

21 May 1971

Dear Harold:

This will have to be a slapdash attempt to answer a number of letters from you which have accumulated during a period when we simply could not find enough time all at once to answer them properly. I shall go through them hurriedly and try to deal with the points that seem most to concern you and/or which I can offer any intelligent opinion about.

In a letter dated April 27 you mention a possible book about the Mardi Gras approach etc. It goes without saying that you have unlimited material for such a book and no doubt could develop it into a blockbuster. Certainly you are justified in doing so. But I still wonder a) how much real good it would accomplish in view of the limited understanding the public has of these things, and b) how much it might be misinterpreted by interested parties. My honest suggestion would be to proceed very carefully indeed with such a project. I have serious doubts about how it would actually work, or be made to work.

Enclosed are copies of several old clippings on your avian friend and related matters which might have some morsels of interest, possibly even of illumination. We most distinctly had the feeling that his recent adventure was not altogether his own idea. My mother's family came from that terrain (my maternal grandmother, then a young schoolteacher, was a Confederate courier and carried messages between rebel generals across the river in the slat of her sunbonnet) and I can recall horrendous stories from distant cousins about the roughness of the country, with great emphasis on some devilish vegetation known as a bamboo "briah" which apparently was guaranteed to make certain that nobody went anywhere off the beaten path, especially at night. I trust that in your excursions with your elderly ~~friend~~ friend long ago that you escaped the horrible fate so vividly described by my long-dead cousins about the lethal effects of these brambles. Anyway, I know what you're talking about, and could not agree more. No real incentive. He was conned.

As to your theory about the attorney and his organized connections, we have no knowledge of our own on this angle but see nothing whatever inconsistent in your theory. In fact a man of his long experience could scarcely have avoided at least peripheral contact in some way, possibly many times, and there is always the chance that somebody got something on him along the way and put him in a position where if they said jump he jumped. This is not to downgrade your thinking in any way. Quite the contrary. I'm merely bulwarking your feeling that this is completely out of character. It could even be that he didn't know a contract was involved when he took the case, then found out too late to back out. See the clipping dated 15mar69.

Before I forget it, I want to mention that your letters have been arriving promptly, even those with ordinary postage taking only two or at most three days. And one dated as airmailed at 5pm in Washington on May 11 actually arrived here the next day, delivered at the house, before noon. From a postoffice that otherwise is breaking down in almost every respect you can name, that's real service.

Also before I forget it, in trying to adapt different brands of electronic equipment ~~gaskmarxx~~ together, I have found that the only way, really, to get it done is to take both pieces in to a dealer or shop and say simply, sell me a patch cord or plug that will enable me to use this mike with that machine. If they can see them, they can do something about it. If they can't, there is no way to tell them precisely what is involved. Our dealer here, for instance, could function from the Sony end of the problem, but would have no way short of looking up an actual Concord to find out exactly what that end needed. And he would not readily ask a rival dealer for help, of course.

We're just as puzzled as you about Eason. One of the clippings enclosed indicates a prior interest in the case, which of course you already know, but this may indicate an even stronger interest dating back to before any contact you may have had with him on this case (not the earlier ones, of course). Incidentally, Jenifer occasionally feeds him stuff from the NY Times on things she knows he's interested in (neither of us has met him) and in her latest contribution she enclosed a note asking why he hasn't had you on his show, citing your book, etc. It could be a straw that pushed him into action in case he's wavering. The others on his station, Dunbar and Spann, strike us as so married to the establishment that they would be the first to chicken out for any reason. Eason has always seemed to be different. We're puzzled.

Hal we haven't seen for some weeks. At last contact he hadn't yet had a phone installed (no one there during working hours to be present while the installer works) and if he has had one installed since then he hasn't let us know. In any case, we're holding stuff for him until we see him.

Your book finally arrived a couple of weeks ago, but I've had time to read only three or four chapters. Jenifer has been behind with the NY Times and her other reading and clipping for more than a month, and being Jenifer, will probably dispose of that mountainous problem (meanwhile keeping up her housework and homemaking chores without fail) before she even thinks of reading a whole BOOK.* We have not got the Dorman book, mainly because downtown San Francisco is unbelievably torn up with subway construction and one ~~doesn't~~ doesn't venture into that part of town lightly or unless one has plenty of time, which we never had. Only one store here, Tro Harper, handles remainders that we know of, and we haven't yet had an opportunity to look for it there. Paul Elder, you might be interested to know, has gone out of business. His location was sold out from over him for construction of a new hotel, and he sold out to Brentanos. Too bad. That was one hell of a book store. In any case, I shall get the Dorman book if I can and read it, and as soon as I finish your book with do the comparing you suggest, but I think you already know that I think your theory is entirely plausible and consistent.

We hope your hookup with Pacifica works out well. It should, if the Berkeley station (KPFA) is any indication. We don't know Kuttner, but he has been sending some interesting tapes through from Washington. Next time you are in New York, you might try WBAI, the Pacifica station there. The news director is a guy named Paul Fisher (We remember it as Paul) who did a magnificent documentary on the veterans in the recent peace demonstrations in Washington, climaxing with Kerry's impassioned and very moving presentation to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Pacifica stations always have been close to the blacks, the really influential ones. They were pioneers in the civil rights movement and have never let up. They do not censor and let everyone have his say. You could not be in better hands, if KPFA is any guide. Let's hope Kuttner lives up to the tradition. Incidentally, Dellums is doing a regular taped commentary ~~on~~ for Pacifica. He owes them a lot, whether he would admit it or not.

The WBAI phone is (212) 8260880. The station recently moved, we understand. That might ~~now~~ explain why you failed to reach them.

We feel sure you must be well aware of this thought, but we have wondered for some time if the incredibly poor job your publishers are doing for you might not be a superb job for someone else. Could this be the latest way of dealing with a problem like you? Even with a publisher your stuff doesn't go.

In haste, with apologies and best regards,

*Reared in the stern tradition of DUTY before pleasure.