

The Warren Commission Plans a Deeper Probe Than Expected

LA - Roscoe Drummond 1/7

The Warren Commission to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy is undertaking a far more wide-ranging and independent inquiry than most Washington observers expected.

It would naturally take as its point of departure the exhaustive and competent report of the FBI, which held that Lee Harvey Oswald committed the crime and was not a part of any conspiracy.

But the commission is not accepting any set of premises and is not embracing even tentative conclusions until it makes its own additional investigations.

This means that the commission:

- 1—Will be sending its own counsel and staff to interview sources already questioned by the FBI and the police.
- 2—Will follow up any fresh leads with its own investigation in addition to using the FBI.
- 3—Will take testimony from witnesses who will be brought to Washington for questioning by the commission.

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All of this emerges as a more formidable task than most members of the commission thought when they first accepted President Johnson's appointment. Some expected it would take two months, nobody figured more than six. Now those close to the commission are saying it will be a year before the commission will be ready to render its report.

This lengthened timetable shows how thoroughly the commission intends to do its work. Mr. Johnson gave it a very broad

charter and the commission is giving its charter a broad interpretation.

Neither Chief Justice Earl Warren nor Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin have publicly laid out the boundaries of the inquiry. But in light of the months the commission plans to



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devote to its job, it is logical that the questions to which it will seek answers will include these:

Who was the assassin and what was his motive? Is the evidence conclusive beyond a reasonable doubt?

Did the assassin act by himself or was he assisted by others? Was there any evidence of a collective plot?

Could the assassination have been prevented? Was the Secret Service in any way at fault?

Wherein did the Dallas police do well and wherein did they do badly—before and after the assassination?

Is there evidence to support the "seeds of hate" theory? That is, that

political controversy in the United States has long been overburdened by violence and name-calling (a kind of mental assassination) that the very climate was conducive to actual assassination? Is there any evidence to suggest that the assassin was influenced by this climate?

What are the constructive lessons to be drawn for the whole nation from the factual findings of the commission?

There is no doubt in my mind that the commission is going to do an outstandingly good job. I have only one reservation on an aspect of procedure. The report is that the panel plans to take some testimony in public hearings.

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I venture to suggest that the commission will conduct a better investigation if it is held entirely in private until the final report is issued.

This is not a trial. It is an extra-legal inquiry to obtain and assess evidence in a case which cannot go to trial. It seems to me that it would be misleading and harmful to have the information which the commission will be collecting coming out piecemeal at periodic public sessions.

All of the evidence on which the commission bases its findings should be made public in the end but not in bits and pieces. The value of this investigation will be only incidentally in the evidence it produces; its value will primarily be the assessment of all the evidence by the commission whose members have the highest credentials.

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