

5 February 1969

Dear Helen:

I shall try to reply to your letter of 29 January to some measure, mostly in an attempt to convey our feeling that the harrassment you have been experiencing probably isn't as serious as it seems.

In the first place, the enclosed excerpt from the August 1967 Esquire indicates that if the lady who kept you on the phone for three hours hasn't pulled much the same thing before, then it was someone who used much the same techniques. Perhaps Mrs. Meagher can help you on this. I'm assuming, of course, that the Esquire account is reasonably near the truth. I have no way of knowing. As far as we've heard, people out here have been spared this particular form of harrassment.

As to the Horsey type, this has not been lacking. There has been a man around here for more than a year (now, I understand, he has moved on to Los Angeles) who fitted into a similar picture and pattern. No visible means of livelihood, very active, into everything, and at times turning a vaguely threatening aspect toward the objects of his attentions. Weisberg knows him. His name is Jonn Christian. He even has something of the same histrionic flair you describe about Horsey, although much less of a mimic. Nevertheless a talented man. We have to confess we disliked him on sight when we actually met him once.

These male types are extremely interesting. In another era they would have been court jesters, perhaps. In addition to their entertainment value they gravitate toward centers of power and action, capering and gesticulating on the banks but rarely getting into the main stream itself. We have known others in such places as Peking, Shanghai, Tokyo, Washington.

My basic impression is that while they amuse the mighty at times and occasionally are used for their informational value, on the whole they are outsiders trying to get in. Sometimes they do, of course, but I doubt seriously if either of the two we are considering actually have done so. Meanwhile they concentrate on confusing, dividing, sowing mutual suspicion, and one must acknowledge they have a fertile field to work in. Objectively, it seems to me this is basically all they have accomplished.

In this connection I'd suggest that you hang on to your tapes and not send them out here through the mail. * You probably won't need them, but you might, and Mrs. Meagher could provide a much more useful reaction to them than we possibly could.

We can't really provide any valid reaction to the business of Thornley and the pictures. As far as we're concerned, we've heard him on two rather lengthy tapes, and he impressed us as sensitive and honest except in one place where he said he thought Oswald was capable of doing what he was accused of doing. Well, he knew Oswald, so he may be right. All I can say is that it fits nothing we've ever read or heard about him. I think what one has to remember about Thornley is the fact that once one gets into the rat-race he and Oswald got into, one rarely escapes its grasp. Like you, we feel that he has been accused only of perjury, and that remains to be proved. We'll just have to reserve judgment.

*It's not that we're not interested; we just don't want to risk being responsible for anything happening to them.

We do thank you for letting us know about Horsey. If he should show up here, we probably will be unavoidably busy with other things.

Your power blackout experience is something we have been watching ever since the big one in the Northeast, and we've been clipping accounts of such things from all over the world and sending them to the Lorenzens. There is one factor the power companies won't admit but which strengthens their stories to some extent. As the Lorenzens' friend, Al Brown, told us, all these power companies cheat in the quality and extent of the equipment they need to make a large power grid work, and in the load levels they put on the lines. This is a matter of cost, of course, so they all take chances in order to save money. Publicly they will say nothing, but privately they will admit something along this line to a real electrical expert like Brown, who got it straight from one of the mightiest of the power outfits. This explains part, at least, of the prevalence of the domino effect in these grid systems, where a small break can produce a chain reaction all over the place simply because lines are overloaded and the automatic cut-outs take over with only a slight triggering that wouldn't have the same effect if someone hadn't been cheating.

But this is only one factor, and we feel as you probably do that a great many of these blackouts need further explanation.

We've had our noses firmly applied to the grindstone for the past several weekends, trying to get caught up with our files and indexing in preparation for the trial in New Orleans. Finally we've just about made it, having brought ourselves up to date since the middle of October when we were knocked out by a series of calamities like holidays, Christmas, the Wire Service Guild strike against the AP, and so on.

There's a new book you may not have heard about: "The Kennedy Conspiracy -- An Uncommissioned Report on the Jim Garrison Investigation." by Paris Flammonde, producer of the Long John Nebel talk show on WNBC in New York. We haven't had time to read it, but it looks quite comprehensive and as far as we've been able to dip fairly objective. We understand he started working on it with Eric Norden, but Norden is mentioned only once, ^{in this connection} rather obliquely, so we have no idea what happened.

Here's hoping we have been able to make you feel a little less harrassed. I honestly feel that if it were truly serious you would be in no doubt about it by now. This sort of thing is not new, and one has to expect some of it. We here have been extremely fortunate in this respect, thus far. Let's hope it stays that way.

Best from us both,


jdw