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Berkeley, CA 94709  
October 12, 1976

Rep. Christopher J. Dodd  
(Att'n: Ralph Locke)  
429 Cannon  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Dodd:

Thanks for your letter of September 30, and for the information provided on the phone by Mr. Locke. I understand the Committee's feeling that policy-making staff positions should not be held by established Warren Report critics, to avoid the appearance of bias. I have written Mr. Sprague, asking that I be considered for a consultant position if one becomes available.

Mr. Sprague's strong remarks regarding access to documents are encouraging. As I mentioned on page 3 of my memo of September 24 to Rick Feeney, a large number of agencies have relevant material which the Warren Commission did not study. Priority should be given not only to the FBI Headquarters file on Oswald, but to relevant material in files on the FPCC and funds sent to Russia, as well as field office files. The CIA files should also get careful attention. In the enclosed letter of April 24 to Dave Marston, I argued that the degree of FBI and CIA cooperation with Senator Schweiker's investigation should be carefully assessed; some of my comments are still relevant. I am still looking forward to seeing the CIA's response to the long memo I sent to the Rockefeller Commission, none of which has yet been made public.

If Mr. Sprague intends to start by focusing on the events of November 22, I would suggest going after the early Secret Service tape of the Dallas Police radio transmissions. The SS got a tape by November 29, and sent it to Washington for "filtering, re-recording, and transcription." As far as I know, the SS did not give any such material to the Warren Commission, and could not find it for me in 1970. By August 1964, when the FBI got around to making a transcript for the Commission, the DPD originals (which they used) were "badly worn." Given the many suspicious circumstances surrounding the DPD's response to the assassination, the original SS tapes might contain important new evidence.

I think it would also be important to study carefully the DPD claim that they knew nothing of Oswald before the assassination - an implausible statement which, if untrue, could explain a lot. George O'Toole and I have both done work on this possibility.

Thanks for sending me the FBI's response to your request for the Oswald file; it is pretty much what I would expect if they are stonewalling completely. (If Mr. Edwards' request of October 29, 1975 is available, I would appreciate a copy.) It is amusing that the FBI has deleted "CIA" from a document which was published in full 12 years ago. I assume that they have provided no information at all from or about any of their other files on Oswald.

The FBI's description of Belmont's dealings with the Warren Commission staff on May 4, 1964 sounds like a typical self-serving statement for the record; I would like to see the actual memo on which it was based. My manuscript analyzes these dealings in detail. We know that on May 4 Belmont took a hard line with Willens and Stern against the publication of FBI reports (see pp. 7.6-7); it is clear that the FBI was insisting on its own definition of "pertinent information" and was resisting full disclosure.

Stern told me a little about his "review" of the file (see p. 7.28). It probably consisted of no more than what the FBI claims, "an item by item comparison with the documents listed in the letter." This means nothing; the FBI certainly would not leave something out of the list and then show it to Stern - who already knew that some relevant documents appeared only in other files. The superficiality of the review is established by the absence of any reference, in the Warren Report

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or in the files, to anything new Stern found. Anything but the most cursory review would have led to the correction of several minor errors in the FBI's descriptions, some question about Oswald's refusal to take a lie detector test (revealed for the first time by the Schweiker Report), and the first item in the file, a newspaper editorial which predates Oswald's defection and has nothing to do with him.

I expect that Stern would disagree with the FBI's account of its cooperation with the Commission. When I talked with him in London, he was working for Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering; he might be back in Washington now.

It is, of course, true that Warren turned down the FBI's offer of the headquarters Oswald file; somehow he had gotten the impression that the staff would want to see it but couldn't be allowed to.

Incidentally, the Schweiker Report includes some previously unknown information from the FBI's Oswald file. (The Report does not make much use of even the old material.) However, it is not clear how much of the file was turned over for inspection. I would think the FBI would find it difficult to withhold any such material from you now. You might want to ask specifically about the cover pages for Fain's report, which mention the lie detector matter. (SR 88, note 8) (The Report says that these pages were "apparently" not given to the Warren Commission; they certainly were not, despite a specific request by Dulles on May 4. [See p. 7.10 of my manuscript.] The FBI failed to mention the lie detector problem when asked for their evaluation of Oswald at that time. [CE 833, #5])

You asked for my further ideas about screening incoming information. It is difficult for me to be helpful on this without knowing the scope and nature of the problem as it develops. I wouldn't want to suggest abstract guidelines for the evaluation of volunteered information, but I have tried to understand just what has led me to discount the information provided recently by Morrow, Sturgis, McDonald, McKeown, Weston, and others. I would be particularly suspicious if (a) any story is an embellished version of one told by the same source before; (b) if all or all but a few of the cast of characters have appeared before, in accounts known to the critics; (c) if the source makes no attempt to distinguish between fact and "analysis"; (d) if the source has no good explanation for not having told the story before; (e) if the story includes an overtly conspiratorial meeting held in the presence of third parties; (f) if contacts between well-known principals (such as Oswald and Ruby) are alleged with no explanation of any non-conspiratorial reason for them to have met; (g) if the source appears to be telling people what they want to hear.

I think that those of us who have followed the case for years have developed a fairly good intuitive feel for what is likely to be trivia or misinformation. Other sources you might want to use are the indexes to FBI CD's in the Archives, and published material on the Garrison affair.

Taylor Branch wrote a fascinating article in the N.Y. Times on September 12, about the CIA's handling of the Church and Pike Committee investigations. Assuming that the CIA and FBI have anything at all left to hide in connection with the assassination investigations - and that is a safe assumption - your work will not be easy! I am looking forward to keeping in touch.

Sincerely,

*Paul*

Paul L. Hoch