

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701

1/19/77

Ms. Patricia M. Orr
Select Committee on Assassinations
Room 3341 House Office Bldg. Annex No. 2
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Orr,

So long ago that it no longer forwards mail automatically the post office renumbered the rural route on which we live. However, your letter of two days ago has just come. I respond immediately.

Before your committee was constituted Rick Feeney phoned me for other purposes. He then told me of the plan for a staff of 170. My instant reaction was that this was the best way for a committee not to know what was going on, what it had, and to lose itself in other ways internally.

Your letter is proof of the accuracy of my foresight. If you had known what was in your files, if you had spoken to anyone else who has had anything to do with me, you would not have written me. Dick Sprague has not seen fit to respond to the letter in which I told him that as long as he and Ozer were on the committee's staff and other conditions existed I would have nothing to do with it. I have heard of the Ozer departure. It did not come in time to prevent his besmirching of the reputation of the House and this committee and was too long after personal and professional conduct Dick undertook to defend but I find can not be either excused or tolerated.

While this is a minor point I think that if I carry it farther what follows may be more comprehensible to you and the committee and in my own files and the archive I will leave on this subject.

It is my recollection that we met in the office outside Dick's about 2 p.m. November 4 17 and that you then indicated yours is a research function. We then discussed the committee's rush to judgement, an incorrect judgement, joined in by Ozer and Rep. Gonzalez. Since then I have heard that your position is a sort of Robert Mahon patronage. While whether or not true this has nothing to do with what I write I would welcome a statement from you for my files that there is no truth in this no matter how indirectly one may interpret your sponsorship.

You as Dick's Special Assistant write me "As you may have done other minor work [that is, do other than collect a few pictures] relevant to either assassination, you may have other information or materials that will aid us in our investigation. We would appreciate hearing about it."

Yes, I have done other work relevant to an investigation of the assassinations of President Kennedy and Dr. King. I use this rather than your formulation because in four months I have seen nothing that persuades me your committee is engaged upon what I regard as an investigation or what the dictionary describes as one. That you write me with those words, whether or not I am correct in believing that we met and did talk, addresses whether or not I was correct in what I told Rick and whether or not you people have been investigating and whether or not you already have no meaningful internal communication. While you may not like this I suggest you can find it constructive.

Your committee has the resources of the Library of Congress available to it. The most perfunctory inquiry would have disclosed that I wrote the first book on the Warren Commission, more books on it than anyone else and the only one not in accord with the official explanation of the killing of Dr. King.

Aside from a few of the staff lawyers I met when Dick asked me in October 20 and Rick I know two members of your staff, inasmuch as I know who is on your staff. Both are on your research staff. I met Deane Gay when he was assigned to another House committee.

He is your researcher director. Your letter says he serves no function, that you have all this money from the House and the waste of it is a priority item and that there is no internal communication between Dick and whatever his Special Assistant may be.

If they did not know what you ask, and they and others do, when ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Jeremy Akers was herelast October he left with a few books and a list of all of them. If research does not include consulting materials listing research sources that are available and if this is foreign to whatever is investigating to your committee then your Mr. Evans obtained all the copies of my FranceUp Jim Lesar had in Washington. Your ~~Muff~~ Muff Rosen knew about my work and earlier had phoned to arrange to come here and obtain copies because that would be faster than mail. I believe she said she is on your research staff.

So from countless internal sources and the minimal consultation with the library of Congress you should have learned in four months that I wrote an entire book on the suppression of pictures in the JFK assassination. This book, my third, in order of appearance rather than of writing, was out about May 1967, well before most of the books on this subject.

In four months neither the staff director, the man in charge, nor his special assistant, have troubled themselves the little it would have taken to be aware of the basic literature on the subject they are, supposedly, investigating.

And with this concept, this kind of performance, you can justify a request for the largest appropriation in Congressional history?

You clearly are not familiar with my work so to make what follows more comprehensible I paraphrase the conclusion to the first on the JFK assassination, my first: that the expected job had not been done and must be, entirely in public and preferably by Congress.

When mine was the first book to ask for a Congressional investigation I hope you can appreciate how I feel in repeating and emphasizing that I cannot in good conscience have anything to do with your committee.

The emphasis is today's, provided by Congressman Gonzalez and Jack Anderson on ABC and in the Anderson column, which I have not yet read. My wife has. She tells me that what I published years ago and is included in books your committee has purchased is now the earth-shaking exclusive discoveries of your committee. I regard this kind of imposition on Anderson, whose course is quite consistent with currying favor in return for leaks and thus seems easily imposed upon, and this kind of imposition on the trust of the American people and this kind of deception of and defamation of the House as unconscionable. Moreover, I am confident that you have used it entirely out of context and I so cautioned a member of your staff who did discuss this with me.

When I read the Anderson column if further comment is called for I will make it. Of today's TV promotion, part of a campaign to make other than an authoritarian out of Dick Sprague and to blackjack an appropriation out of the House, I will make three comments. If anyone desires more I need only be provided with a tape.

I ~~xxx~~ have never met Congressman Edwards. I regard the attack on him before a nationwide TV audience as a wretched business particularly because the Members of your committee include a former FBI agent, Congressman Edwards' apparent sin, and others who from their previous membership on the UnAmerican committee had the closest and most dubious association, in my view, with the FBI. As my concept of Americanism cause me to oppose the UnAmericans' concept of guilt by association, I oppose it when it is applied to Congressman Edwards. Besides, although he failed in his effort because he depended on those he believed he could trust and did not know they were not ~~xxxx~~ trustworthy, particularly Mark Lane, and filed in his last year's investigation of some FBI misconduct, his public hearing did not improve the FBI's image. And the same ~~ark~~ Lane, who ~~xx~~ has boasted in public without a denial that Dick Sprague owes his job to ~~ane~~ Lane, led your unquestioning committee into another international deception and ripoff of the public mind.

This same abused nationwide audience was told that those who oppose Dick and the committee's request for \$6.5 million dollars are a "netley crew" and that these reporters who to my knowledge have written only with accuracy about his past record engaged in what Congressman Gonzalez described as "some hatchet jobs dredge up on Mr. Sprague." I have heard Mr. Sprague in what appears to be his chief function, public appearances, held forth on the function of reporters. It is to say only what he wants said. Anything else is irresponsible. This may be his concept of American journalism. It is not mine. I'm surprised that Mr. Gonzalez, who is old enough to remember "Sieg Heil!" would say what he did. In any event, although I have done nothing in public, I am one of this "netley crew," probably its charter member.

Congressman Edwards' membership appears to stem from his opposition to the House becoming the practitioner of the worst vices of the CIA and FBI and the excesses unfortunately so common in police departments. He opposed the use of electronic devices in clandestine surveillance, a matter reflected with less than ~~frankly~~ fidelity ~~with~~ in your flack's letter in today's Post. Congressman Edwards' objections were clear enough to me in the reporting of them. He wants the House to respect Constitutional and American rights. Long before your appropriation demands were public and with them a breakdown of expenditures I wrote Dick on exactly this point but not about this greasy kid stuff of the speckeries. My complaints and my reasons for refusing to have anything to do with the committee whose first exponent I was came from its repeated acts in overt and intended violation of these rights. After he became aware of my initial protest Dick wrote me that he agreed, as I recall his words, "totally and completely." What better reason could he have had for persisting in them and extending them into the realm of the clandestine?

If anyone wants an expansion of this, which I very much doubt, I need only be asked. I have understated the offenses against law and decency, if they are not yet public, and the inherent assault on the integrity of the House in what this committee has already done and the House does not know about. Congressman Gonzalez has solicited my support before the Rules committee. The record of your committee to date persuades me that the best way I can spend what time I have left is in making as full and as accurate a record of these tragic events and their consequences as I can so I will not ask to be heard by the Rules committee. Were I to be there is not one favorable thing I could say about your committee to date and there is very much I could say about how this committee and then the House were deceived, misled and in other ways had their trust imposed upon and what is not yet public, the commercialization of it.

Your specific request has to do with photographs. Can I help you on this. I can and I refuse to. There is no power that can compel me to cooperate with your committee even though for all these years I have yearned for a Congressional investigation. If your committee elects to challenge me on my refusal, as I do not for a minute believe it will, I will give you basis for it.

I am responsible for the pursuit of such pictures by another Richard Sprague, a fine person who has in my opinion become a madman on this subject. I opened up his original sources for him. I am responsible for some of Robert Greden's work that your Members were deceived over. I have done other work on pictures and I have some I will not give you, some these others do not have. I can lead you to other pictures and I will not. I can tell you where others are sequestered and I will not. I will not, under any circumstance or faced with any penalty, be party to any further deception of the people or the Congress that is in any way related to these terrible tragedies. You should understand my view: that they also represent the deepest subversion of my concept of representative society. I am not now and I never have been in the pursuit of a whodunit and the first time anyone consulted me for Congressman Downing I made clear my belief that the House has no right to engage in such an adventure.

Having referred to your calling Greden before the committee last September in fairness to him I add that I am certain of his intentions and that they are good

and entirely unselfish. I knew him and his wife well and regard them as fine people. My wife and I are the godparents of his son, a wonderful beautiful child. I can and I do endorse the technical faithfulness of his work on the Zapruder film. He did it originally for me, in consultation with me and some of it at my request.

Separate from this is his interpretations of the film and his qualifications to offer interpretations. This involves the childish concept of your committee in on two levels, staff and Members, that this film is a thing unto itself, especially in the evidence it holds. I condemn all uses of this film made before the Congress, and I am aware of a number besides its presentation to your committee, because all were made for political purposes and without the possibility of communication of its real evidence.

Those who imposed on Mr. Groden's sincerity and brought this about have commercialized this already. I understand in six figures.

I use this one film of many in part because it is a horrible example of misuse of which I cannot in good conscience be part and in part to make a point of what I regard as at best a deception and an example of professional incompetence, the workings of a committee not worthy of support.

I am not saying this to your people for the first time. Nor is Rick's call to me they day of the Rules committee action the first time. Then and on another occasion I recall I was asked for what I regard as a proper beginning for this committee. When Dick and I met for the first time on October 20 we also went into this. With one exception on which he said he reserved judgement Dick agreed with my recommendations. The word that came back to me from my recommendations to Congressman Downing is that they had been agreed to. The opposite has been the committee's record and remains this from all the indications available to me.

If you chose to misread this as some farout ego involvement it makes no difference to me. The realities are that in all these years I have been without any regular income, that I do sell books, which provide my income, that any attention to me helps sell books - and thus helps my income, and that I am conscientious and deliberately rejecting what can attract attention to me and to my work, what can sell books.

In each of the occasions on which I was asked to put recommendations in writing my situation required that I do it off the top of the head, without time to think it through or to organize it in any way. I am certain that on these occasions I said the same thing and that this included my refusal to be part of anything with which I could not agree. I also said that if the committee took a course with which I could agree there is nothing I would not do to help it, regardless of the personal cost to me. Earlier I had demonstrated my good faith in this to Congressman Downing's staff by showing them copies of what it had cost me much to obtain and offering it to them prior to my later publication of it. This includes what I regard as essential to any understanding of the Zapruder film, which was used in a side-show barker manner before your Members. It also includes other pictures, including some that from my knowledge and experience are essential in any consideration of the meaning of the Zapruder film. Or others, like these of Muchmore and Nix.

Rick Feeney, one of these people, is on your staff. he knows of this.

I digress on Rick. The last time we had any real conversation was when Dick was called to the phone October 20. I then asked Rick for what Congressman Downing had already presented to the Rules committee and thus was public domain. He was offended, showed it and asked me why. I told him what I now repeat, that it was a fake and that at some point the House and this committee might be attacked for it, so I wanted to know what representations had been made in order to be of future help if my help were to be asked. His offense continues. I have not received a copy of it. I also have made no other effort to obtain it. But I have no hesitancy in stating that both of the major representations made to the Rules committee as they relate to the JFK and the King assassinations are fraudulent and have been commercialized since then successfully by both of

5

these who deceived these Members and through them the House and through the House the people. That the Members were so, easily deceived does not in my opinion, qualify them to conduct an investigation.

Robert Morrow's Betrayal is a fraud. It is to say much less than I can to say that Congressman Downing leaned himself to a commercialization of the paperback reprint by the corporation that has paid an incredible sum in advance for Richard Nixon's self justification. Warner, this corporation, distributed copies of Congressman Downing's glowing endorsement of this fraud by one I believe is a convicted felon to further commercialize a great tragedy, the House and the agency of the people.

Pretty much the same is true of Delegate Fauntroy and his uncritical use of Mark Lane's combination of incompetent thievery and grossly defamatory improvisation upon it in the King assassination. Lane has been all over the media boasting about this, with Delegate Fauntroy's assistance in what is simultaneously an entirely unjustified defamation of the FBI and an exculpation of it for the actualities that are its responsibility.

In fairness to former Congressman Downing and Delegate Fauntroy and so you can further understand my refusal to have any present connection with your committee I note Congressman Gonzalez's ^{reference} ~~reference~~ to a rotten and utterly irresponsible project by the self-styled garbologist A.J. Weberman, a book titled Coup d'Etat in America. If there has been more excessive obscenity on this subject than that by this garbologist I am unaware of it.

While Congressman Devine, a former FBI agent, has not to my knowledge endorsed any of this kind of scavenging and thereby involved the House in it, he was part of a McCarthy-type operation in collaboration with our only ~~un~~ unelected President during the days of the Warren Commission. Because this matter is now before the courts and because I am the plaintiff I say no more than that I believe he ~~has~~ has a conflict of interest. Well, I guess I can add that the collaborators in that endeavor that to me is not in accord with respected and traditional American beliefs includes those who were part of the recent and unsuccessful campaign against Theodore Sorenson.

There are other reasons why I will have nothing to do with your committee if it is continued as it is now constituted and why I will not give it anything more, not even what is public domain. One is that it does not keep its word or meet its obligations. Another is its career of leaking and leaking the irresponsible and untrue. Still another is that it begins with these conclusions that can properly be arrived at only after an investigation, a real investigation, not leaks to Jack Anderson and others. These are not all but about these I will be specific.

I have been James Earl Ray's investigator. This imposes obligations on me that I must meet. I could not have been more explicit about this than I was with Dick Sprague and others of your staff. CBS once presented a conflict of interest to me on this and when I had a book to promote so I could sell it I refused prime-time TV attention because there was no other way I could resolve that conflict of interest. I loaned certain of my records, my work product and my personal property, to your committee with the understanding that the use of it would be restricted to those of the staff who had need of it and that it would not be made available to others and would not leave your offices. When I was finally able to recover it one of my originals was missing and I was ~~xxxxxx~~ assured that a thorough shaking down of your offices did not disclose it. Later I was mailed a xerox of it that I still have in the committee envelope in which it was mailed to me. That xerox was unstapled on more than one occasion. The most obvious explanation was for the making of more xeroxes. Yet I had been assured of confidentiality beginning with Dick Sprague's personal assurances.

On the leaking and the prejudgment Jack Anderson serves as an illustration of both. It also illustrates what I do not go into, the use of semantics to deceive. There was the pre-Christmas leak of the allegation that James Earl Ray, described as the King assassin and pointless without this being true, had a meeting with a conspirator in Portugal. This before any investigation? This as part of an unhidden campaign to blackmail the Congress and to misuse the black Members of the Congress?

This when so many of your people know I have been Ray's investigator and you have not even bothered to ask me if it is within reason or possibility? This when I have introduced Dick to Ray's lawyer? And nobody has asked him if within his knowledge this is possible or reasonable? On this you stake the integrity of the House?

Pretty much in the same is true of your Mexican fandango to the tune of the speaks your have to investigate and who have already ringed your nose. It is a lively rhythm.

But if Ray and Oswald are the assassins, explicit and inherent in these adventures, what is the need for \$6.5 million? Why with these preconceptions this kind of supposed investigation?

And with the obligation I bear Ray you ask me to have any association with you?

No way!

You ask my work of me when you have already ~~XXXXX~~ "lost" some of it? No way!

The "netley crew" of which I am one has too much regard for the integrity of our basic institutions, of which the House is one.

Whatever may be in the minds of others, like careerism or prior friendships, is not in my mind. I am much too concerned about what these assassinations and the subsequent malfunctioning of our basic institutions have done to us and our system of society to lend myself in any way to what in its better moments is the utter irresponsibility of your committee.

So I refuse you, totally. If you are continued and you subpoena me, which I do not for a moment think Dick or any others will dare, my position will be the same.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg