

THE WARREN REPORT

10 Peace News December 1, 1964

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12/11/64

Mark Lane's non-reply

Mr. Lane's letter, printed on page 8, is a prime example of the misguided emotionalism and intellectual shoddiness of his approach to the Warren Commission report.

In my article of October 16, I made six specific criticisms of Russell and Lane and a few more general ones. The six specific criticisms were:

1. Russell's reference to the "true murderers" of President Kennedy was not backed with any definite information that there was more than one murderer.
2. Russell, as he himself had written in a *Daily Worker* article, based his strong criticisms of the Warren report on reading its summary and conclusions - a mere twenty-eighth of the report.
3. Lane distorted Frazier's evidence about the length of the package Oswald took to work on the morning of the assassination.
4. Lane took statements made by Dr Perry about Kennedy's wounds out of their proper context.
5. Lane ignored the discussion in the report about the direction which the

shots fired at the presidential limousine came from.

6. Lane misrepresented the Warren report's statements about the assassination weapon.

Of these six criticisms, Lane only refers to one in his reply, even though the reply is substantially longer than the original article. The criticism referred to is numbered (2) above, and Lane has even managed to get me wrong on this one point.

I did not "seem amazed that Lord Russell could so quickly draw conclusions after the release of the Warren report." There was no amazement. I knew, and I said, that Lord Russell had based his conclusions on reading the summary and conclusions of the Warren report, as he himself had declared in an article in the *Daily Worker* on October 10. It shocked me that anyone should draw such harsh conclusions on reading so little of the report.

My article was not an "attack" on Russell and Lane, as Lane says it was, but was an attempt at careful and detailed criticism of the statements of Russell and Lane. This point about my article has clearly eluded Mr. Lane.

So has the general evaluation in the article of the Warren report itself. While I accepted the conclusions of the report, I made it absolutely clear that there were many uncertainties in it, that there were a number of unanswered questions, and that some of Lane's criticisms of the conduct of the Warren Commission were valid. Lane seems not to have noticed all of this. For example, he says:

"If premature criticism is a matter of concern for you, should not the 'leaking' of the entire document to the media months before it was published also concern you?"

Of course, I did actually say in my article on October 16:

"There have also been some shocking irregularities in the conduct of the Warren Commission itself in the form of leaks to the press."

Mr. Lane clearly believes that the best form of defence is attack, and he devotes most of his "reply" to making further criticisms of the Warren report, rather than to substantiating some of his earlier criticisms of the report which I had found to be a series of distortions.

In my article, I made no suggestion that the Warren report should not be criticised, but said that "those who criticise it, like all who take up a minority stance on a complicated public issue, have a responsibility to document their criticisms carefully."

In the criticisms of the Warren Commission in his "reply", Mark Lane seems to me to make a number of valid points. Mrs. Mary Moorman obviously ought to have been called as a witness to the assassination; O. V. Campbell and the four employees of the *Dallas Morning News* should likewise have been called; and so should the witnesses to the killing of Tippit mentioned by Lane.

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However, it is worth pointing out some of the rather doubtful claims connected with Lane's complaints that these witnesses were not called. In saying that "the majority of witnesses to the assassination of President Kennedy were not permitted to testify," Lane is probably

right. But is he establishing as a point of law that the majority of witnesses to every crime should be permitted to testify? Does this not make investigation of crimes committed in public, such as assassination, wellnigh impossible? In any case, what evidence has Lane that the majority of witnesses wanted to testify? While I would agree with Mr Lane that some of the uncalled witnesses he mentions should have been called, his more sweeping criticism of the Commission on this matter seems to me hard to sustain.

With regard to the Tippit killing, Lane implies that there was only one eyewitness (Mrs Markham) and that she was a rather doubtful one. He says: "One wonders about the absolute case against Oswald for the murder of Tippit." It is worth comparing Lane's statements with the report:

"At least 12 persons saw the man with the revolver in the vicinity of the Tippit crime scene at or immediately after the shooting. By the evening of November 22, 5 of them had identified Lee Harvey Oswald in police lineups as the man they saw. A sixth did so the next day. Three others subsequently identified Oswald from a

photograph. Two witnesses testified that Oswald resembled the man they had seen. . . ." (p 155)

The report makes clear that it had some reservations about Mrs Markham's testimony, and says that "even in the absence of Mrs Markham's testimony, there is ample evidence to identify Oswald as the killer of Tippit." (p 157)

Mr Lane distorts the issues in other places. With regard to the accuracy of the rifle shots, he bases his conclusion that they were highly improbable on the assumption that Governor Connally was hit by a different bullet from either of the two which hit Kennedy, a rather big "if" which should be argued more closely. But in any case, Lane is completely disingenuous in suggesting that Oswald got "a 'poor' rating with a much better weapon in the Marine Corps." The Warren report (p 179) shows that Oswald was tested twice in the Marines, scoring 212 and 191. The rating on the first was described to the commission as a "fairly good shot," the second as a "rather poor shot." Lane chooses to quote the second rating and ignore the first. This seems to be typical of the way in which he ignores facts which do not suit him.

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