

WC Silence on Presidential

The Legacy of the Warren

By Thomas Collins
Newsday Washington Bureau

Washington—The telephone number for the Warren Commission in Washington used to be 543-1400, but if you dial that number today a recorded voice will tell you, "Sorry, the number you have called is not in service . . ."

In its way, the message from the telephone company sums up, better than anything else could, the present status of the commission and its interest in the subject it investigated so exhaustively: the assassination of President Kennedy. After long and arduous research, the commission issued its vital 888-page report in September, 1964, made 12 recommendations—most of which were highly critical of the protective measures of the Secret Service and the FBI—and then, since it was not intended to be a permanent body, disbanded.

Its seven members are now scattered, and finding out what they think of how the recommendations have been carried out is not easy.

Chief Justice of the U.S. Earl Warren, who headed the commission, refuses to comment on any aspect of the report. Allen Dulles, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency and a member of the commission, said he has not had time to study what has been done. J. Lee Rankin, the New York attorney who was general counsel to the commission, said he did not feel competent to pass judgment on how the recommendations have been implemented, and the White House, declining to comment, passes inquiries to the Treasury Department—which oversees the Secret Service and has always had responsibility for presidential protection.

In addition, a watchdog committee of cabinet rank that was recommended by the commission to oversee the protective responsibilities of the Secret Service is not functioning as a working group. As a result, there is no governmental body—aside from the Treasury secretary and his assistants—charged with the responsibility of seeing that the Warren Commission's recommendations are being carried out.

Six of the 12 recommendations relate directly to the Secret Service. In them, the Warren Commission strongly urged that the service modernize its system of detecting potential presidential threats, improve its methods of conducting presidential motorcades, increase its staff and budget, install modern data-processing equipment, and

Tuesday, December 7, 1965 NEWSDAY



Under Secret Service reorganization, chief James J. Rowley has the title of director.

improve its relations with the FBI and other federal and local law enforcement agencies.

There is much evidence that the service has gone a long way toward complying with these recommendations. It recently reshuffled its top echelon of officers, giving Secret Service chief James J. Rowley a new title as director and four top assistants where he formerly had only two. It has "vigorously and thoroughly" gone about the huge task of systematizing its file in anticipation of automating its records, according to David Acheson, the special assistant to Treasury Secretary Fowler who is in charge of the service.

Its manpower has increased from 600 in 1963 to an authorized 920 this year, and its budget is now \$12,500,000, a third more than last year. In addition, agency officials said, the service files are now bulging with 250,000 names of persons who might be a threat to the President's life, five times the figure in 1963. This is a result, they said, of the better working relationship the service has established with the FBI, the CIA, military intelligences and local officials. The number of duties of agents assigned to presidential motorcades also has been increased, and a system of inspecting buildings along the motorcade route—when time permits—has been in operation the past 18 months.

But if it was the intent of the Warren Commission to insure that some newly designated governmental body exercise a watchdog responsibility in the area of presidential protection, that has not been accomplished. A high-

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ranking committee was formed, shortly after the commission made its report, headed by then-Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon, and including special presidential assistant McGeorge Bundy, then-CIA Director John A. McCone and Attorney General Katzenbach. Whether this was the committee the commission had in mind is a matter of conjecture, one top official said. Its primary job appeared to be to review the commission's recommendations. It did so, and made a report to President Johnson, which has never been made public.

White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers refers all questions on the committee to Bundy. Bundy says the committee is not meeting and, in turn, refers inquiries to Secret Service overseer, Acheson. Acheson says he does not believe the committee ever was formally disbanded, but is not aware that it is functioning at present.

Acheson himself is the answer to one of the Warren Commission's recommendations, but in the opinion of at least one highly placed source close to the committee, he is not the full answer. The commission had recommended that a special assistant be named to supervise the Secret Service and that he should have "sufficient stature and experience in law enforcement, intelligence, and allied fields . . ."

Acheson, the committee source said, "is a real nice guy, but he isn't what the commission had in mind as far as stature and background is concerned—not that kind of background." Acheson, the son of former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, was U.S. attorney in the District of Columbia for four years before taking over his present job. Before that he was a partner in the Washington law firm of Covington and Burling, in which his father is a senior partner.

As for the other commission recommendations, they have either been adopted, ignored or are the subject of lengthy study. A suggestion to transfer the protective duties of the service to another agency has not been adopted; one requesting that the President's physician always be nearby has. One admonishing the State Department to adopt better procedures for the dissemination of information on defectors is being complied with, a department spokesman said, but just how is a secret. A recommendation that ethical standards be established by members of the bar and news media, to prevent interference with trials and police investigations, is under study. And one recommending that legislation be passed making the assassination of the President and vice president a federal crime has been adopted by Congress.