

It's spreading — the Mark Lane bug



By
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Kempion**

I HAD NOT recognized how far my prejudices might go in disabling me for a fair assessment of the House Assassinations Committee's assertion that President Kennedy was murdered by conspirators until I heard Mark Lane's voice on the radio saying that here was proof that he had been right all along.

I have the extreme distaste for Mark Lane that is possible only in the case of persons one used very much to like; and, even though I should be content to have him live forever, it would always be to me an extreme example of the mystery of God's ways that He should have let hundreds of children die in Jonestown and spared Mark Lane. If an excuse could possibly exist for covering up a conspiracy, it would be to protect our sensibilities from the dreadful moment when a reporter is heard to ask Mark Lane a question in tones of awe and veneration.

The House committee's assertion certainly does not prove and, in fact, does not even suggest that Mark Lane was right. It has, after all, been Lane's premise that the ghost of Lee Harvey Oswald was framed; and the flattest sentences in the committee's report are the ones that read:

"Lee Harvey Oswald fired three shots at President John F. Kennedy. The second and third shots he fired struck the President. The third shot he fired killed the President."

What the committee has proved is that Mark Lane's methods are infectious. Its "report" is a series of allegations supported by the promise of supporting evidence to be made public sometime in the spring. The assertion accompanied by the assurance that proof will arrive at some indefinite future date is the essence of Mark Lane.

The committee's statement that someone who could not have been Oswald fired one misdirected shot at the President from a grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza cannot be dismissed, being founded as it is on

the testimony of experts in acoustics. But the committee's chairman, Congressman Stokes of Ohio, could not be content with plausible evidence without trying to buttress it with figments.

He pointed out that 21 of the 178 witnesses before the Warren Commission remembered the shots as coming from the grassy knoll. But, by the committee's own account, only one shot came from the grassy knoll and all the others from the Texas Book Depository. Congressman Stokes is thus citing as a contribution to his proof the



Rep. Louis Stokes: a little something for each side.



Mark Lane: his methods are infectious.

statements of witnesses his own findings have judged to be wrong.

But then the committee had no way to dodge the force of the weightiest piece of proof in the entire case, which is the autopsy report with its photographs that indicate that the President was struck from behind with bullets coming from Oswald's mail order rifle. There is no way to dispute such evidence except to suggest that the doctors at Walter Reed faked it; and even an instrument of a body as intellectually incoherent and superstitiously irrational as the House of Representatives cannot quite bring itself to believe that.

Of course, two persons firing at the same victim constitutes a conspiracy. But a conspiracy of whom? Of nobody very tangible, the committee hastens to say: it acquits the Secret Service, the FBI, the Cubans, Castroite and anti-Castroite alike, and, in a burst of universal tolerance, the Mafia.

In summary: (1) There was a conspiracy and (2) no one of consequence did it. (1) gives the conspiracy theorists a license to speculate and (2) spares our national institutions any undue embarrassment from speculation. All of this adds up to a fair sample of what is thought of as the genius of legislatures -- the distribution of the little bit to each side in any dispute, except of course the lonely one which asks only for common sense.