

95  
PH  
RB

6/20/70

Dear Dick,

When first I read your letter of the 17th, I considered just not answering it, for I am convinced any effort at the rational would be offensive to you, and that I certainly do not intend, and because I know from the past that you just will not consider what is uncongenial to what you have already decided you want to be the truth. We all have a kind of compulsion to learn who killed the President and why and to bring to light and achieve public acceptability for the truth. However, there is no magic in this business, there is no wish-fulfillment in what we do, and each of the endless irresponsibilities, which are the only thing the media, with its unerring instinct for undermining legitimate work, give extensive attention to, further destroys even the willingness to consider what could be factual.

The apparently-endless task of frustrating the unintended harm of the dedicated wrong has sapped the efforts of those who do test their work. Let me remind you of what might have ensued over those tramp pictures and almost did, and of your steadfast refusal to consider what you imagined just might not be true. Since that costly effort, Curry has brought forth a book with a picture that is the most dramatic proof of the total error of what you alleged, as it is of Fred's very sick "Last Train", and you have both been silent about this. There is a contemporaneous picture showing neither the train where you allege it was nor the cars where Fred alleges they were, and the President is in that picture. But there was ample evidence without this, only neither of you would consider it.

How does one begin to tell a sincere, unselfish, hard-working man who has done so much good that he has done something that is only the opposite? Especially when one knows how persuaded he is that he is so right, else he'd not have done that which he did.

I can only hope your enlightenment does not come in court, as defendant in a libel action.

Quoting Garrison is today less evidentiary than it ever was. To say that there are no bank-president witnesses in this case does not mean we must rob the booby-hatch and invent them. What is worse is that were the people you identify as confessed conspirators that, had they confessed and were they credible, save for the Santanna fiction none is connected with the shooting in any event. So far as Hicks is concerned, ever Garrison abandoned that long ago and it doesn't make sense on the face of it.

I know about Dean and Fred. It is I, not Fred, who turned him on (twice), got him to come to Fred's, interviewed him and then turned him over to Fred, who, unless he lied to me thereafter, never even got what Dean had with him, promised to me through Fred, who was to xerox. Nor did I get a transcript of the tape of my own interview. True, there is a certain resemblance between Dean and the man in 237, but pardon my lack of confidence in Fred's capacity, as you expressed it, "You have to look in a man's eyes when you ask him a question to get the full import. Fred did." Of course we had him and the picture to compare. And what would confrontation with him accomplish? Another "confession"? If so, of what?

Unfortunately, the nature of the work you have done and the areas in which you have worked have not required that you know the requirements of the law under which Skolnick alleges he is suing. If you had the slightest idea of this, you'd know his is a spurious action, for the law is a good one, has certain prerequisites that are proper, and Skolnick has conformed to none of them, beginning with the making of a simple request for that which he alleges was suppressed. Do you have to know anything at all about the law to know that before you can charge

that you are being denied something you first have to ask for it? Skolnick never did. He got, by misrepresentation, some of the documents and footnotes from the appendix of one of my books, added the most incredible inventions to it, and presto, he has an instant suit. There is nothing but horsehit that he added. You say, "I always wait until I have had a face to face, eyeball to eyeball meeting with a person on this subject before reaching a conclusion". Aside from how incredible it is you couldn't detect the stuff he was throwing to be what it is, no more than the suit of a cheap, self-seeking publicity hound, let me tell you how I feel when I'm clubbed on the head from behind. I don't need another thing to tell me I've been clubbed on the head. There is no point in spending time on you with Skolnick, for you have a compulsion to believe the incredible when it says what you like to hear. Otherwise, how could you miss the total ignorance displayed in the suit he sent you? Or the patent insincerity in his saying he was filing the suit under 5 USC 552 and his plea that it be declared unconstitutional?

However, if they persuaded you at all, I certainly would like to read the letters he sent you. Or, you persuade very easily, for the documents all contain makings you should have recognized as not of Archives origin. However, above all of this, I have his receipt and thanks for that which he then turned around and stole. How much of this alone can we survive?

Dick, it is not necessary to dredge the sewers to do legitimate work, nor is it necessary to believe the inherently incredible. After itemizing the incredibles upon whom you drew, even then having nothing solid from any of them of your own "eyeball" character, you say to me, "If you write all of these and any others that come in via the 'confession route' (is that what it is?) as kooks; why, then Harold, you might just as well quit right now". The tragedy is that you really believe this foolishness, Dick, are unaware of the fact that it is but foolishness. First of all, you do have nothing but kooks in your own selection. Second of all, they have not all "confessed". The route they took is publicity seeking, not confession, and they didn't even "confess".

However, let me put this on a different basis to you. Why not ask yourself a simple question: what have I done if I am wrong?

Dick, we none of us know as much as we should, and we are none immune to error. However, it is obvious that there are some pre-publication steps we can take to minimize the chances of error. One is to test the work by submission to those with adequate knowledge. I cannot believe you did this with your piece, for none of those with sufficient knowledge would have failed to warn you of the self-defamation in which you were about to engage. Or haven't you yet realized that each of us will be known for what he publishes, each will have to live with it?

But it is not alone because I regret the hurt you have done your own reputation that I write you. I do hope the day will come when those of you who know too little and draw unwarranted conclusions from invalid or non-existent "evidence" will understand the harm you do all others and the cause of truth. This is, I have no doubt, the last thing you want to do, hurt another or reduce the possibility of establishing truth. But as friendship requires candor, then I must tell you that this is precisely what you have done. I am truly sorry.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg