

CITIZENS' COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

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JACKIE PILCHER
Secretary

July 13, 1967

Mr. Frank Stanton, President
Columbia Broadcasting System
51 West 52 Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Sir:

This letter is being written to elaborate upon my telegram to you of July 5.

Beginning on Sunday evening, June 25, and continuing for three successive evenings, CBS presented a "CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report". This four part series was purported to be the culmination of months of independent and objective investigation by CBS News.

As the programs evolved, it became increasingly clear that this was not an 'objective investigation' at all, but rather an editorial by CBS designed to reconstitute the generally disbelieved conclusion of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald, unaided and without motive, murdered the President.

The Federal Communications Commission has declared in its "fairness doctrine" that a broadcast station must allow all sides of a controversial issue to be heard; that the public airways cannot be employed by a station to use its power and prestige for the purpose of putting forth only one point of view. This, however, is exactly what CBS has done.

The lack of objectivity in the CBS approach to the controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination was manifest in: 1) the superficial presentation that omitted relevant and important evidence which was often inconsistent with a lone assassin conclusion, and 2) the manner in which substantial research findings of the various critics were transformed by CBS News into straw men.

For example, on the first evening, the so-called "paper bag controversy" was considered: Was the disassembled rifle in the paper bag that the Warren Commission said Oswald carried into the Depository building? CBS News addressed itself to the two witnesses, Frazier and Randle, who were the only persons to see the paper bag before the assassination. Both of them consistently indicated that the bag was about 27 inches long, some 8 inches shorter than the largest component of the rifle.

CBS News attempted to refute the witnesses by having Dan Rather hold a package that was long enough (34.8") to contain the rifle in about the manner that Oswald was supposed to have held it. He then walked away from the camera with the top of the rifle visibly protruding above his shoulder. "You can decide if Frazier,...50 feet behind Oswald,...could have missed the (protrusion)," said Rather. Of course, the five inches of rifle which extended above his shoulder was always in view, but that did not stop CBS News from concluding that Oswald did carry the rifle into the building in the paper bag.

CBS News completely ignored:

- 1) Randle's testimony as to how Oswald carried the bag as he approached her home---like a lunch sack, barely clearing the ground. (Such a length on a man of Oswald's height is substantially less than the length of the disassembled rifle.)
- 2) Frazier's testimony as to how the paper bag was placed on the rear seat of his car, and the subsequent deduction that it was 27 inches.
- 3) Witness Dougherty's testimony that he saw Oswald enter the building that morning and that, "If he was carrying anything, I didn't see it."
- 4) FBI expert Cadigan's analysis of the bag which showed no chemical or physical evidence of a rifle ever having been in it--no oil, rifle debris, or distinctive marks. (J. Edgar Hoover had stated that the rifle was well oiled.)

That same evening, a witness to the assassination, Amos Euins, was brought forth to claim that he had seen a man in a window of the Depository building holding what looked like an iron pipe. This was used by CBS News to support the thesis that Oswald was in the window, even though Euins testified to the Warren Commission that the man was a negro. But this the audience was not told.

These examples duplicate exactly the selectivity of the Warren Report in presenting evidence. But even when CBS News presented its own research, important facts were omitted when they tended to discredit a lone assassin conclusion.

One clear example is the subject of "blurs" on the Zapruder film, cited by CBS News as indicative of when the shots were fired. It was contended that three blurs, at frames 190, 227, and 318, were caused by a jump in the cameraman's hands as the shots were fired. However, a glance through the individual frames published in Volume XVIII of the Hearings before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy indicates similar blurs occurring at no fewer than eight places, in addition at frames 195, 203, 222, 250, and 290. The audience never heard this fact, for eight blurs coupled with the standard of evidence employed by CBS News would lead one to conclude that there were eight shots.

These examples are not the sum total of meaningful omissions during the four evenings. But these omissions, though important to consider, are not as serious as the manner in which the critic's most basic objections to the Warren Report were repeatedly misrepresented so as to facilitate their refutation.

In dealing with the single bullet theory, CBS News conducted a highly dramatic test involving a series of gelatin blocks ostensibly representing the path of a bullet (C.E. #399) through President Kennedy's neck and Governor Conally's back, rib, wrist, and into his thigh. Unfortunately, this test was irrelevant to the issue because it was conducted to determine whether or not the bullet had the penetrating power to cause these wounds, a question that has not been raised by any published critic. The real issues have always been, and remain: 1) the virtually undeformed condition of the bullet when found (the audience was never shown the CBS test bullet which did not smash a rib), 2) the complete absence of particles of blood and tissue on the bullet, and 3) the fact that the time span between the wounding of the President and the Governor was too short to have been caused by two bullets from the Mannlicher-Carcano and too long to have been caused by one bullet (see LIFE, November 25, 1966).

In dealing with the head shot in frame #313 of the Zapruder film, Dan Rather asks an expert in photograph analysis, "Are you aware that some critics say by the very fact that in the picture you can clearly see the explosion of the bullet on the front of the President that that certainly indicates the bullet came from the front?" No published critic has ever cited this forward explosion, seemingly of blood and tissue, as evidence of a shot from the front. The question is, and has always been: Is a violent rearward and leftward movement of the President's head and body as shown in Zapruder frames 314 through 323 consistent with a shot from behind, or from the front-right? (Walter Cronkite even had the audacity to claim that this discussion of the explosion of the bullet explains how the head was forced backward by a shot from the rear!)

These few examples, suggestive of the majority of the questions posed, establish that the CBS News inquiry was not in any way an objective presentation of the facts of the Kennedy assassination. The various criticisms voiced by the various authors were either ignored or so misrepresented as to constitute a gross deception. These programs were, in sum and in substance, an editorial by CBS. This was reflected most explicitly by the phrases used by Walter Cronkite, "CBS News has concluded that...", and, "It is the opinion of CBS News that...", etc.

The Citizens' Committee of Inquiry was first formed in December, 1963 by Mark Lane to aid research on this subject. It was reactivated by myself and others in October, 1966 to provide a vehicle by which those who do not accept the conclusions of the Warren Report could express their feelings on this subject.

Accordingly, because the "CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report" consistently omitted what we believe to be substantial and relevant evidence; because the aforementioned 'inquiry' repeatedly misrepresented the positions of the various critics of the Warren Report; because the series of programs was in essence an editorial by CBS; and because the FCC has declared that adherents of all sides of a controversial issue must be given a fair opportunity to reply to such a program, we of the Citizens' Committee of Inquiry demand an opportunity to reply on the CBS network to these programs. We desire to produce a program which will allow the various critics to express themselves in rebuttal to the positions taken by CBS News.

We make this demand on behalf of those millions of Americans who doubt the conclusions of the Warren Report. We make it on behalf of the 20,000 people

whose interests on this subject are formally (by signature) represented by this committee. And we make it on behalf of the major critics of the Warren Report who are associated with this committee.

We sincerely hope that you will recognize the justice involved in this matter and will act accordingly.

Sincerely yours,



Steven J. Burton,
National Chairman
Citizens' Committee of Inquiry

PS:

I reserve the right to distribute copies of this letter to the news media at such time as I deem it necessary.

s.b.

cc:

Rosel H. Hyde, FCC
Rep. Theodore Kupferman
Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison
Richard Salant
Leslie Midgely
Robert Richter
Walter Cronkite
Dan Rather
Mark Lane
Sylvia Meagher
Harold Weisberg
Raymond Marcus
Marjorie Field
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