

9 November 1966

Mr. Eliot Fremont-Smith
The New York Times
Times Square
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Fremont-Smith,

Your analysis of the impact of Inquest on public attitudes is perceptive and generally valid. However, I must take issue with the statements in today's column—"these documents were turned over to the National Archives last week," and "...it seems victory enough for a book to help get some documents transferred to the National Archives."

Not that those statements are not true—they are, of course—but they need qualification or elaboration if they are not to be quite misleading to the reader.

The autopsy photographs and x-rays were deposited in the Archives but not as part of the Warren Commission collection. The press has reported the severe restrictions placed on access to the documents but none of the accounts I have seen (including Fred Graham's two stories in the Times) are entirely accurate. The archivist has made it clear, in response to an inquiry on November 7th, that no one will be permitted to see the documents now and for the next five years except a federal commission, if one is appointed, charged with further investigation into the assassination. Even federal investigative agents are denied access to the documents for the next five years unless they apply for and receive permission from the Kennedy family for such access. For all practical purposes, then, no one not connected with the Government will be able to examine the photographs and x-rays, and even Government agents have no automatic access to them for at least five years.

Therefore, what has been provoked by Inquest and its impact on the "liberal intellectual Establishment" is not disclosure of suppressed vital evidence but a publicity stunt calculated to sooth those whose complacency about the Warren Report in the first instance proved that they do not read the fine print. The "victory" is more an affront, and a further violation of the norms. But it does betray a certain panic and disarray among those who claim that they have nothing to hide.

I am sorry that your otherwise-fine article did not make clear the nature of the "transfer" of the documents.

Yours sincerely,

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