

Pull

July 18, 1968

Editor  
The New York Times  
Times Square  
New York, New York

Sir:

At the time that professional apologist for the Warren Commission, John Sparrow, dribbled his spittle into the Times of London's "Literary Supplement", your paper, which has religiously refused to consider any article by an author with evidence questioning the official fairy tale about our President's murder, carried and syndicated his lies. Your reporter located me in New Orleans and promised that at least a few of my answering words would be carried. They included a challenge to a confrontation. I was not quoted, nor did you in any way indicate that Sparrow's lies were less than a direct blessing from Heaven.

Neek you carried another and a really outrageous piece stemming from this Sparrow trash in which the then-unmurdered brother of the martyred President was held to blame if there was anything wrong with the investigation of his brother's assassination.

Sparrow's magazine article, without the changing of a comma, suddenly became a book (of which no one had heard) and Sparrow was in the United States and on the "Today" Show to sell an unavailable book of which no one had heard, a book the stores could not find or sell, and then he was gone again, back to the Old Blighty he further blights. Is it not remarkable that this book was sold by an RCA subsidiary and publicized by an RCA subsidiary when RCA is one of the large war contractors and so obligated to the government?

It is, of course, no more remarkable that NBC refuses the opportunity for response than that the New York Times does. Even in your Sunday magazine you have refused to consider articles from the other side, regardless of their content.

After all of this, you suddenly find ample space for more of Sparrow's vilification, and no blue pencil, yet no space for response. I have been sent a copy of the piece he did and you syndicated - 36½ inches in the copy I have - headed, "How to Make a Fool of Yourself Before 20 Million People". In the text I find those who cannot swallow and hold down what Sparrow does either "actually crooks" or "crazy"; "demonologists"; or "a crowd of crooks and crackpots"; or "trouble-makers who stir up fantastic suspicions for evil ends".

Specifically, I am "egregious".

Can you justify your publication of such libels, regardless of their source? Is this your concept of "all the news that's fit to print"

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when there is an enormous amount of authentic, official documentation that I have personally offered your paper - free- and you have never used a word of it? Can you consider this even within an extension of your own definition of honest journalism when you so steadfastly and from the first have refused to publish any articles on the other side? I know; I have offered them. I also know that your book reviewer refused even to note in his "books received" column receipt of my first book, which was the first on the subject and the one that opened it. His reason is fiction: A private printing, to the New York Times, does not exist (he said he spoke for you all). This is the same New York Times that asked for and got a total of 13 free copies of that very same book before I started charging for them. He is consistent. He refused to acknowledge any of the four I have published.

But what about Sparrow, his honor, integrity, dependability? Here I refer you to Sparrow as you published him and his great fear of having to face one of us - Lane or me, or Jám Garrison. Why need an eminent scholar, an articulate man, fear confrontation with an "egregious" ordinary man? Knowing what I do of his peccadilloes, I'd certainly not bite him!

Sparrow's fear is genuine, for he knows he writes fiction, depending on the ignorance and sycophancy of those who publish him to get away with it. Like the literary night-sneak he is, he knows he will not have to face me or any of us. Like the male whore he is, he knows he cannot - dare not. I have repeatedly challenged him to a confrontation in any medium of his choosing, on any aspect of the subject of his choosing, on his writing, mine or any combination he prefers. He has not accepted and he will not accept. Not because he is so confident he is right, not because he fears an "egregious" ordinary man, a "crazy" man, a "crook", a "troublemaker", or a "crackpot". What Sparrow fears is exposure of his hideous nakedness, his personal and professional dishonesty, the flaunting of his ignorance and misrepresentation for all the world to see.

I have had correspondence with him. He fails to accept the challenge to show a single important error in my work, which now extends to four published books on the subject. He does not for he cannot. Yet you permit him your enormous facilities and your earned reader trust for the retailing of such personal rot that is clearly both damaging and of damaging intent.

It is now well past the time when the Times can consider that support of any government dictat is its major responsibility. Each and every one of you who participates in decision-making and makes the well-earned reputation of your paper a handmaiden of government will have yourselves and history to live with. You may, if you ever take the trouble you long ago should have to try and learn what the truth is, wind up thoroughly ashamed. Have you thought of this? It is inevitable.

You will not have the excuse you did not know because it is your obligation and responsibility to know and because there exists a written record of offer to you of an amount of documentation so vast you can not imagine it or its content.

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What a sad day it is for our society when those of us who are unknown and entirely without means must carry the obligation of a really free press, not only as surrogates for the wealthy, powerful press, but in spite of its most stalwart efforts to prevent us!

Because this is a personal letter and not for publication, I will share this added bit on him you exalt, the warden of All Saints.

I wondered how a man so terribly wrong and of so high a station would dare risk a reputation in this manner, and for what purpose. What bugs him, I asked myself. Inquiries among dependable British correspondents soon made it clear that he is parti pris. The information I got from them is that he has long-time intelligence connections and is also homosexual. With the obvious involvement of intelligence in this assassination, with Clay Shaw's well-known public reputation, Sparrow is on two counts, at the very least, something other than an entirely impartial man. This is not to say that a partisan should not write, but it is to claim that he cannot, honorably, behind the false front of disinterest.

So I wrote Sparrow and asked him to confirm or deny each of these things. He declined, giving as his reason that I would not believe him. I responded and asked that, whether or not he considered I would believe him, he might at least make a pro forma denial for the record.

The next thing I read was the trash you printed.

Yours is a particularly shameful record because yours is a particularly great paper, with a responsibility like no other. You have abdicated that responsibility, and on the basic issue of the day. There is no policy of the government, right or wrong, that does not derive from the President's murder. When the government that came into power through that murder alone "investigates" it, it investigates its own legitimacy. When that investigation is, at best, unbelievable and, at worst, deliberately false, what has happened to the country, to its basic institutions? And what of the policies that were immediately reversed, those policies that today are the root of the national travail?

It is no more "coincidence" than the unfailing policy of the New York Times to print all the regurgitation of the intellectual finks, all the libels that defame those of us who seek the truth, and to refuse every article on the other side, to refuse even to look at evidence when it is offered.

I make this offer again, but this time not without restriction. I will show you what you would see of what I have gathered, but in confidence. And trite as it must seem to the publisher of the Sparrows and the exalter of the Epsteins, I quote "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

"DO YOU really want to be made a fool of before 20 million people?"

Put like that, the prospect certainly did not appeal to me. At first, when I was invited to appear on NBC's "Today" show (weekdays at 7 p.m. on Channels 3, 4, 8) earlier this year and give my views on the controversy concerning President Kennedy's assassination, I welcomed a chance of vindicating the conclusions of the Warren Commission and exposing to a nationwide audience the extravagances of its critics: it seemed an opportunity too good to miss.

But I soon began to have misgivings. I was told about the innocent victims of television — honest and intelligent men made to appear, under its merciless inquisition, as knaves, or fools, or both.

In England the inquisitors were fearsome enough; in the United States, I was assured, they were no less formidable and even more unscrupulous — they stuck at nothing.

I might be confronted, without any warning, by Mark Lane, the archdemonologist, by the egregious Harold Weisberg, or the maniacal Joachim Joesten; or all three of them might spring upon me together and tear

## TELEVISION

# How to Make a Fool of Yourself Before 20 Million

By John Sparrow

me—metaphorically limb from limb.

Worse still, I might find myself under cross-examination by the redoubtable District Attorney, Jim Garrison himself.

To take on such experts without notice and on their home ground, was to ask for trouble. They would not pull their punches, and their blows, I was warned, might not be all of them above the belt. I should be chased ignominiously round the ring and then knocked flat in full view of the American public.

When I reached New York the warmth of those who welcomed me was certainly disarming: my fears, according to my hosts and sponsors, were all illusory; no surprises would be sprung upon me; the organizers of the program promised full cooperation. Surely no danger

could lurk behind such comforting assurance?

And yet, a doubt forced itself upon me. Perhaps the intention of these friendly-seeming people was precisely that: to disarm me, to lead me, all unsuspecting, to the slaughter.

Was not this the kind of stratagem I had been warned against? By the time the fatal day arrived, my misgivings had returned in full force. But it was too late to retreat.

I would have to face the camera, and face it protected only by the thin disguise—a touch of intelligence below the eyes, a dab of honesty about the mouth—provided at the last minute by NBC's resident cosmetician.

Once inside the studio, I realized that all was well: I had nothing (except fear itself) to be afraid of; there was no hiding place for Mr. Lane to lurk in, no trapdoor to release the demon of Garrison. It was obvious from his greeting that my interviewer, Hugh Downs, was a friend and not an enemy; I was to be given a clear run to make my own points in my own way.

And the points I had to make were plain enough: the Warren Report was right, the conspiratorialists were wrong; the Commission and its staff were honest men who did a good job; the critics or most of them, if they were not actually crooks, were the cracked, the crazy, and the credulous. I had only to be myself, and this plain truth would surely come across.

Myself! Alas, that was just what the merciless medium compelled me to be; as always, it stripped bare the real man.

The first question—"Do you support the Commission's conclusions?"—seemed to give me just the lead I wanted. "Certainly," I said. "They did a fine job and they reached the right result."

At least that was what I meant to say, but somehow it came out different: "Conclusions? Well, yes, I think, the main conclusions . . . But, of course, it depends what you mean by 'conclusions.' On the whole, I think I would say . . ."

My questioner came quick-

ly to my aid: "What about critics?" That was easy "A crowd of crooks and crackpots," were the words that rose to my lips—but they were not the words I uttered. "Well," I heard myself saying, with a most superior English intonation, "I think they're sincere. I mean, while there is an element of distortion that might, on the one hand . . ."

My friend hurried once more to my rescue: "I believe you have called some of them demonologists. What do you mean by that?" I gladly seized the proffered life belt:

"Troublemakers who stir up fantastic suspicions for evil ends" was of course my answer.

But it was not the answer that I actually gave: "Well, I would say, I think, that, while an honest critic looks at the evidence and builds a hypothesis upon it, the demonologist, if we may call him so, is a man who, having formulated a hypothesis that fits a predetermined theory, motivated, at any rate in some cases . . ."

So, for what seemed to me—and surely to my audience—three-quarters of an hour, but was, I am told, 10 minutes by the clock, I chased myself round the ring, and scored a handsome victory over myself on points.

Made a fool of before 20 million people? There had been no need for any American inquisitors to do the job. I was perfectly capable of doing it myself.

*New York Times*