



EPSTEIN

To Edward J. Epstein must go a large share of the credit for breaking the dam of silence which prevailed in the United States, until the late spring of 1966, with regard to any published criticism of the Warren Commission. His book, "Inquest," was the first to be published in this country by a major publishing house. It was accorded recognition by reviewers of prominence and received the benefits of an expensive promotion campaign. Mr. Epstein's book was further complimented with an introduction written by Richard Revere, a writer whose credentials are considered impeccable by a large segment of the liberal-intellectual community. Epstein began to be recognized as a "responsible critic," both here and abroad. He was granted interviews by most of the major networks, a distinction which none of the other critics had succeeded in achieving.

A well-known critical authority on the Warren Commission's findings, Sylvia Meagher, had not only read the manuscript prior to the book's publication, but had made 'many valuable suggestions'* She told me, a month before the book was published, that Inquest would succeed, as no other book or article had in the past, in breaking the back of the Commission's case. It was with genuine anticipation and excitement, therefore, that I awaited the opportunity to read "Inquest."

I had met Mr. Epstein at a "critics' meeting in October of 1965 at the New York apartment of Sylvia Meagher. During the course of the afternoon, Mr. Epstein had told about a meeting of the Warren Commission in June of 1964, when one of the Commission members had reportedly suggested abandoning the investigation; "we haven't got a case," he was purported to have exclaimed. It was my recollection of this startling statement, as well as a number of other interesting revelations by Mr. Epstein that day, which provoked my anticipation of his book and which gave me reason to expect that Mrs. Meagher's prophecy as to its impact would be realized. To my considerable surprise, however, the book, although meritorious in much of its content, failed significantly in seriously damaging the Commission's case.

In spite of Epstein's often disparaging information about how the Commission approached its task, he, nevertheless, agreed with their basic premise, that Lee Oswald was the assassin of President Kennedy, a premise which nearly every student of the 26 volumes of hearings and exhibits would be equipped to challenge. Furthermore, Mr. Epstein's book shows little evidence that he ever examined the nature of Oswald's involvement. (Curiously, Sylvia Meagher had been one of the staunchest supporters of the concept that Oswald could not have and did not kill the President).

Why, then, has Mr. Epstein gained fame, success and recognition—when other critics of the Commission's case have either failed to find widespread acceptance or, as is the case with Mark Lane, if they have managed to penetrate the wall of opposition, they have often been damned.

ridiculed, and accused of all manner of nefarious motives? Why is Mr. Epstein regarded as the fair-haired boy? I believe the reason is that Mr. Epstein is cloaked in the mantle of the 'academician,' the 'scholar'. Because "Inquest" began 'as a master's thesis in Government at Cornell University', because Mr. Epstein has since joined the faculty at Harvard, there is a tendency to respect his every word. Thus, in a sense, because of his unique background and qualifications, he might have been expected to nurture a dedication to objectivity and to factual representation in both his thoughts and his writing. Unhappily, this is not the case. His article, "Garrison," in the July 13, 1968 NEW YORKER magazine is a glaring example of the degree of bias and deception to which Mr. Epstein repeatedly succumbs.

Only the demands of time and space preclude a point-by-point refutation of the Epstein article. I shall, however, attempt to illustrate with a few examples how demonstrably dis-honest Mr. Epstein's article is, not only for the delusive attack on Mr. Garrison but for the blatant errors of omission. It is not my purpose, here, to defend Mr. Garrison so much as it is to set the record straight.

On Page 40 of the NEW YORKER, Epstein refers to Gordon Novel as 'a specialist in anti-eavesdropping devices', and on page 60 he calls Novel 'an electronics expert.' What Epstein does not tell his readers is that Gordon Novel is a self-confessed CIA agent, an admission which was also publicly made by Novel's attorney, Steven Plotkin. (See New York Times, 4-27-67; "Novel Told Intimates He Was With CIA—Mounting evidence of CIA links—He was a CIA operative and will use his role to battle Garrison; New Orleans States-Item, front-page headline story: "Novel CIA Agent, Attorney Admits" 6-25-67). I have heard Mr. Epstein, on a recent Newsmaker call with radio commentator, Bob Grant, defend his failure to include this information about Novel. His excuse was that both Novel and Plotkin have denied the admissions News stories dealing with Novel's CIA connection were carried in the New Orleans press for many months—from the end of April '67 to the following October. Yet, a careful search of all the news items covering that period of time fails to reveal any such denials. Moreover, the information was developed by the New Orleans newspapers and not by Jim Garrison. The reason why this is a major, rather than a trivial, omission on Epstein's part is that many of Garrison's charges that a conspiracy existed in the slaying of the President directly involve the CIA. Mr. Epstein must be aware of the fact that a considerable portion of the criticism leveled against Garrison's case has come from Gordon Novel. It stands to reason, therefore, that any evaluation of Garrison's case by Gordon Novel would be of questionable value, at best.