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The Editor  
London Sunday Times  
London, England

Sir:

When offered genuine news of the Kennedy assassination, British papers are wont to say, in one manner or another, "Oh, there is no interest in that over here any more." Offered a piece of professional sycophancy, like your half-book length apologia for what is inexcusable by the eminent warden of All Saints, Mr. Sparrow, you grab at it.

Depending on the respected barrister for fact or opinion about the assassination or its investigation is like reading books instead of marrying. You just do not get the real thing.

In his criticism of me, which seems to be in part that I pretend neither to solve the crime nor to be James Bond, he is at least consistent. I am informed that in the summer of 1965 he was asked for a legal reading of my first book, WHITEWASH: THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT, by a major British publisher who had tentatively favored it. He seems to have recommended against it on the ground that it was not favorable to the Warren Commission!

Those who have had access to your "literary supplement" say this noble upholder of the law (British, at least) complains that all I do is show the Warren Commission was wrong. If this is his charge, I plead "guilty". I am sufficiently old-fashioned to believe rather deeply that when an American President is gunned down in broad daylight in the streets of an American city and that murder is officially investigated by the government thus brought into power, there may remain no questions unasked and none unanswered that are within the capacity of man to answer. I further believe that when a murdered American President is consigned to history with the dubious epitaph of what can at best be considered a questionable inquest, no President is ever safe and the institution, like all the others of a democracy, is thenceforth in jeopardy.

If he shows no major mistakes in my writing (and my evidence is 100% that of the Commission) and cannot show that those errors I attribute to the Commission are not errors, on what basis, then, does this embodiment of the Queen's law assail me (aside from a pretended kindness which rings as true as the word "love" in the mouth of a whore)?

Apparently on the basis of profound ignorance. Here, too, he is not alone. A year ago, our own American eminences commemorated the assassination's third anniversary by demanding to be heard and believed while beginning their statements with variants of "I don't know what

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I am talking about, but . . ." Beginning with Texas Governor John B. Connally, each proclaimed his ignorance by bragging that he had not read a single one of the books he assailed. These included such personages as a former Presidential press secretary, Malcolm Kilduff, whose performance was soon to be exceeded by another, Pierre Salinger, whose undying contribution to freedom of the press was a foreword to the literary lickspittlery of Newsweek's Charles Roberts in which Salinger demanded that criticism of government not be heard - in effect, suppressed.

Accompanying these ringing affirmations of man's freedom was a campaign of equal integrity in which those who wrote critically of the government were labeled "scavengers", the governor's felicitous phrase. To labor for several years without profit or even income (with the not inconsiderable aid of the warden) somehow became reprehensible.

What was not disgusting or in any way repugnant was the profitable writing supporting the official version or by those made famous by the assassination. It was honorable for Congressman Gerald Ford, paid to perform public service as a member of the Commission, to affix his name to a book written by another and to include in it Warren Commission material not found in the Report. He was likewise not to be faulted for signing, if not writing, private "Warren Reports" for Life magazine, reputedly the highest-paying American publication.

When Mr. Sparrow's American counterpart, Louis Nizer, a world-famous lawyer, wrote a glowing glorification of the Warren Report for a commercial edition of it when the "evidence" was still unavailable, he performed a "public service" and was not criticized.

The governor himself, if not paid cash, reaped the rich political harvest of favorable exposure in millions of its glossy pages and more countless millions of newspapers which reprinted from Life. Certainly this was not "scavenging", for did not the governor say the Report he proved wrong was indeed right?

Need I mention those many others who became rich, famous or both only because of their associations with the murdered President or because of that foul deed? Like the nanny of the children, his former secretary, or Salinger, Theodore Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger? How could these pure and unmercenary souls, greatly enriched as they were by the assassination, be thought to have financial gain in mind when they were entirely uncritical of the "investigation" of the murder that did enrich them?

The overnight millionaire, William Manchester, is in a different class. When he wrought an additional tragedy, still further a needless scandal, for which, to begin with only, he received \$665,000 from Look alone, the description "scavenger" is hardly appropriate.

(I do hope it is not improper to wonder if the All Souls warden gets nothing but a heavenly reward for his own well-publicized writings.)

In any event, based firmly on bias and buttressed by ignorance, Mr. Sparrow defames me. I know, I can assure you, that he has seen my first book. What I do not know is that he has read the three that

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followed, none of which has been published in England. He has not ordered these from me. Here I accuse him of neither unwisdom nor inconsistency, for he can better criticize what he does not know than he can answer it, as long as he need not face the author. And thus he need not concern himself with the enormous suppressions by the Commission as I have brought them to light from my personal and exhaustive examination of its files (that is, if anyone can be said to exhaust the estimated 300 cubic feet of them).

So, you add your prestige and circulation to his considerable reputation (how it was earned now seems no secret) and initiate another slander of those who seek truth. Your and his defamations, which have no foundation in either fact or integrity of opinion or purpose, have now been widely syndicated throughout at least the English-speaking world. Is it not now past time for you to give me the opportunity to respond? Or do you believe I should be as defenseless as the Warren Commission rendered the safely-dead Oswald in denying counsel to show the other side, to test its "evidence" with cross-examination?

Of course, there is no need for a night-sneak to risk face-to-face confrontation, and he is perhaps wiser and more successful - and less likely to be hurt - if he avoids it.

Yet we do, as we have from the first, urgently need a genuine dialogue on this subject, you and we. You are not immune to what affects the United States, its institutions and its government.

There is no end to the unchancy monologue of the warden, but dare he risk a dialogue? a confrontation? Dare he test his opinions, defamatory as they are, and the presumed "fact" upon which he should base them, to the face of one who says he does not know what he is talking about? I challenge him to that test.

Although I am but a humble writer (and I am, in both finances and station) and he is one of the world's famous, a man renowned in the law, I would welcome his arranging a public forum in your country and my attendance upon it with him, open to his peers who might want to ask questions or observe the abundant demonstration of his skill and knowledge, to the press and the general public.

As the challenger, I grant him the choice. We could discuss his writing, on which, without doubt, he is the world's outstanding expert; mine, of which he wants you to believe so little! or any combination of his election.

Should it, to my regret, not be possible for such a personal debate to take place, there are always your columns, and you, he, or the two of you jointly, could exercise his prerogatives.

Should he decline my challenge, he and I, at least, will have measured each other. And should you let it rest thus, you and I will understand each other, will both know the basis for the words printed in the Sunday Times.

England has a long and honorable tradition regarding questions of principle and the establishment of honor between men. If I require a "second", I nominate my long-suffering agent, Mr. Gordon Harbord, 53 St. Martin's Lane, London W.C. 2.

I attend you, gentlemen!

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg