

## Raw Notes (Russell)

In May FBI Director Hoover addressed the Commission. He was quick to assert that there was “not a scintilla of evidence showing any foreign or domestic conspiracy in the Kennedy killing.” He went on in same vein launching a preemptive strike against any future dissenters and critics of the Commission and, by extension, the FBI, the Commission’s investigative arm.

Little did Hoover suspect that the first dissenter of the official story was sitting in the room listening to the Director’s oration. It was Senator Richard Russell.

On September 18, 1964 Russell forced a special executive session of the Commission. Russell explained to his Commission colleagues that he could not sign a report stating that the same bullet that hit President Kennedy exited his body and went into Governor Connally.

Russell was convinced that the bullet that struck Kennedy was not the bullet that slammed into Governor Connally’s back, traversed his chest and slammed into his wrist and then entered his left leg and only by some strange quirk of reverse kinetic energy was able to exit his leg and come to rest in his pants but still remain in virtually pristine condition. Kentucky’s Republican Senator John S. Cooper was persuaded to join Russell’s dissent and Louisiana’s Hale Boggs was wavering and tilting toward also joining the dissenters in rejecting the single bullet explanation which was essential to the Warren Reports lone assassin conclusion.

It should be noted that Russell’s rejection of the single-bullet theory was part and parcel of his displeasure of the quality of the FBI investigation and the information it and the CIA fed to the Commission.

After an exhausting morning search for some mutual solution to the impasse John McCloy came up with language that both the majority and the Russell faction could reluctantly agree upon. Russell’s concession to the “single bullet theory” was softened to a degree by his insistence the Report include language categorically conceding that Oswald could not have carried out the assassination on his own.

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Russell was so exhausted after the September session broke up at the end of the morning that he made a rapid escape from the Capital for a weekend at home in Widner, Georgia. He was in such a rush to get out of Washington that he forgot to take his toothbrush, extra shirts, and his meds he needed to control his emphysema.

Russell believed that in settling for half-a-loaf (on Oswald may have had help in the assassination) he took some solace in the fact that the two statements he read to his fellow Commission members during the September 18<sup>th</sup> session fulfilled his obligations to his Georgia constituents and to the record of history.

Rankin's treachery: While the special September session ostensibly came equipped with stenographers who were presumably recording the session for the record and for posterity this was all a fiddle. Rankin (w/ Warren's permission) had staged the whole performance.

Rankin waited until November 5, more than a week after the Warren Report was in the public domain to send out what the General Counsel identified "as the minutes of the last meeting of the Commission."

Harold Weisberg learned from rumors circulating Washington was a fakery. He contacted the National Archives in Washington, D.C, for a copy of the verbatim transcript of the September 18<sup>th</sup> WC session. He learned that there was no record of any session just some "secretarial" business about when Commission members could expect copies of the Warren Report and other innocuous tripe.

When Weisberg showed Russell archivist Rhoades's letter Russell was aghast. This kind of suppression was outside his experience on Capitol Hill. He urged Weisberg to continue his work on the Kennedy assassination. Russell, the first dissenter of the Warren Commission Report, never changed his mind about Oswald as the assassin of Kennedy but he believed that Oswald had not acted alone.