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No Surprise

Rumors and strange tales about the shooting of President Lincoln have kept cropping up off and on during the past century. Thus it is not surprising that the Warren Commission's findings as to the assassination of President Kennedy are still being called into question. It would be far more surprising if this were not so.

The lack of published dissent from the Warren conclusions might also be rather disturbing, since one might then have reason to suspect an official attempt to suppress criticism. As it is, no such suspicion arises. Those who dispute commission findings, notably the basic one that Lee Harvey Oswald alone was the assassin, have had no trouble getting their views before the public. Several accounts already on sale, and others soon to be published, take issue with various aspects of the report.

One principal source of challenge is the summary of a Federal Bureau of Investigation report, now declassified, which appears to discredit the official view that a single bullet passed through President Kennedy's body and then wounded Gov. John B. Connally Jr. of Texas. The summary report is quoted in support of the idea that a second assassin was also involved in the crime.

The various dissident accounts cannot be merely shrugged off; they deserve a hearing. However, one should bear in mind that not merely the FBI summary report but all the actual reports of FBI agents were used by the commission. It considered the two-assassin theory but discarded it on the basis of all the evidence available.

It does not follow that the commission is right and its detractors are wrong. The circumstances are such that, though the most intensive investigation was made, no one can ever be wholly sure. At present, however, there appears to be no valid reason not to accept the accuracy of the Warren Commission report.