

2 November 1973

Dear Harold:

Sorry to have taken so long to study the attached and return it. I hope the delay has not held you up in any way.

It's a bit difficult to criticize an insert fairly, since one can only infer what precedes and follows it. However the main question I'm left with is, what was the motivation of the Democratic members of the Watergate Committee in taking part in a whitewash of the truth and in hiding embarrassing fact? You explain that the Republican members saw their own fortunes as bound up with that of the party and Nixon, but I find no real clue to what made the Democratic members behave as they have. Probably you deal with this elsewhere and are merely avoiding redundancy, but I think in any case it should not be left out.

I know this is a fast first draft and that many of the stumbling blocks I encountered in reading it will automatically be corrected as you rework it. However I feel it is not unfair to remind you that commas, which easily can be overused, nevertheless are extremely useful in making complicated passages more easily absorbed. Same for dashes and parenthetical markings. I think your big problem is that you habitually, in an effort to be precise and exact, try to crowd too many ideas into a sentence, and when this happens, the crowding of new concepts presented bogs the reader down unless you help him with commas and other aids that feed him the new stuff a spoonful at a time instead of holding his nose, forcing open his mouth, and pouring the whole thing down his throat in one big blob. Many of your ideas, and many of your combinations of ideas, you must keep in mind, are totally strange to most readers. Certainly they are not the stuff he is used to reading. Therefore you have to slip it to him in easily acceptable doses, either by patient explanation -- which you don't have time or space for in many cases -- or in fluidity and lucidity of style.

I think also that you tend to shoot the horse in the first sentence and then beat him to death in the rest of the paragraph, so to speak. In other words, in an honest effort to make a point, you make it explosively at the opening and then pile on the evidence throughout the rest of the passage. The result can be a bit exhausting in some cases. It shocks the reader, which you want to do, of course, but it also can leave him wondering what all the fury was about. My own inclination would be to try, at least, by way of experiment, to understate your point initially, or state it minimally, then build up the ~~xxx~~ evidence steadily and then administer a coddle de grace at the end. The rapier, rather than the shotgun, one might say.

I note you make the point that this insert is based on material not published by the committee but of which you have obtained a copy. But you don't say how it came to you or how you know it's authentic. Probably you don't want to say, or cannot, but if this isn't dealt with I think there will be doubts.

Hope this is of some help,


jdw