

From Dalton Trumbo  
7551

November 26, 1950

To Mr. Ben M. rgolis

112 W. 9th St., Los Angeles

Dear Ben: Thanks for your letter of November 22. Its contents indicate that my suggestions have made a very small impression. We consider your proposal at least temporarily to "shift emphasis from the fight for parole to applications for executive clemency" a most unfortunate one for us. It gives paramount place to an impossible objective (clemency), as opposed to a possible one (parole). In doing this it continues past errors, and diminishes our hope for release. We feel that if any realistic effort is to be made to get us out, the possible must be given precedence over the impossible. We feel that clemency should be undertaken as a corollary to parole, but that all possible emphasis should be given the latter. Let me summarize what thus far has happened:

- (1) In the second week of June we informed Marty that we would be eligible for parole on October 8, and showed him time slips from the Washington District Jail to prove it. A mere telephone call to the Warden at that time would have confirmed this fact. But it was not made.
- (2) Based on a false assumption that parole was not available to us, the only possible campaign had to be centered around the issue of clemency. Much work, I take it, was done for this.
- (3) This work would much better and much more effectively have been devoted to the problem of parole -- had anyone known parole was possible.
- (4) As a result, the information that we were eligible for parole, came as a surprise on July 20. Since the emphasis was then on clemency, no serious concentration, so far as we can learn, was made on parole. The board was assumed to work in a vacuum.
- (5) We were denied parole.
- (6) Since that denial, we have been eligible for reconsideration of parole -- a possible thing.
- (7) Your letter still indicates that the same "shift in emphasis" from the possible (parole) to the impossible (clemency) is once more under way.

There is nothing in our past records nor our conduct in prison which reasonably could mitigate against our parole, unless it is true that denials of parole in our cases means the establishment of special categories for political prisoners, and a policy and precedent of No Parole for Political Prisoners. We are astonished that the importance of such a precedent is not instantly recognized. We believe it is an issue upon which many diverse groups of people could find agreement, and present a most distinguished front to the Parole Board, seeking to discover if such a precedence has, in fact, been established, and why. We have no objection to such a distinguished group and its attorney also and simultaneously

appealing for clemency; but we do not understand or approve the "shift in emphasis". We believe parole -- and at once -- to be the issue; and we believe it would be fatal to assume that it is impossible.

I agree with you completely that "the unequal sentences are a very important basis" for the parole campaign. But I think you will agree with me that every such campaign has both a legal and a public side. It is the public side to which I gave emphasis in my letter. It should not be underestimated. The story of parole granted ad nauseum in the movie extortion cases is a fascinating one. Carey McWilliams probably knows more about them than anyone else. Could he not write a piece on the contrast between them and us for the Nation? Would you ask him? Couldn't someone see Drew Pearson on the same theme? Is there not a public interest in the parole of the German and Japanese war criminals by way of contrast? Aside from weekly Variety we have seen no item anywhere concerning denial of parole. Could not someone write the New Republic, Compass, etc. to get the news to the public?

We have been trying to persuade Marty to communicate with us, either by letter or in person, and we hear, although not directly from him, that he will be here next week, when a fuller exchange of opinion will be possible. In my letter I asked you to tell us whether or not we should formally write the Parole Board for reconsideration. Your reply contained no answer to the question. We have, therefore, so written the board. We believe parole a percentage possibility, and we very much hope you do, too.

Since I have no way to do it, would you kindly have a copy of this letter made for Herbert and for Cleo and mail it to them? Greetings to everyone --

Dalton Trumbo -- 7551