about it and by showing them parts of the evidence of which I made copies for him. He volunteered to pay this cost last time, actually computing what for him is a peanuts expenditure. He made a slight arithmetical error when he asked himself what are we talking about. Now don't misunderstand me, I'd have had to do this anyway, but the immediacy of doing it was caused by him and him alone. As you know, at that time had you not sent me the \$70 you owed me, I'd have been flat broke. After we got that, I'd computed our cash resources. It was a few days later. They then totalled \$71.00. This copying had to be done from the master, the only set that can be used in offset. That meant it required greater care. I had a choice between driving to Washington to get it done, where the first copy would have been about 6¢ and I might have gotten the additional copies for 5¢, but in legal size this is by no means certain. I had a chance to get it done locally for 5 1/2¢ if I did the work when the machine was not in use. This meant a cash driving cost for me of what when one has more than \$71 is negligible, about \$2-3. And it took about eight hours of my time. I paid for it. It was about \$52. He volunteered to pay for this, but instead of leaving me a check when he was here and said he would, he said he'd send it to me. As he left he decided to make a Kennedy approach, and this, as I wrote him, required that an extra copy be made. He never wrote or phoned to say no, so I made that extra copy to have for this purpose (he has had no reaction or response of any kind). When I sent him his copy I told him how much it cost. I made one passing reference to it again last night. No reaction. He has not repaid me. And I now have less than \$20.00. When the 1970 declassification was completed, he was here. He discussed my getting it and he said he'd pay for it, asking about how much it would cost. I gave him a minimum figure based upon the lowest possible estimate of the volume. It turns out to have been about half of what was actually made available, and when he got home he sent me only half of what he had said he would. Or, about a third of the cost. Now he didn't have to pay any of it. It was kind of him to offer to. But the reality is that he is kind of stingy, a common characteristic I have found in people of real means, without exception. Bud owes me money, believe it or not. Maggie Fields, of whom I was genuinely fond, aside from the later despicable accusations we do not know really came from her and couldn't possibly have any valid basis, for all her wealth never even thought of repaying me the nominal costs of the copies I got for her at the Archives, nor did she even offer me a couch in her quarter-million home when she learned I was in LA and without a pad - and learned it by accident when I was in her home. The people who have been generous are those of nominal means, and when they have sent me small sums I have felt very warm. The total of these things over the years fall short of what the critical community owes me and that is not a great sum. The largest single contributor is a man I've never met, a retired, unlettered, not wealthy auto worker who is also ill. I used to return his checks until he assured me he was alone and had no need for those sums he sent. I have

not heard from him in two years.

So Ned has made a very minor contribution to a selfless work. If we examine this in any meaningful terms, as of this point it results in a net loss to me. He has taken about 8 days of my time in person, and a fair amount in correspondence time, with him and what he required with others. There has been a slight cost in entertaining him. In the time he has taken from other work I could have written a third of a book. So, in time, unless something more than coming to know and like him and enjoying his visits comes from this, it represents a cost to me exceeding the value of what he has contributed. As you know, I do not really measure things this way, do not think this way. But I am assessing the meaningfulness of that which he has done to date and on balance it has been costly to me, only because I am so broke. I am distressed that he has not given me the money he told me to spend, the money he alone required that I at that time spend. I did not do it when I completed the two earlier parts of the book. The first part written from the summer of 1967 until early 1969, and the second from the first of 1969 until some time in 1970. (And if we are assessing selfishness and selflessness, I gave the first part to Garrison, and it is I think the only thing of real value that emerged from that disaster and I gave the second to Cyril and Bud to use in the Halleck hearing.)

I didn't plan this letter, as it shows, perhaps should not have taken the time, but I felt I should inform you of fact and of my feelings. I also felt that I should inform you so that you can, if you see the need, be helpful to Ned, in the broadest but including the personal sense. I am disturbed, seriously, and in some ways distressed as he doesn't realize. As of now all I can do is await developments. I think it likely this will abort because he, not I, has changed the conditions of the agreement. I haven't changed any, and he confessed surprised at some of what he called my liberalities and trusts and a flexibility he apparently had thought impossible. I decide it is in his interest to end it while it is yet in mine not/ to, I will end it. If the conditions turn out to be those I can't accept, I will on that basis. And the unfortunate thing is that I have no way of really knowing whether I can accept what he has done until he completes it. He has suggested sending half of it when he is that far along. He was supposed to have had the whole thing done by two days from now and is far from it. Had he stuck to his knitting it would have been possible. It will be rough on both of us if the agreement comes to an end. It will only if he changes the conditions. Or in any major way, his role, which also is really one of the conditions.

From a few little things I also have the feeling this has led to some kind of problem with his wife. That should not be, but I think it is.

This, despite its length, can't begin to reflect all of what we talked about in more than 12 hours. It gives you some of the fact that comes to mind, some of my reactions, some of my feelings. And it is for and to you alone. No copies to anyone, no talk to anyone. Insofar as any editorial help you may offer his is concerned, I think you should hold off at least until you read the final part. Time probably won't permit a reworking of the earlier parts ~~ix~~ when it can help him. And above all, if and when you detect it, see if you can help him control and understand the exalter concept of self that he so clearly and arrogantly displayed here last night and early this morning. He may develop unnecessary problems. I'd hate that to happen, but I think I see the beginnings. I hope I'm wrong.

You are busy and this requires no response of you. I am not saying don't respond, but unless you feel a genuine need, don't take the time. Let me add one more thing: I told him I had gotten a non-responsive response from Cyril that was also personally offensive, that I had not filed it so he could read it if he desired, and that in answering I had made a carbon for him. He had no interest. I also told him that Cyril still had not sent the couple of xeroxes he had promised on spectrography and neutron-activation testing. I find it hard to reconcile this with his precipitate consultation with you and his subsequent call to SN.

Best,