

29 April 1974

Dear HaroldE

This is a fast and top-of-the-head response to your notes of 4/24 and 4/26 about book possibilities. Before I get into that, I note that in your 4/26 to BF you are asking about the dates connected with McCord's letter to Sirica. For what it's worth, our chronology shows that the letter is dated 19Mar73, was "delivered" by McCord to Sirica on 21Mar73 (but Sirica refused to accept it on grounds he should have no direct dealings with a defendant (NYT24mar73)but that Sirica read the letter in court on 23Mar73.

Now, about the proposed book. We are reluctant to say anything that might discourge you, but even more reluctant to encourage you without what we feel to be justification. What I say will be on the basis of very fragmentary knowledge, so don't take it too seriously. You have fed us the story of 6/20/72 for many months in bits and pieces, much of it in a form which we were not in a position to understand fully because it was only recently that we got first a copy of ~~the~~ the Gray transmittal letter to Haldeman and then still later a copy of the enclosure.

The result is that we have the impression that you consider this proves that the coverup was organized that day, when it became clear how much was known to the FBI, and that therefore the tapes of the meeting which considered all this information and its implications never could see the light of day. This is oversimplified, but boiled down that's it.

We do not disagree, but where we begin to feel doubt is the question of how this is to be accepted by the general reader as proof. There is no doubt in your mind that it constitutes proof, and basically none in ours, but we do not have the same confidence that the average reader is going to go along.

Not only is the question two years old, so old that the reader is going to question many things that he would not otherwise simply because he can't recall his own feelings as of that time. The question also invades his private rationalizing in which he has worked out a technique of avoiding thinking about such things. He does not WANT to know the facts, if for no other reason because to know them is to recognize that the entire system is rotten and not working. We know that he could not bring himself to do this in the assassinations, and we have every circumstantial indication thus far that he has put up the same mental roadblock against really understanding Watergate.

We therefore have to disagree with your opinion that such a book would turn out to be extraordinarily hot. It might be, but there would be massive resistance against admitting it. Not only the subconscious reluctance I mentioned above, but probably a conscious campaign against it that ~~we~~ could turn very nasty indeed if not violent. If you thought you had trouble with the Whitewash series, you might well run into much worse this time under circumstances which none of us now can foresee.

Since your theme cannot reflect favorably on the media, you can expect no help there. So what is left to promote such a book? We think, on balance, that the signs are all wrong for it now, as far as we can see.

This doesn't mean that you should not go ahead with it, organizing and boiling down your material and outlining your arguments, but holding off until you can see your way clear to genuine publication possibilities either in the form of a very worthwhile advance or ~~guarantees~~ guarantees. But these would have to be good and airtight. You cannot repeat the battles you waged to get the Whitewash series published, and remember that your opposition should be wiser and more experienced now than then.

In any case, you have told us nothing which indicates you have to reach a final decision immediately. Hang tough. Make it plain that you require a considerable measure of protection this time. If it can't be provided, too bad. You can always try again later.

One of the reasons for our lack of encouragement is the Mitchell-Stans verdict, which shows how successful the government's policy of a hamstrung prosecution can be, and the fact that GL once more is defying a legal summons and trying to answer it with a public relations gambit. We'll watch him at 6 p.m. local time tonight to see just how blatant it is. But what all this boils down to is that we agree with you fully that he's getting away with it again. The basic reason that he is goes back to what I said above, that people simply don't want to know too much of the truth, for personal and subconscious reasons. They would like to be rid of the guy, so typical of their own social shortcomings, but are unwilling to pay the price in terms of their own self-esteem.

Furthermore, there is massive reluctance to accept ANY version of anything that doesn't conform with the accepted and current cliché about it. I've got two widely different * articles now in the hands of the third set of magazine publishers, and both are basically unacceptable because they challenge accepted beliefs, which are no more than beliefs, with arrays of facts (some of them newly juxtaposed with each other) which no editor wants to take responsibility for. If either gets published it will be only because some editor who is very exceptional will become intrigued and decide to take a chance on getting his teeth kicked in by the establishment.

So perhaps what I'm trying to say is simply that from here it looks like the time for you to move is not yet, that you're probably right but that no one is going to be able to admit it, and that the lesson from all this is to take it easy and see what turns up. Conditions may change, but right now they don't look too good.

Best,  jdw

* One concerns Butterfield, the other is a radical anthropological perspective on acupuncture.