

5/7/70

Dear Mr. Weintraub,

If your letter of 5/1 is not quite the description of your relationship with Skolnick reported to me, such as your helping arrange appearances for him (which may be erroneous and certainly is not culpable), it is superficially logical.

Where it falls short, as I see it, is in an uneven concept of what is news. If Skolnick alleges the world is flat, that is news. If someone accuses Skolnick of being a crook and worse and offers the proof, that is not news.

Not news, in Chicago, where Skolnick heads a committee to "clean up" the courts? Not news when the utter and complete incompetence of the suit can be established without consultation with a lawyer, by a simple reading of the Freedom of Information Act or what is easier, the Attorney General's memorandum on it, which spells out, in simple language, all the prerequisites not a single one of which Skolnick met?

Not news in Chicago or to the Sun-Times or to Larry Weintraub when this paragon of decency demands the declaration that this Freedom of Information law, so long sought and so fiercely opposed by those who would suppress, is unconstitutional?

Not news in Chicago when this stalwart protector of the judicial process files a suit the most casual reading of which by any informed person discloses it is spurious and of ulterior purpose--so not news when he imposes upon the court and defames and prostitutes the judicial process--the same one ~~was~~ he proclaims the holy purpose of cleansing?

Not news when he blows and chance of carrying further the investigations to which he contributed nothing but his literary lightfingers, a new concept of civic duty?

I spare you more that ~~might~~ be obvious to you.

Whether you make a "career" of the story or whether you have any responsibility for what Skolnick did is not the point. What is the point is your concept of objective reporting. In practice this means Skolnick only, regardless of what he does. It happens I have a reputation not inferior to his and unlike his, mine is both international and has never been challenged successfully, never once to my face. Your eminent Albert Jenner, for example, backed out of a debate on the Madigan show rather than confront me. I am well-known in Chicago from so many radio and TV appearances I cannot count them all. I am as legitimate a news source as Skolnick. More, I provide the man-bites-dog traditional news concept, for Skolnick casts me, the original and most persistent and severe critic of both the Archives and the Secret Service, as their defender against his defamations. Now, on another aspect, can those Secret Service agents he libelled make response?

Is it now news to you and your paper that after he knew the man from whom he had stolen the work objected he thereafter, no doubt in accord with his concept of judicial honesty and civic probity, persisted in the misuse of it in a legal proceeding?

This is Chicago's "Clean the Courts" committee and Chicago journalism's proper attitude toward it?

As I recall my letter (and much other material is on my mind, Skolnick being but another of the many problems to be met), all I asked of you is quite proper, that you give me what you properly could to undo the damage he had done. Or is ~~it~~ it that you, like so many people on Chicago, also fear that of which he is capable in his limitless irresponsibility?

I am glad to hear of your doubts about the Warren Report. Had it extended to reading my work, which is by far the most extensive, you'd have known more about Skolnick's misuse of that phone call to Klein's, the Secret Service report on which is reproduced in facsimile in my second book.

It is simply incredible to me that any reporter knowing of the Kerner decision would not have checked anything. Chapter IV of the Warren Report is based upon that which Skolnick alleges is suppressed or could not be found, the order for the rifle. The order and related papers are actually reproduced in facsimile. Not only would this have put that entire fakery in true perspective, exposing that Skolnick, rather than being a legitimate "investigator", had either not understood the most transparent English or worse, hadn't even read the Report.

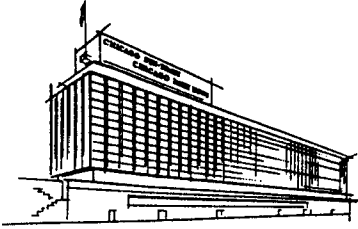
And it certainly is not news when he claims the suppression of what he never once asked for!

I have not asked you to "get involved" in any dispute. I have asked you apply what were in the days of my experience normal, traditional news standards. If it is true that all you did was "cover" what you describe as "a public occurrence", certainly there is no reflection on you involved in presenting the other side and what with or you or your paper did not like would be the makings of a rather sensational story.

But if you are interested in whether or not I sue him, your penultimate paragraph, you might check with the clerk of the same court.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg



CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

MORNING AND SUNDAY / DIAL 321-3000 / 401 NORTH WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611

May 1, 1970

Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Frederick, Md.

Dear Mr. Weisberg;

Sorry I was so long answering your letters, but I have been on vacation for some weeks.

I'm equally sorry that you have been injured by Skolnick, who as you say, thrives on publicity and could hardly operate without it.

But please understand my position. I cannot matter to me where the documents came from as long as they appeared to be authentic.

I covered a public occurrence, a radio station interview. It was available to me as it was available to anyone with a radio. I did look at the documents and felt reasonably sure that they had some authenticity.

And then I wrote a little piece about what was said that night. The story did not say it was true. It said Sherman Skolnick says this. I have my doubts about Sherman's theories. But then I also have my personal doubts about the conclusions of the Warren Commission report.

In any case, the story is not one to which I shall devote my career. It happened. I covered it. Unless something important happens, I am unlikely to do anything more with it.

And I cannot take responsibility for what Skolnick did to you. If you want to debate him, or sue him, more power to you. In either case I will probably do a story about it.

But I cannot get involved in your dispute with Sherman. Sorry.

Sincerely,

Larry Weintraub