

21 January 1972

Dear Hal:

It seemed I never would be able to read through your extremely interesting mailings from Jan. 9 through 13, but it finally has been done. You make an excellent case that a setup is being methodically prepared for use if needed. At this distance it is hard to develop a firm opinion, but I certainly find no gaps in your chain of thought.

Enclosed is the one small item we've found appearing locally on Lattimer since the one sent earlier. It's merely a photo and caption in the magazine section of the combined Sunday Examiner-Chronicle. We presume TV coverage was confined pretty much to the one day, but don't know; no one has said anything about it. On radio, as far as we know after the first day only Jim Eason surfaced with a brief, questioning comment on his talk show (we taped it and will be sending you a dub) clearly expressing doubt about Lattimer's conclusions and inviting comment. In the two hours remaining on that particular show none came in, or at least none was aired.

Since you asked it, here's a hasty opinion on your Lattimer add to PM, making due allowances for the fact that it's an unread draft. As an editor, I'd say it suffers from overkill. As a friend, I suggest you risk alienating some, at least, of those you seek to convince.

As I understand it, you want PM to be a record for history, whether published or not. This reads like a polemic pamphlet, written to destroy Lattimer. The reality is that he's the recognized head of an important department in an important hospital, regardless of how he got there or how he ventures into other fields.

(10 Jan 72) There is much more to urology than urine, so I would not put myself in a position of trying to diminish him that way. (Your letter to him was far more effective, by the way. It made due allowances for all sorts of things and concentrated simply on backing him into his corner as a liar and sycophant.)

This is an unread draft, of course, but I find some passages almost unintelligible or so involved that most readers would skip over them if they didn't put the whole thing aside in favor of TV and a beer. In some places I'm not sure of your target and what you intend for it. You sometimes string too many ideas and images together in a single sentence for clarity to survive.

YOU know very clearly what you are thinking and what you want to say. On the page it's not the same, and the proof of this is the device we've developed when you throw one of these blockbuster sentences at us. We read it aloud, and it becomes clear. The eye apparently requires a different mode than the ear, and the effect is sometimes that of a transcribed speech.

We suspect that you get carried away with your own delight with a series of images and try to cram as much ammo into each salvo as possible to increase your punch. The law of diminishing returns sets in early here and results in clutter and blunted impact. This invites those who want subconsciously to forget the whole thing to do just that. This is the enemy. Why help him ?

I think the average person feels in this era of credibility gaps that if you really HAVE a good argument you don't need to resort to extreme language to get it across. If this has any validity, then the better approach is to let the facts speak for themselves as much as possible. Sharp language, pejorative expressions, impassioned statements, adjectives and adverbs in general, all tend to alert the reader to the possibility that you are working, possibly a bit too hard, to convince him. If you can take an even tone, avoid giving the reader the feeling that he's being indoctrinated, and lay some honest facts on him, you can achieve the best possible effect: permit him to feel that HE has arrived at the conclusion you desire by absorbing the facts you present in logical, uncluttered order. In any case your conclusions cannot become part of his convictions unless you can make him feel that they are his conclusions too.

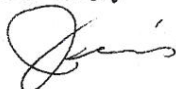
As much as possible, let Lattimer, Graham, the Times and the networks hang themselves. They have made a good start. You have the not-too-difficult task of making clear how they have done it, pointing out how and from which class of widows and orphans they stole the rope, and perhaps giving them a little help here and there in fashioning the noose. This takes calm, relentless analysis, at which you excel. The slow burn lasts longer than fireworks.

If it is true, as you appear to believe possible for excellent reasons, that Lattimer was unleashed (or re-unleashed) in order to counter your own book even before publication, then you cannot afford, in fairness to yourself and to the effectiveness of your thesis, to risk being accused of a purely subjective reaction. The antidote to that is objectivity, which never hurt anybody.

(It's somewhat beside the point, but I still tend to feel that the Lattimer caper stems from a broader political need, although there is no reason not to think that the prospect of PM might have triggered it sooner than possibly intended).

As I said at the beginning, this is hasty comment, made from afar and made with reluctance appropriate to the distance, but I respond willingly to your own sense of urgency ~~about~~ about what is going on.

Sincerely,



jdw