

Chapter Four

The Warren Commission Behind Closed Doors

To investigate, lay to rest rumors and convince the public of the validity of one particular set of facts. The Warren Commission is the most outstanding example of this type of commission.

Elizabeth B. Drew "How to Govern (or avoid it) By Commission." ----*Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1968.

When the Commissioners first met they all knew what was expected of them. They were to go through the motions of an inquiry and release their report in quick order. There was no element of suspense as to where their inquiry might lead and what their final report would conclude. The FBI's strategic leaking of the conclusions of its investigation to the press made this incandescently clear to the Commissioners. The records of the executive sessions disclose that the Commission's prestructured task was to support the FBI's conclusions: Oswald was the assassin and he acted alone.¹

Chairman Warren underscored the secondary, almost remote, connection of the Commission with the inquiry into the assassination during the first executive session. He proposed that the Commission avoid public hearings and resist calling any live witnesses. The Chief Justice saw no gain in asking for subpoena power. The Commission, Warren opined, "could hold our meetings and take any evidence or any statements in camera, and eventually make our report without any great fanfare throughout the country." Warren thought that these steps would expedite the whole process. He was comfortable with relying on the FBI, CIA, and Secret Service and other government agencies to carryout

Chapter Four

The Warren Commission Behind Close Doors

To investigate, lay to rest rumors and convince the public of the validity of one particular set of facts. The Warren Commission is the most outstanding example of this type of commission.

Elizabeth B. Drew “How to Govern (or avoid it) By Commission.” ----*Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1968.

When the Commissioners first met they all knew what was expected of them. They were to go through the motions of an inquiry and release their report in quick order. There was no element of suspense as to where their inquiry might lead and what their final report would conclude. The FBI’s strategic leaking of the conclusions of its investigation to the press made this incandescently clear to the Commissioners. The records of the executive sessions disclose that the Commission’s prestructured task was to support the FBI’s conclusions: Oswald was the assassin and he acted alone.¹

Chairman Warren underscored the secondary, almost remote, connection of the Commission with the inquiry into the assassination during the first executive session. He proposed that the Commission avoid public hearings and resist calling any live witnesses. The Chief Justice saw no gain in asking for subpoena power. The Commission, Warren opined, “could hold our meetings and take any evidence or any statements in camera, and eventually make our report without any great fanfare throughout the country.” Warren thought that these steps would expedite the whole process. He was comfortable with relying on the FBI, CIA, and Secret Service and other government agencies to carryout