

31 August 1965

Professor A L Goodhart  
University College  
Oxford, England

*10/8/65 Sub  
the two part  
written articles  
on Manchester*

Dear Professor Goodhart,

Thank you very much for your letter of 26 August 1965. Your remarks about the usefulness of a subject index to the Hearings and Exhibits are encouraging. I hope that it may be possible to find a publisher, so that the index can be available to students of the assassination.

May I now make some respectful comments on points raised in your letter? First, concerning "off the record" interruptions: I am not cognizant of English practice in this respect but I suspect that there is no Anglo-Saxon system of law which permits such discussion of vital evidence not excludable from the record. I have no doubt that a substantial proportion of the off-the-record interruptions which I mentioned (actually, the total exceeds 200) were not germane or were subsequently entered on the record. In a number of significant instances, however, this was not so. The case of P. Dean, to which unfortunately you do not have access at the moment, causes me considerable concern about the nature of some of these interruptions of recorded testimony.

Second, may I clarify that with respect to the photographs and x-rays taken during the autopsy, the correct verb is "omission." The record suggests that the Chief Justice did not himself view that evidence, which was placed into the custody of the Secret Service immediately after the autopsy was performed. I have not found anywhere reason to think that there was refusal on the part of the Secret Service to yield those photographs and x-rays. Dr. Humes did comment at the outset of his testimony that he did not know whether or not the Warren Commission would have available to it the photographs (2H 349). If the Commission made no attempt to obtain them, it appears to me extremely unfortunate. I say this because of the uncertainty which persists about the exact location of the entrance bullet wound in the back, or the back of the neck, or the shoulder, as variously described. A number of eyewitness descriptions (Secret Service agents present at the autopsy or called in explicitly to view the wounds) as well as the holes in the clothing suggest that this wound was below, rather than above, the exit wound (originally considered to be an entrance wound) at the Adam's apple. The photographs might have resolved that problem.

I agree with you that one would require strong evidence to believe that the Chief Justice had deliberately suppressed evidence. My own opinion on that question is still in suspension, primarily because the Chief Justice himself told the press (about March 1964) that the "full truth" might not be made known during our lifetime. Counsel Jenner told a witness who mentioned that public statement that it would be quoted (and presumably explained) in the Report (15H 737). However, the Report does not mention nor explain that remark by the Chief Justice. I am troubled also by the manner in which the Chief Justice personally questioned Jack Ruby, stating at one point that Ruby had replied in the negative to a question which in fact he had not answered (5H 204). I am equally uneasy about the matter of the tape-recording of the telephone conversation between Mark Lane and the witness Helen Markham.

Let me reply to your questions about Lane and his reasons for withholding the transcript (tape recording) in the first instance. At that time, you may recall, the Chief Justice released a public statement that he had every reason to doubt the truthfulness of Lane's statement that he possessed a tape recording such as he described. Lane, according to the transcript of his debate with Counsel Joseph Ball at Beverly Hills, California, 5 December 1964, went home and pondered the problem. He did not wish to be prosecuted nor to go to jail for voluntarily disclosing the tape recording made without permission of Mrs. Markham; nevertheless, because of the importance of this issue, he voluntarily sent the tape recording to the Chief Justice, with a letter dated 7 July 1964 requesting an acknowledgment from the Chief Justice that he no longer had reason to doubt Lane's testimony concerning the statements made by Mrs. Markham in the telephone conversation. Lane has never received any response to that request, nor has his letter of 7 July 1964 been included in the Exhibits together with numerous and seemingly complete correspondence exchanged between the Commission and Lane; and nowhere is it acknowledged that the tape recording was obtained from Lane. I could only infer this; and only in the last few days have I learned, via the transcript of the Beverly Hills debate, of the exact mechanics employed.

I greatly regret the Commission's failure to compel disclosure by Lane of the source of his allegations about a conspiratorial meeting between Ruby, Tippit, and Weissman; and with all respect, I cannot agree that it was immaterial whether or not the allegation was true. If it was true (as the allegation on the Markham conversation turned out to be true), it must of course confront us with an entirely new theory of the crimes in Dallas. My point was that no individual nor official body has the moral right to leave this matter unresolved, and the Commission had a duty to exercise its powers to compel disclosure.

Finally, my reference to Marina Oswald's possible mercenary motive for the Nixon story was based on testimony of her former attorney, J H Martin. (Rather, Martin was her business advisor and manager for some months.) He said that Marina Oswald had had an offer of a huge sum of money from a magazine if she provided an exclusive story containing as-yet-unrevealed information about Oswald. Shortly thereafter she made her first mention of the supposed attempt on Nixon. It is true that the Commission did not conclude that the story was a fabrication. I could not avoid the impression that fabrication was at least suspected, from a reading of all the relevant testimony. And I continue to find it incomprehensible that she should have "forgotten" to mention the Nixon attempt when, early in December, she was disclosing the Walker attempt. Of course, variations in the testimony of any witness over a substantial period of time are to be expected and are understandable; apparently I did not make clear my main point—that Marina Oswald repeatedly reversed earlier stories, the later versions having the effect, in each case, of incriminating Oswald. For example, she said repeatedly in FBI or Secret Service interviews that Oswald had not engaged in any target practice; and she said also in one interview that he neither possessed rifle ammunition nor ever expressed any intention to acquire any. Later, she testified that Oswald had engaged in target practice, and that a bullet shown to her was "larger than those her husband had had" she believed. When variations assume such a constant pattern I wonder if they can still be regarded as innocuous.

Let me close with a personal word. If I seem to defend Mark Lane energetically, it is not because I admire him or feel any identification with his point of view (except in the most general sense). As I do not especially like him, I must take extra care to do him justice; and this much I have tried to do at all times. My own view of the Warren Report, and of the assassination, has never depended on Mr Lane or any other critic—it has developed from serious, sceptical, and conscientious study of the entire published record, in which I have tried to subject my own judgments to the same severe standards with which I viewed the official findings. Unfortunately, I have found too many serious conflicts between the testimony-and-documents and the corresponding sections of the Report to permit acceptance of the findings or unreserved confidence in the authors.

I apologize for writing at such length.

Yours very sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher

302 West 12 Street, NYC 10014 U S A