

10/6/71

Mr. Ben Gilbert
WETA-TV
2600 Fourth St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Gilbert,

Thanks for taking the time to respond to my letter on NEWSROOM. I hope you understand I intended nothing personal. I knew when you left the show and that is about when I did, too.

Nor was my letter intended as a personal attack on Mr. Maerki. I was making a general observation on a disappointment not mine alone on the failure of public TV to meet both its potential and what I, at least, regard as its only proper function, to present to the people what they will not get on commercial TV. Buckley is another case.

As with commercial TV, the subject of the assassinations is a taboo with you (pl.) I know from long experience, going back to 1966 and not with WETA alone. I was booked in San Francisco, went out there, and was summarily rebuffed at the station. I was approached a number of times by Mitchell Krause in NYC, but he never aired me. When I asked fairness-doctrine time to respond to the foulmouthings of a blatant propagandist who defamed a number of the victims, I didn't get it. On my current (?) book on the "ing assassination, I was offered a spot on the NYC equivalent of your OPEN AIR if I'd give a week's notice of when I would be ^{there}, and it was withdrawn on the pretense the offer was never made when they were phoned. Mr. Maerki never phoned me once. I call him thrice and the reporter he assigned at least that many times, with never a callback. He said he'd get a book and didn't. I bought one and loaned it to him and never heard from him again. I'm broke and could ill afford this. It could not then help my book, but I felt and feel this is a subject public TV should handle and handle responsibly. When about two months passed and I heard from nobody at WETA, I phoned and asked the return of the book. After I wrote a short letter, it was, uninsured, damaged and unsalable.

I should not have had to approach public TV with this book. The enclosed reviews are from published sources someone, certainly, should have seen. Certainly one call should have been enough. And is one answer to at least six asking too much?

If you invite me for OPEN AIR, I'll accept.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

**WETA
TELEVISION/26
RADIO/FM 90.9**

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October 1, 1971

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
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Frederick, Maryland 21701

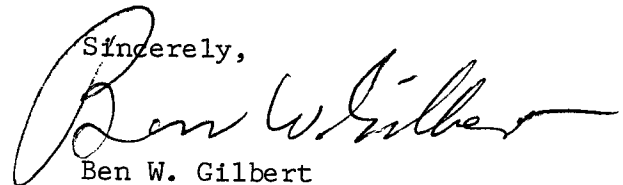
Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Your taking the trouble to write us your reactions about the prospective demise of NEWSROOM is appreciated.

As you know, I left NEWSROOM last February and have not been involved in its management and direction since then. No doubt Mr. Maerki has advised you of his reasons for not giving attention to your book.

Your letter raises a more general question to which I would like to reply. You refer to "the false pretense of public TV news." There has never been any pretense of covering the news, as such. We have not allocated our resources to compete with the commercial networks and affiliated stations in conventional news coverage. We do attempt in our public affairs coverage to deal with major issues in the news as they appear. We also endeavor to provide access to divergent viewpoints on matters of local interest in our OPEN AIR program. Have you seen it? I would be interested in your reaction.

Sincerely,



Ben W. Gilbert

BWG/cc