

11/22/68

Dear Moo,

Monday I <sup>sent</sup> wrote a member of your staff an airmail, certified letter. At the very latest he should have gotten it Wednesday. I certainly expected to hear from him because this is the only member of your staff who ever devised a code with me so he could call me and know where to call me again at a clear phone. His formula, if it interests you, was a simple one: he asked me my age. I told him 55. He said to get the number of such a phone, have it at hand, add 5555 to it, and when he phoned me to give him the new number. I think he said if the number was too large, to subtract 5555. In any event, I do have these numbers by my desk and have from that moment. However, he has never called me and I do not know why he made this request of me months ago. Yet his own formula provides him with a means of instant, secure response. It is now almost midnight of the third day since he should have received the letter.

I was troubled when I wrote him. I am more troubled that he is silent.

Frankly, I suspect there may be trouble brewing. Yet I do not want to precipitate a big hassle in public. Nonetheless, I must do what I think is necessary to safeguard Jim, who is certainly the world's most trusting man (and as I told him, one of the two most naive - I am the other).

I wish you could read the letter very carefully. You may anticipate one or both of the areas of my major concern. I would hope I am not alone in these worries. Unless I am quite wrong (which would be a real load removed) I am certain those trained in the law should at least be aware of them. Any cub reporter would be. The only person I had a chance to talk to at any length about any of this was Barbara, and what she told me magnified my worry. She had had similar ones and was given nonsense for answers.

In an effort to be as fair as possible to this person, I explained to him I could not send a copy of the letter to him without undercutting this person. I also told him I had no objection to his showing the letter to Jim.

His silence makes me wonder if he, thinking over what might follow this letter, he did discuss it with Jim but without giving him the letter to read himself, uninterrupted. Perhaps I am getting too paranoid, but one possibility is that while pretending to read the letter and for the most part reading it accurately, he might have paraphrased parts to make the letter say other than it does, other than is intended. It is two pages typed single space. The longer it is, the easier it is to change the sense and context by altering a few words, by wrong emphasis, etc.

One of the greatest problems his silence gives me is this: I told him that after knowing Jim for a year and a half I had the definite feeling he was building up to something that might well be explosively wrong. I explained my concern in some detail. Now it happens that this is something I have discussed in the past with him, so he knows my worry in this direction is not new. His silence in the face of it is even more troubling to me. While I recognize there are many things I do not know, and as you know, I never spy around to learn what is going on, nonetheless, the lack of a pro forma assurance that my fears are groundless perplexes me. I would think it would be automatic under the circumstances if it were the case.

With this background I seek your advice, using this indirect means of reaching you privately. I would like to have Jim read that letter if this person does not give it to him and leave him alone with it, so he can read it

for himself and get its meaning without "interpretation". I feel that if this person had taken the letter to Jim, which I do not regard as a likely possibility, I would have heard from Jim. He knows I can get to a clear phone in less than a quarter of an hour and he certainly knows more than one he can use. Then, after Jim has had a chance to read it, I would like to discuss with him what prompted me to write it.

While I told this person I could not send a copy to Jim without undercutting him, I cannot let him be silent indefinitely and thereby veto my freedom to do what I think must be. *mine*

Before Bud went abroad, as I believe I told you, he asked me to go to New Orleans with him December 1 and I agreed. If he does not change his plans, I will again be there within a week. At that time I would like a chance to go into this with Jim, privately. Thereafter, if he so desires, I will go into it with anyone else he may desire.

My question, then, is this: Bud returns Tuesday, 11/26, unless he had changed his plans without telling me. If I have had no response to my letter and find I am going to New Orleans shortly thereafter, do you think it would be right to Xerox a copy and send it to Jim? There is nothing in the letter that would mean anything that could possibly hurt us if it fell into the wrong hands. I sent the original certified to assure its proper handling. The advantage of my doing this is that Jim would be able to read it carefully for himself and be prepared to ask me anything he might want.

There may be ways in which I can communicate the stress of my immediate concern. One was the chalk-talk at the club a week ago today. That really shook me up, particularly with one perhaps subconscious revelation from Jim that I took to mean he is about to do something. I was so deeply troubled by this I spoke to Vince Salandria about it. From what I could tell him by phone he shared my apprehension. The other, if Louis remembers, is what I asked him to send me what he could about, and that is only one thing, if he stops to think. We were in Jim's office looking at the film. When Clancy was rewinding the film, Louis left the office and I followed him, then asking him this. If he can recall that, you will understand another of my worries, or at least will know what it relates to if you do not agree with my fears.

While I am writing, let me say I should have heard about the JR interview by the time you might respond to this. If you merely indicate you would or would not recommend, I'll know what you mean. I'll then be able to let you know whether the interview was fruitful, perhaps what, if anything, it yielded. This could be information and it might be something more tangible.

When I was at the dentist's today (and we do not yet know if I'll lose any teeth, thank you), I also touched base with the Archives. What I requested has not yet been prepared for me. I'll be in Washington again in several days and will check again. Meanwhile, I hope you can get time to go over what I had send you, what we had earlier sent Tom, and understand that material. You may think of things I didn't. One of the things I'd like to do when I am there again is interview Sam Newman. I know you people did, but I now have something you perhaps did not then have. I'd like to discuss it with him. It just might release a few memory cells. If you'd like to go with me, as we did on the printing, let us figure on that.

Too late for more now. Let me hear from you, please.

Sincerely,