

17 July 1975

Dear Harold:

A note to get the enclosed on their way, and to take care of some hanging details.

Still nothing here in print or on the air, as far as we know, on McDonald's enterprise.

Regarding, the Kerr/Neff interview with you on the 11th on the Olson/CIA/LSD story, they did not use it until the 6 p.m. news of the 14th, and then only summarized it in a fairly brief account. No quotes, no replay of any of their tape. However they did give you full credit, at least a couple of times, for bringing the whole thing to light, and we could find no fault with their handling of it except that twice they referred to you as a Maryland attorney. Next time one of them calls, you'd better straighten them out.

A footnote to your 7/11/75 memo on Alexander Butterfield/CIA/Prouty via CBS. We missed the CBS treatment but heard several versions of the same thing later that day and the next. We agree with your angle that the key question is why Prouty waited so long. We noted yesterday that he now is backing away from his flat statement that Butterfield was CIA. We're not qualified to have an opinion on your idea that Prouty signals an effort by the military to weaken the CIA, but it sounds reasonable.

What I want to mention is your fourth paragraph which begins: "There was ample reason to suspect Butterfield served a master other than Nixon when he disclosed the tapes. Jenifer and Jim White had and recorded their suspicions." I don't think this is intended to mean that you think we specifically held that Butterfield was serving someone besides Nixon in spilling the taping system, but on the off chance you do let me explain a bit.

We believed then, and still do, that Butterfield was so anxious to testify before the WG committee that it added up, for him, to a matter of carrying out orders. We believed then and still do, that those orders came from Nixon himself, possibly via Haldeman. Nixon's necessity was to counter Dean's ~~expensive~~ testimony, a necessity made even plainer later by the tapes revealed by the House Judiciary Committee. Since Nixon himself wasn't about to testify, the next best choice was Haldeman to rebut Dean, and Haldeman's performance on the stand was much enhanced by his ability to refer to the tapes without ~~refer~~ revealing their specific content more than necessary. In fact, it is our belief that Nixon and Haldeman probably never seriously entertained at this time the idea that they might have to give up substantially the actual incriminating content of the  ~~tapes~~ tapes. At the time we suspected there might have been a possibility that Haldeman talked Nixon into the idea of revealing the existence of the taping system, ~~but~~ as a means of increasing Nixon's dependence upon him, ~~but~~ and this still may be true, but it's not too important. The important thing, in our opinion, is that Nixon wanted Butterfield to make the taping system known so it could be used in the argument that Dean was making up a lot of stuff which didn't conform with the record.

Butterfield himself had a fairly plausible argument for wanting to testify and get it over with. As FAA boss he was due to go to Moscow to attend an international civil aviation conference. However, if he had had the slightest idea that the White House wasn't perfectly willing to have the taping system made public wild horses couldn't have dragged him into any situation where he could have been forced to make such an important disclosure.

The best proof that he was just doing as he was told was the charmed life he led as long as Nixon lasted. One has no difficulty <sup>imagining</sup> how quickly and thoroughly he would have been got rid of if Nixon had been displeased with what Butterfield did. Only after Ford began cleaning out the Nixon holdovers in the administration did Butterfield get the boot, and even then only after he told his boss, Claude Brinegar, that he couldn't be fired from the FAA, that his was a presidential appointment and only the president could remove him. Ford wasn't quite willing to go that far, but not too long afterward Butterfield resigned with obvious bitterness.

It is, of course, theoretically possible that in spite of all this Butterfield actually was a CIA plant of some kind, but I'm inclined to doubt it. If so, he wasn't at the very high level initially described in the first reports by Prouty and others -- privy to the President's thinking -- although he did occupy a key position as a sort of sergeant major in the WH staff operation. It seems here more likely that Prouty and others just found him a handy handle on which to hang the story at this particular time. After all, Butterfield is out and out of a job, and what can he do besides deny it? He'd do that even if it were true, of course.

Got to get this in the mail. See you later.

Best,



jdw