

Meeting with John Lindsay, Newsweek, their offices, Saturday 2/16/74, with Lesar

Lindsay had called me night before after Elfin gave him my letter noting that he had not had his investigative man call me some months ago when I had seen him and needing him that he had been sitting on a large part of the story for a year and a half without knowing it. It was this had had interested Lindsay, who apologized for not having called me to begin with, when Elfin had asked him to. He had said the note got lost in the stack on his desk. We had had a long and interesting conversation Friday night. Driving in Sat. a.m. it occurred to me that he could get an measure of me and I of their judgement and intentions if I gave him something, no strings attached. So, I phoned in the a.m., before he got to the office, but after he had left his home(226-6463). Office 1750 Penna Ave., NW, 298-7880. I took Lesar with me.

For Lesar's benefit and to leave no question in Lindsay's mind I repeated what I had told Elfin when he asked me what kind of numbers I was talking about: no numbers, merely the means of continuing my work, in return for which all I had and all I would yet do, including arrangements for deposit of all in a university archive. Without identifying I added that there were feelers now from two. I went farther and gave some detail on the efforts I had made without success to give things away and how disappointing it was to be going over my notes on these things to see how well it all stacked up, how much had finally dribbled out in a way that lost impact, and how much of significance nobody had yet caught up with. He understood and lamented what he called committee journalism. He went into this when at one point I said I hoped he would not take it personally, that I was not saying reporters were incompetent but that there seemed to be no real investigative reporting, merely the seeking of leaks (he agreed) and that I was aware of the limitations that could not be avoided in modern reporting. When he went into the lament about committee work, where one knew so little of the work of his mates, I added I saw other limitations imposed by deadlines and costs, and to this he agreed, so he knew I was neither boasting nor condemning. In fact, at this point he digressed into the problems at the Post and told me what I did not know, of a internal struggle for command between Bradley and Geyelin, who is now challenging him.

This came out when he was talking with some feeling about reporterial limitations, went into the problems of Woodward and Bernstein and then exclaim how disgusted he had been over the Post editorial praising Helms after his testimony. He had called Bradley, who he knows from his Newsweek days, and Bradley said to begin with I know exactly why you are calling (he was right) and to say he shared the feelings. Geyelin, according to Lindsay, is close to CIA or Helms, I'm not sure which he said.

Lindsay made so many and so many different references to Dean I presume he interviewed dean. Scitt's dislike of Dean seems to stem from Scott's misunderstanding about delay in Kunzig's confirmation when the White House was concerned, after nomination, of what would come out in full FBI investigation and opted appointment that did not require Senate confirmation and then used Secret Service (only known case) instead of FBI to investigate. Dean was in the middle, the paper-shuffler, and had wanted only to get the whole mess off his desk, but Acott blamed him for delays.

Buchanan seems to be in charge of the new assault in the new counterattack, just winding up and to be the big one.

Elfin looked in three times while we were in the conference room without comment or expression of sign of recognition.

Lindsay knew that Hunt had worked on the fifth floor of that building because he had a spook friend who had worked in the same office but claimed not to know what Hunt had worked on all the time they were together. He had told me this story night before but I went into it again. He said he had walked into the office to see this friend (the guy who always gave him the high sign not to show recognition when they were on the elevator together). I asked him what it said on the door. He said something innocuous and I asked if it was



something like US Military Group. He nodded and added that there was not a single visible military uniform when he first went there but the next day there were two corporals at the door. When he indicated he had not been able to figure anything out I told him that I had done at least an appreciable part of this and in time would perhaps be in a position to tell him. He understood, as he also did when I twice cut Cesar off when he was going too far in the proffer of what I had. When I was later explicit about this and the reasons and expressed the hope that he would not misuse or candor but would abide by the conditions he said he did understand, appreciated it and would not use these leads.

Re: Helms' testimony, he told us of a call from another retired spook friend who had asked him to remember the assassination of a military attache in Iran on the eve of Helms' testimony and then asked him what he would think if instead of spooks this had happened to a Mafia boss and a subordinate on the eve of testimony that then turned out to disclose nothing. He thought this explained the emptiness of Helms' testimony. I told him I knew some of what the Senate had known and had not asked about. He agonized over all of them being part of a coverup and I tried to explain this as their concept of the national need. He said he could see it and knew no other explanation. Ditto for Warren investigation, which he also could not explain and about which he does have deep doubts. Doesn't believe.

Say end of strong Colson-Shapiro counterattack and leaks coincides with reason to believe that Shapiro suddenly finds reason to doubt complete truthfulness with him of his client(partner). He is amazed that Colson has been able to get away with what he has gotten away with.

He makes the obvious interpretation of the excessive fees to Bittman, they include payoffs to Hunt. He wrote out the dates on that \$75,000 and Hunt's use of \$80,000 from the insurance money. But he and this staff appear to have done no work in this area. He does not know the reason for Bittman's getting out. I reviewed Post (no reason) and Times (Cox alleging conflict interest) with him without triggering anything.

He said that suddenly sources on the story about Hunt and the Panama assassination had dried up and nothing had happened. I asked if he meant President Panama, narcotics, he said yes, and I said that this came from a Hunt novel and that the story had appeared, which he said he had not known.

I began by telling him of my thoughts on driving to town, that there was a story I was willing to give him, no conditions, to give him a chance to evaluate what I did not represent as definitive but did as a possibly significant one he could check out for himself (I even told him how and who, where, at Archives, and the laws etc.) I went into the possible side issues and side interpretations and then spelled out the requirements of the laws before a gift could be accepted, showed that they had not been met and that all the lawyers involved on both sides had to know they had not been, that therefore there was a deliberate fraud for which Nixon could not escape legal responsibility, and that despite all this and his taking an exemption, he also had in the papers his right to take all of the alleged gift back. He used taxes and the responsibility of the taxpayer but the one who prepares to illustrate his understanding. He also understood when I asked him to disregard the inapplicable Nixonian description of deed and consider it as a contract, which it was, because a) there had to be a governmental finding of national or public interest and b) there had to be an acceptance of the conditions that c) had to be and in fact were spelled out and then d) had to be found to be in this public interest. Because none of these things had happened, I said, in my view there was no gift and no basis for a tax exemption and all the government and Nixon's lawyers as well as Nixon had to know it. Here he went into the long defense of Nixon personally, blaming and placing exclusive responsibility on the lawyers and saying Long knew better. He agreed that what I had given him appeared to be a significant story. I made clear that one of my reasons was an effort to throw a block into the counterattacks, that a well-timed offensive by the weak would ruin the strength of the powerful.

There was more. He is to speak to Wifin Tuesday and will then be in touch. Seems interested