

8/14/74

Dear Jon,

Herewith a carbon of my response to Rolling Stone's Walsh's letter to me. Thanks.

The irresponsibles have been up to their usual. One told Penthouse of this transcript and what I was doing with it before I completed the writing. This practically required that I respond to their expression of interest, quite encouraging over the phone. After they read the first ~~32~~ 2/3 of what I wrote.

I have just returned from New York. This is FYI because I do not spread these kinds of things around. They are long on the talk and short on the money. They are willing to print my underground book as I have it camera-ready. But their advance is less than the cost of setting type and making up.

Were this not discouraging enough, they will not give copies to Members of Congress. I would have to buy them and then pay the cost of distribution.

Their book-publishing manager appears to me to be a looser

I told him politely but pointedly that his offer could be interpreted as a cheap buy that would make him more vulnerable ~~and~~ to and less likely to resist sinister influences, to quote Haig, and that as an author who was also a publisher I took the offer as a measure of what I could expect of him and therefore was not inclined to accept it. Lesar and I have not finalized a decision but it seems likely that we will do an underground version as originally planned and then hope to be able to distribute when I can't use most of the major distributors because they have already gypped me out of thousands. All but one. He will distribute. He is in New York City and limits to that area.

Political developments leave us so little choice that tomorrow I will have to arrange to make and deliver two xeroxes before publication because of the state of the administration's efforts against the Freedom of Information law amendments.

Again FYI, Department of Justice has threatened a Ford ~~black~~ vote. There is Ford dynamite in the book, as in time you will see. At that time you may use.

I did not tell Rolling Stone this or more that I have on Ford (See Whitewash II for fun stuff) and I won't use in advance what I have on him in my Watergate draft.

Hasty thanks,

Dear Jon, I don't have the address. Would you please forward? Thanks.

7/21/74

Editor, Rolling Stone,

I hear you have commissioned Robert Blair Kaiser to do a piece on Conspiracy Theories in the JFK assassination. This will be another of your contributions, whether or not so intended, to the Department of Information. You and he did it earlier by dignifying a non-event with a non-report, giving significance it did not have to the public abortion of the so-called "Committee to Investigate Assassinations." It's Georgetown's abortion of last November.

You may not share my view, that the JFK assassination is a turning-point of modern history. Much as we do not know about it, we do know that national policy and direction changed with it. Do you believe LBJ or JFK would have been President without it? Or, it is such too significant an event for the kind of attention the matter of the dedicated wrong have been given by the alternative press.

Editors necessarily trust those who write for them. They thereby become the creatures of writers if they are without basis for discrimination. In printing Kaiser's earlier piece you lacked discrimination and displayed a lack of knowledge which could be the basis for it.

If this were a responsible treatment of a serious subject, and it can't be, there would be the question what qualifies Kaiser? His writing a book on Sirhan? What has that to do, except that in a generally good work he displayed an inadequacy for the role he had undertaken with the JFK assassination? Or his knowledge of those who work in the field or who pretend to? Or his inability or unwillingness - take your choice - to distinguish between the two?

A mythology has been fabricated about this assassination, assassinations in general and the intelligence agencies. Those who make it up know nothing about speaks or spookeries. The few who have contaminated themselves with a little fact do not let it intrude upon passions, anxieties or preconceptions. There are a few uncorruptious among them but most are fine, concerned people who just happen to be nuts on these subjects and also happen to be sincere. Sincerity of belief did not make the world flat.

Those who would undertake to inform people, especially the very fine new generation of young, owe a responsibility not to misinform. Intent is irrelevant, fact is relevant. This subject can't be treated responsibly and if it could be Kaiser is not about to start doing the work required for the effort - before he could write a word.

We may not like the realities of modern life but that does not keep them from being realities and the realities. All the crazy writing that when it is best motivated is merely wrong finds its ways into files for extraction and confidential display any time anyone in a position to be of some influence opens his mouth or gives a sign. On the other extreme there is a charlatan who would be more respectable if he were certified insane. He screws CIA and does work for it that it can't do for itself, making official connection another irrelevancy. If there is an exception to his acceptance in the alternative media I don't know it. And his awful stuff is so bad it requires no specific knowledge for disbelief. ~~because of these deficiencies he doesn't care. He'll give Kaiser and you plenty of theories and neither of you will know whether the one he gives refutes others he has propounded. This is the regard in which you hold your readers? Or your responsibilities?~~

There is decent, responsible writing that can be done. But not by those who can't separate apocrypha and anachronisms.

This fine new generation does want to know what truth can be known. But what do they get? A raft of commercializers who take their money and give them fairy tales. These are characters who merely take the work of others - the crazier the better - and improve on it. There is nothing too insane. They call themselves "researchers" because they are indiscriminate plagiarists, so they have read something, generally worthless when it is not worse. Then they improve upon each other. By the time this cycle is through a college year there is no work left for the black artists.

What do they read? Or what is available to them? What have those of means done to make truth as it can be authenticated available to the young in quest of knowledge? For them ~~Walt~~ Strodick! And the countless others like him ^{who} differ only in being unable to equal his lack of scruple and can't approximate his ability to manufacture evidence with a single flick of the forked tongue. No others get in print.

Most people get their news from the Establishmentian media. They, these editors, begin with prejudice against truth. What more do they need to fortify this prejudice than the mounding insane stuff that crosses their desks from the alternative media?

And because all this rotten writing is insane they assume that there is no other writing, that it is all insane.

So whose interest does this miserable pile serve?

Who speaks sponsor this kind of sick stuff. It makes them credible as they cannot do for themselves.

If you can't find another Willie Cameron to do the kind of beautiful, responsible writing she did on the Hunt children, can't you please stay away from these subjects where you can't do good and inevitably will do harm?

They are not subjects for trivial writing or juvenile writers.

They are not subjects on which you should abuse the trust of your readers.

Were I not certain I'd not be taking the time to write you. That I do take this time I hope you will understand to be an indication of the respect I have for some of the fine things you have done and a belief that you do not really want to do what will be inevitable in this project.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg