

25 February 1974

Dear Harold:

The attached, very badly written story is sent along merely to indicate how the left is collecting its thoughts and that we are not entirely alone in our feeling that the SLA may be something of a tool.

If this theory has any validity, it certainly is not weakened by the Murphy Kidnaping in Atlanta, despite all the denials that there could possibly be any connection between the two cases. Murphy appears to have changed his story, by the way. Immediately after he was released he said he thought three men and a woman were involved; later he fell in with the FBI and official version that only Williams and his wife were responsible.

Nor am I comfortable about Bill Knowland's suicide last Saturday, Feb. 23. He may have been the suicidal type, but I know of nothing pointing in that direction. I didn't know him well, having interviewed him only once (in 1949) and talked to him on the phone a couple of times later. He's more like Ford, not too bright, bull-headed and only moderately articulate as I recall him. Today, Feb. 25, the Chronicle ran a long story reviewing his career and pegged on the fact that authorities have no hint of a suicide motive. No hints, but the implication of the story is that the suicide remains without adequate motive.

I would not be disturbed about this if it were not for two things: 1, This is the third newspaper publisher to be involved in a violent incident in recent weeks (Hearst, Murphy and now Knowland), and 2, even as a suicide Knowland may well be a casualty of Nixon's career. In 1958 there was a fast shuffle in California where the then Senator Knowland decided he wanted to run for governor. This bumped Gov. Goodwin Knight, who had succeeded Earl Warren when Ike named Warren to the Supreme Court. Goodie moved up from Lt. Governor and was all set to run for re-election in 1958. But Knowland's wishes prevailed. He wanted to get set for a run for the White House in 1960 or later. Instead, Pat Brown beat him in the race for governor, and Knowland's political career ended. I felt at the time and still do that Nixon was the one who persuaded Knowland he could make it against Pat Brown, knowing that Knowland's right-wing platform (right-to-work etc) would mean his defeat at that time. Knowland was liquidated, in effect, and so was Knight, who was forced to run for Senator and lost to Clair Engle.

So if Knowland really committed suicide, it could have been because of the realization of what his own cupidity and stupidity had got him into, thanks to Nixon's false encouragement. This plus the realization of all this had led to that is affecting the GOP in general and the whole country -- all of it due to Nixon in one way or another.

This raises the question of whether Knowland was able to face the question of whether he could or would denounce Nixon openly, something he never has done. If he ~~couldn't face it~~ couldn't face it, it could have led him to suicide along with some private trouble we know nothing about. If he could face it, and if this became known, it could have led to a murder arranged to look like suicide, because Knowland still has as much stature as any Republican in the state, despite his retreat from politics since 1958. His open denunciation would be extremely damaging.

I'm noting these ideas merely to alert you to a probably remote possibility, but one which I do not yet feel justified in dismissing.

23: Answering some of the points in your mailings of Feb. 18 and

Re: yr 2/13/74 memo on Dektor and the 18 minutes missing from the tapes, we find a NY Times story date 5 June 72 by Fred Graham on Dektor and its PSE gadget, generally unfavorable, which winds up with a paragraph describing Allan D. Bell Jr. as "a former military intelligence officer who formed Dektor two years ago with two other former intelligence officers," neither of which is named. The rest of the story is about PSE and how everybody is leary about it. Don't think you need, but if you do cite the date and we'll copy for you.

In another 2/13/74 memo, this time of GL's memorables, you ask for anything on GL's Lincoln memorial appearance, presumably from the NYTimes since you say it was too late for the WX Post to carry. The times did have such a story, but in a memo dated 2/22 you say you did get the issue involved, Feb. 13. If you missed the GL story we'll be glad to copy for you.

In a third 2.13 memo you mention that I have made no comment on a couple of references you made earlier to Bernie. I recall them, but could not make out what you were talking about at the time and still don't know.

That seems to be about it. Must get this in the mail, and we'll get back to you later.

Best,



jdw