

January 28, 1965

Mr. Herb Michelson
WAKR P.O. Box 1590
Akron, Ohio 44309

Dear Mr. Michelson,

In answer to your letter of January 25, I reaffirm my general agreement of the possible worthwhile TV shows that could result from confrontations between members of the staff of the former Warren Commission and those who criticize their work. I reiterate my suspicions that these gentlemen will not participate under conditions that are not loaded in their favor and I say this from my own repeated experience.

The format you have in mind is congenial to those without financial problems. It is one that is not possible for those of us who are without fixed or regular income or independent means. It is not possible to adequately prepare for the type of thing you have in mind without the great expenditure of time and money.

Frankly, I see no reason for this not being a spontaneous thing. This makes for better TV. Certainly the former lawyers are familiar enough with the subject, should know more about it than any others, have more experience with this kind of thing than non-lawyers and are generally in the position of advantage with such a format. The type of preparation I understand you to reflect they have in mind will tend to make this a heavy, dull thing and to unnecessarily freeze it into a fixed mold. It will also tend to limit the subject that might be discussed and, if it puts them in a position to refuse to discuss any aspect on this ground, I will oppose it. I think this should be free and wide open, no aspects barred. I have no desire to make Mr. Griffin seem to be ^{one} who will participate only under terms that are advantageous to him, but if he surrounds himself with qualifications and evasions to begin with, I regard it as other than a good augury.

Candor impels me to suggest you prepare yourself for what may be ahead. These men just will not debate on a basis of equality and a wide-open format. I can refer you to a number of cases. Perhaps the easiest one is at WNEW-TV, where they, having declined an offer to participate on a "special" later had a change of heart and asked for and got an additional program they thought would be theirs alone. When they found I was to be on it, as two of their defenders had been on the earlier one, with two minor exceptions they all declined. That show has yet to be taped but will be soon, with but two members of the former Commission staff and they represented by a champion. It is only if you understand the history that you can prepare for the future.

Generally speaking, I think I'll not want to participate unless I am adequately compensated for my time, including any preparation you might require. I see no reason for any income to go to the Kennedy library when there are so many of us without independent means doing what we regard as legitimate research on the late President and do so without income or profit. If the lawyers want to give their share to anyone else, that is their affair alone. And I think the income should be divided equally.

Sincerely yours,

WAKR

the Radio-Television Center of Akron



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Jan. 25, 1967.

Harold Weisberg
Coq D'or Farm
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Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I appreciate your quick response to my Jan. 11 letter which outlined Burt Griffin's proposal for a series of television programs involving members of the Warren Commission staff and the "critics" of the Warren Report.

I'm in sympathy with many of the points you raised. At this time I can't attempt to satisfy you on all of your objections. There's no question some compromises will be necessary; but until I've received responses to all of my tentative invitations, I frankly won't know what over-all ground rules we'll end up with. Let me now just respond to some of your notes:

1--The proposal did not begin with me; it came from Griffin, apparently stemming from conversations he'd had last fall with two or three other members of the Commission staff.

2--Obviously, I can't speak for Griffin's failure to confront you in earlier TV "debates." There's no question in my mind you see the value of debating with them, even if it might involve going along with a few of Griffin's conditions (which I have a feeling are still open to negotiation).

3--I feel strongly a network of independent and educational TV stations could be meshed for this sort of programming, on either a live or taped basis.

4--The heavy law involvement you speak of can, I feel, be avoided. First, I want a journalist to prepare the advance list of criticisms. Second, if the sessions were held in public anyone could attend, including Mr. Griffin's law professors--if they wished. I don't visualize sending out special invitations to the Bar for this.



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5--You certainly have proven by your writings that you would be able to prepare advance "evidence" to support your criticisms. The issues our journalist would prepare in advance would, in fact, be based on the points raised by you and the other "critics."

6--I'm aware Griffin's final paragraph does, as you say, "give him an out." But again, if his proposal is the only basis for which he will face you and the other "critics," it might in the long run be worthwhile for you to participate. Judging from the early response to my letters, several of his Commission staff colleagues also are willing to participate.

7--If you require higher expenses and remuneration than the other participants, I will do my best to get the money for you--within reason.

-- I hope you understand I'm not trying to take sides. I'm simply trying to assemble the people under terms that all can live with in relative calm. I sincerely value your judgments and opinions.

As soon as all the responses come in, I'll begin laying the groundwork for network and financial arrangements. Or at least try. Thanks again.

Sincerely yours,



Herb Michelson