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January 4, 1932

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Hon. Albert E. Ritchie
Governor of Maryland
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My dear Governor Ritchie:

Relying upon your assurances in recent letters and communications to the press that you are actively interested in punishing the lynching of Mathew Williams of Salisbury, Maryland, we are passing on to you for whatever it may be worth a suggestion from one of our correspondents in Washington, D.C.

He suggests that Williams, who was shot before he was lynched, might have been shot in order to shield the real murderer of the aged lumberman. Our correspondent points out that a number of cases have been brought to light in the south within the last three years, where white people have committed the crime of murder, have attempted to blame Negro employees for the crime and have attempted to instigate lynchings in order to cover up all traces. One such case occurred in Florida two years ago. After the first hue and cry about Negroes died down police investigation disclosed that the man had killed his own wife but had blamed the Negro servant. The husband was subsequently sentenced to twenty years in prison.

We do not know that any such suspicion attaches to the Salisbury murder, but perhaps a quiet investigation could be conducted to ascertain whether or not such a condition could have existed.

Very sincerely yours,

Roy Wilkins
Assistant Secretary

RW/ID