LONDON DEBATES WARREN REPORT

Critics Are Split on Issues Raised by 2 U.S. Books

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Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Sept. 25 — The Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy is undergoing another round of scrutiny in Britain. Critics and defenders seem about equally divided.

The occasion for the revival of interest is the publication of two critical books already on the market in the United States—"Inquest" by Edward Jay Epstein and "Rush to Judgment" by Mark Lane.

Mr. Epstein's complaint that the commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren did a hasty, inadequate job has won more support than any conspiracy theories — either his or the more fanciful ones of Mr. Lane.

Mr. Epstein, a Harvard doctoral candidate, undertook his study of the Warren Commission report as a master's thesis at Cornell. Mr. Lane is a lawyer and former Democratic Assemblyman from New York City.

Tonight The Times of London called on the Warren Commission to reopen its inquiry and deal with the various points of criticism raised. The comment was in an editorial for tomorrow's editions.

"All things considered the Warren Commission did a remarkable job of work in difficult circumstances and extreme pressure," The Times said.

However, it continued, "it is now clear" that the commission "did cut some corners."

Lord Devlin, one of the most respected legal figures in England, said in The Observer today that, in light of the Epstein book, the commission "was not as potent an instrument for discovering the truth as externally it appeared to be."

On the other hand, Lord Devlin said Mr. Epstein had not sustained his intimated charge that the commission had "brought itself to shirk the truth because of its own fear of the political consequences."

Evidence Held Lacking

Mr. Epstein agreed with the commission that Lee Harvey Oswald had fired at the President but thought there might well have been a second assassin. Lord Devlin thought the known evidence on firing times left the possibility open, but he saw it as only a possibility, with no trace of affirmative evidence to support it.

Prof. Arthur I. Goodhart, another eminent lawyer, writing in The Sunday Telegraph, ridiculed both the Lane and Epstein books as worthless, especially Mr. Lane's.

He recalled that Mr. Lane's own testimony before the commission was evasive and devoid of direct relevance. He described as "utter nonsense" a statement by Mr. Lane that Oswald would have had posthumous counsel before an English royal commission.

The only favorable review in the serious Sunday papers was by Cyril Connolly, the literary critic.

He said in The Sunday Times that he was now convinced that the authorities investigating the assassination were unduly committed to the view that Oswald had committed the slaying alone. He called for another investigation by "some completely unprejudiced and fearless body."

Alistair Cooke, the long-time American correspondent of The Guardian, also was critical of the Warren report. He said that it had "signally failed" to ascertain the truth, and that "this President or the next should convene another commission."

Another call for a further independent study was made by the anonymous reviewer in The Economist. Without it, he said, the judgment will "never be satisfying or conclusive."

Bernard Levin, an often acidulous columnist in The Daily Mail, found both Mr. Epstein and Mr. Lane "shifty" in their handling of the evidence. He said they merely served those who refused to believe the report's conclusion "because the truth is unbearable to them."