



Washington Progress Report

ASSASSINATION INFORMATION BUREAU

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As we go to press, the future of the Select committee on Assassinations is uncertain. There are indications that Congress is wavering in its commitment to investigate assassinations. A scheduled vote in the House of Representatives to re-establish the Committee for the new Congress has been postponed until early February. Doubt over whether there was the 2/3 vote needed to approve it prompted House leaders to delay until a vote taken under different procedures and requiring only a simple majority could be taken. We urge telegrams to Congress supporting the Select Committee.

Opposition is forming to the Committee's request for a first year operating budget of \$6.5 million, which chief counsel Richard Sprague claims is the "bare-bones figure". The budget is largely due to Sprague's refusal to rely for staffing on the FBI and CIA, agencies vitally involved in the cover-up. The debate that will occur over the budget should not be construed as Congressional concern for the taxpayer's dollar, but rather as the current tool of the forces of cover-up. According to Representative Henry Gonzalez, the committee's new chairman, "it comes down to a question of what price we are willing to pay for democracy".

Further opposition is coalescing around, Sprague's background, whether the Constitutional rights of witnesses will be protected, and the total scope of the investigation.

Though the committee has existed in only skeleton form so far, limited by the temporary budget, Sprague has revealed a few targets of the probe. The committee has investigated the associations of James Earl Ray, particularly the possibility that he was given money during his flight from Memphis. Sprague also disclosed that he has located several previously unknown witnesses to the discovery of the CE 399 bullet at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. According to reports, these witnesses believe the bullet was planted, substantiating a long standing claim of critics who feel Oswald was framed. The Committee has also viewed and attempted to analyze photographic evidence from Dallas, including the Zapruder film and the Altgens photo.

Sprague was chosen as counsel for his experience as prosecutor in the trial of United Mine Workers President Tony Boyle for the murder of the Joseph Yablonski family. In that case, his investigative method revolved around the trigger men who were apprehended easily but had no knowledge of the higher-ups. The assassination cases are, of course, more complex, but Sprague may employ a similar approach by assuming that Oswald and Ray were involved but ignorant of the true nature of the conspiracy. Initially, the Select Committee will focus on the controversial physical evidence, but increasingly the probe will turn to the background and associations of Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray.

The media, long a factor in the cover-up, has shown early signs of hostility toward the new probe. Time, the New York Times, and the Washington Post have led the charge by portraying Sprague as politically motivated, flaunting the old Castro-did-it theory, and distorting the nature of the budget request. Especially aggressive in this regard has been the Post's George Lardner Jr., interestingly the last man to have seen David Ferrie, Garrison's chief suspect in New Orleans until his untimely death in the early morning hours of February 22, 1967. Reading between the lines will be an essential part of understanding the true politics of this investigation.

Our feelings about the investigation are generally favorable. There is no indication at this point that it is fixed. Sprague estimates a minimum of two years to complete his work and the efforts to cover-up are likely to be strenuous during this period. The issue of public hearings is a tricky one for the Committee. Sprague is caught between the need for secrecy on the one hand, to protect sources and conceal paths of investigation, and on the other hand to be sufficiently open to maintain public confidence. Open hearings should be held by March or April when the Committee has reached plateaus in the accumulation of evidence.

Everything we have learned suggests that this investigation will be a political ballgame for high stakes. Past investigations like the Watergate and the Church committee's, were showdowns between politicians as prosecutors and politicians as defendants. Neither probe resulted in any significant reform. The Select Committee on Assassinations requires the introduction of a third force: an active and informed citizenry.

A.I.B. Items:

—Though we have been able to find out little about it, there is still an ongoing Senate Investigation of the John Kennedy assassination, the remnant of the Schweiker committee. Gary Hart of Colorado heads this investigation and there is a possibility that it will attempt to pre-empt the Sprague probe. This is one to watch for.

—The A.I.B. is distributing, for \$3.00, Peter Dale Scott's new manuscript on CIA-Mafia connections and the Schweiker-Hart Report. Send check to AIB.

—As with the entire operation, money is needed. We applied a year ago for a 501 c(3) tax exemption and the I.R.S is still reviewing our case. If we should be granted this, any contributions will be retroactively exempt.

—This Progress Report can be had by sending us a self-addressed stamped envelope for each month's issue.





A Research and Educational Collective

Informed citizens realize that the truth behind domestic assassinations will come only through the efforts of the ultimate victims—the American people.

Now. More than Ever.

We begin 1977 with the best chance in 13 years finally to solve the crime of J.F.K.'s murder. The House of Representatives has established a 12-member committee to investigate this crime and the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King. The AIB is opening a Washington DC office to monitor the activities of this Select Committee, and we need your help. Your continued concern is very important in making our voices clearly heard. Our office will provide the following functions;

1—Monitoring the Investigation. The A.I.B. intends to represent the public interest by scrutinizing every step of the investigation. Continuous independent review of the Select Committee's investigative methodology, staffing, and tentative findings is crucial. Our office will rely on the considerable resources of the assassination-research community in maintaining a regular monitoring function. Your input is not only welcome but needed.

2—Press Summaries and Briefings. The media has been notoriously weak on this issue. Some elements have been outright antagonistic to the discussion of conspiracy and are actively undermining the Committee's work. We plan to issue regular press briefings, and to sponsor public seminars that will provide cross-fertilization of assassination research.

3—Library/Resource Office. The public resource office will serve the needs of the independent researcher and journalist. It will provide an extensive library service and will operate as a message center for researchers. This is an important function. There is no existing independent assassination research facility that makes its resources available to all.

What Can You Do?

Write to Congress:

Tell your Congresspeople that you won't rest until the truth behind political murders is known. We must make our voices heard. The following are of particular importance because they sit on the House Select Committee on Assassinations:

Henry Gonzales (D. Texas) — Chairman (202) 225-3236
 Louis Stokes (D. Ohio) 225-7032
 L. Richardson Preyer (D. North Carolina) 225-3065

Yvonne Burke (D. California) 225-7084
 Christopher Dodd (D. Connecticut) 225-2076
 Walter Fauntroy (D. Washington D.C.) 225-8050
 Harold Ford (D. Tennessee) 225-3265
 Stewart McKinney (R. Connecticut) 225-5541
 Charles Thone (R. Nebraska) 225-4806
 Samuel Devine (R. Ohio) 225-5355

John Anderson (R. Illinois)
 (At the time we went to press, no one had been named to the seat vacated by the retiring Chairman Thomas Downing)

Contact the Media:

Over 80% of the American people don't believe the findings of the Warren Commission, and this fact must be respected by, and reflected in, the media. Contact them and demand full and honest coverage of the assassination question.

Organize:

We encourage the establishment of local support groups throughout the country. Such groups can have a significant effect by building constituent pressure in key congressional districts. We are stronger when organized.

Inform Yourself:

Understand the issue so you can in turn teach others. The A.I.B. can help. We will supply, free of charge, our bibliography, a monthly progress report on the Washington investigation, and information on the books, slides and films that we have available. Please send stamped self-addressed envelopes or contributions to defer mailing expenses. The A.I.B. will also continue to carry out educational projects, including lectures, teach-ins and the preparation of audio and video tapes on a variety of topics pertinent to the investigation.

We Need Your Help.

Your support of the A.I.B. is crucial. If this investigation is to have any degree of success, it will require sustained public vigilance. Your contributions will help support our Washington office, provide for continuing research, and provide the means to develop a newsletter through which we can keep you informed.

The time for Americans to act is NOW. There may not be another opportunity. Help us. Now. More than ever.

The A.I.B. was formally incorporated in September 1974 to educate and activate the American People on the issue of domestic political assassinations. Over the last few years, members of the A.I.B. have been involved in such activities as:

- * Delivery of over 500 audio-visual presentations on the J.F.K. assassination.
- * Research and educational consultants for national and local media, as well as the thousands who have contacted our office.
- * Sponsorship of national conference, "The Politics of Conspiracy" held in Boston, January 31—February 2nd, 1975.
- * Hosting of weekly radio show on WBUR-FM, Boston.
- * Publication of an anthology, Government by Gunplay (Signet)
- * Publication of The Yankee-Cowboy War (Sheed, Andrews and McMeel) by Carl Oglesby
- * Production of video tapes on the J.F.K. assassination and the Huges Empire.
- * Writing numerous magazine and newspaper articles.
- * Development of a new audio-visual presentation, "The Mysterious Howard Huges"