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Warren Report Aides, Critics Clash Sharply

Commission Junior Attorney Challenges Author to File Libel Suit Against Him

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Two attorneys for the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy clashed Thursday with words—and a challenge to file libel action—with two critics of the commission's report.

Joseph A. Ball, a senior counsel for the commission, and law professor Wesley J. Liebeler, a commission junior attorney, traded sharp statements with authors Mark Lane and Edward J. Epstein. At several points, Lane, author of "Rush to Judgment" and the attorney for the mother of accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, called the commission report fraudulent.

Ball and Liebeler called the report fair and conclusive and criticized Lane and Epstein, author of "Inquest." The four appeared on a panel at the Associated Press Managing Editors Assn. convention.

Critics Rapped

Ball hinted that critics of the report ignored evidence in shaping their versions that the Kennedy slaying may have been the result of a conspiracy. The commission found that Oswald alone killed President Kennedy.

Liebeler and Lane in the sharpest exchange with Liebeler inviting author to file a libel against him.

...and he said who had made similar charges previously Lane threatened to sue him.

'Waiting Anxiously'

"I've been waiting anxiously for those papers ever since," Liebeler said. "If you have them here, I'll be glad to accept service of process . . . because you know very well as soon as you do that you're going to have to submit yourself to deposition under oath, and through discovery proceedings, and that I'll wait for, Mr. Lane."

Lane, sitting next to Liebeler, said quietly, "You'll have them soon."

Liebeler, in criticism of Epstein's book, said family research and scholarship went into its preparation. "This book," he said, "has done more to impugn the integrity of the Warren

ren Report than Mark Lane did. Epstein owes an obligation to the public to explain his work.

"If our work is examined in the true spirit of scholarship, I am confident that it will stand the test of history."

Ball said, the Warren Commission investigation was the most intensive ever conducted in this nation.

"If we had followed the same distortions as Lane did in his book, I would be ashamed of myself as a lawyer," Ball said.

He said Lane drew conclusions which were not warranted by the evidence and called this "the technique of propaganda."

Lane accused the press of failing in its duty following the assassination.

"Where was the press during the investigation?

by the Warren Commission?" he asked. "The press miserably failed the American public by not demanding open hearings of the Warren Commission."

Lane called for creation of a new commission "composed of persons in whom the American public could have faith."

Lane said such a commission should hold open hearings at which the interests of Oswald would be represented.

Epstein charged that Warren Commission attorneys did not resolve contradictions posed by the autopsy report on how the President died and the FBI version and did not include the FBI statement in the final report.

Shots Question

Critics of the Warren Commission have said Oswald could not have fired three bullets quickly enough and, therefore, there may have been more than one assassin.

Epstein urged that X-rays and autopsy pictures be released for examination. The Kennedy family and the government have declined to make them public. **END**