

RUSH TO JUDGEMENT

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Both Cinematheques, Hollywood and Pasadena, are showing Mark Lane's "Rush To Judgment." The film could not have arrived at a more significant moment; Jim Garrison's efforts to try Clay Shaw apparently are futile as

America deliberately forgets the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

It is bitterly characteristic of Americans today that "Rush To Judgment"—indeed the whole nightmare from which it arose—has been relegated to "underground" status. A film vitally essential to every American is treated as an oddity and played in "underground" theaters (assuming the social stigma therein) instead of being emblazoned across every drive-in screen in the nation, free of charge.

As a movie "Rush To Judgment" is negligible; as a document of a twisted and tormented segment of American history it is invaluable. Like it or not, this film—or more precisely, the situation which caused this film—raises questions that will haunt the American conscience until they are truthfully answered.

We live in a society which not only tolerates but encourages escapism. Conditioned by a steady diet of radio and television information, we are even able to convince ourselves that fact is fantasy. The war in Vietnam is just another serialized movie; and Bosley Crowther saw "Rush To Judgment" as just another "... good courtroom drama that bombards the viewer." Sure Bosley, it's a courtroom drama, and the conscience of every American is on trial.



Mark Lane (above) and Oswald (below) are two of the "actors" in the documentary "Rush to Judgment."

If the attitudes of the generation now in control of the system were prevalent, there would be little hope of our conscience ever being found guilty. But a new order is taking over. I'm 26 years old; there's a whole lifetime ahead of me in which I'll have absolutely no respect for my government, nor feel any duty to my country because of what my country has proven itself to be. And there are millions of young people who hold these same sentiments. On this alone I rest my hopes for the future.

"Rush To Judgment" is simply a two-hour condensation of Mark

Lane's book of the same title. Its methods are the same as the book's: a challenge and refutation of the Warren Commission Report using the findings of the report itself. Lane does not claim to have solved the assassination mystery; he merely demonstrates (and to my mind, proves) that the Warren Commission has not solved it either.

But the film of "Rush To Judgment" has an immediacy, urgency and viability that the book lacks. It is safe to assume that at least 75 per cent of the readers of this article have not actually read Lane's book, much less the Warren Commission Report. Through condensations in newspapers and magazines and through television summaries we know the gist of Lane's contentions; but there are always two sides to a story and, after all, we aren't in a position to KNOW, are we?

The point is, of course, that we are never in a position to know anything which the system does not want us to know. If truth is our aim—and as decent human beings we should have no other aim—then the questions which Lane asks are certainly more pressing than the conclusions the Warren Commission has reached. And the beauty of this movie is that it presents these questions "live" in the form of honest American citizens whose testimony incontrovertibly makes the Warren Commission Report highly suspect.

Slowly, deliberately, ploddingly, Lane parades his endless stream of witnesses and contradictions across the screen until one is overwhelmed with the grossness of the error which our leaders obviously have made of their investigation.

Once again we see films of the assassination, of Oswald's arrest and finally his death at the hands of Jack Ruby. Lane's camera takes us behind the white

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picket fence atop the grassy knoll where dozens of eye-witnesses

have sworn they saw and heard gunfire. A cocktail waitress and a Negro man give testimony which undeniably links Jack Ruby in illegal activity with members of the Dallas Police Department—especially officer J.D. Tippett.

Lane interviews persons who claim to have witnessed incredible things on the day of the assassination, such as the woman who saw a "short, chunky" man with a gun standing over slain Officer Tippett while a man resembling Lee Harvey Oswald walked away from the scene on the other side of the street. Or the landlady of Oswald's boarding house who said a police car stopped in front of their dwelling, honked three

times and then left, an hour after the assassination.

The absolute falsehood of the Commission's "one bullet, two victim" theory; the mysterious deaths and/or attempted murders of potential witnesses; the physical impossibility of Oswald firing all shots from the window of the School Book Depository within a few seconds; the Commission's blatant omission and/or alteration of testimony and photographic evidence—all these things fashion a case against the state which cannot be ignored but which, horrifyingly, IS being ignored.

For, to my mind, the key issue of "Rush To Judgment" is not only the question it raises but the apathy it reflects. It is a fact now and it always has been a fact that people in general do not want to confront the truth. This is made chillingly clear in "Rush To Judgment" by eye-witnesses who prefer to forget what they saw in deference to the Commission's findings.

Lane wisely and shrewdly includes interviews with James Tague who was struck by a cement fragment from a ricocheting bullet which could not possibly have been fired from the School Book Depository—yet Tague says he believes the Commission Report.

There is Orville Nix, whose

film of the assassination was altered by the FBI before it was returned to him, Nix swore the shots came from the grassy knoll but now "believes" the Warren Report.

There is James C. Price who actually saw a man running away from the picket fence on the grassy knoll, where he also saw a puff of smoke. Price accepts the Warren Report.

In the face of this shameful aspect of human nature which Nietzsche has so eloquently exposed, it is essential that "Rush To Judgment" be played again and again until our cowardly consciences no longer can withstand the call of truth. We can not remain ostriches with our heads buried while life goes on around us—or can we?