

Letters to the editor

'Secrecy' and the assassinations

With reference to *The Star's* recent editorial on the Assassination Committee ("Strange speculations," July 22), I can well understand your disagreement with the report's conclusions but think Mr. Belin has seriously misled you on the "secrecy" issue.

Incidentally, it is ironic that Belin raises this issue. He was a counsel to both the Warren Commission and the Rockefeller Committee. The Warren Commission held only one public hearing (of one witness, on the demand of the witness's lawyer, Mark Lane). The Rockefeller Committee held no public hearings and only issued a final report, with none of the evidence being released in back-up volumes. Our committee held 38 days of public hearings and has released almost all of the testimony in 27 volumes. A small amount of testimony has not been released simply for reasons of logistics — we lacked the clerk help to get it out.

The reason for hearing all testimony first in closed session was to comply with the House rule that testimony that might defame, degrade or incriminate a person must first be heard in executive session. This is the only way to avoid publicly presenting baseless and harmful allegations. Even without a House rule, it would have been irresponsible to do otherwise because of the nature of a congressional hearing as opposed to a trial. For example, in a congressional hearing hearsay evidence is admissible and the witness has no right of cross-examination.

We received testimony from all of the living members of the Warren Commission, the executive director of the commission and from its four

(I believe) chief counsels. Only Mr. Belin (he was not one of the chief counsels) refused to follow our committee's usual procedures relating to taking testimony. He demanded that he be heard in public session or not at all. We could hear only a limited and representative number of witnesses in public hearings because of time limitations. Mr. Belin played a more minor role on the Warren Commission staff, so that we chose to put on the major Warren Commission witnesses. We offered to take Mr. Belin's testimony and release it

publicly, but this was not satisfactory to him. I point out that the object of taking testimony is to get at the facts, not to provide a forum for a witness to argue his theory of the case.

In short, our committee conducted a very careful investigation, one careful of the rights of witnesses, but probably the least "secret" of any committee investigation in history.

On the acoustics evidence, we may have to wait on more examination of it for a final verdict. The evidence as it now appears seems to me unanswerable: 22 echoes coming to a point (when shots were fired from the school book depository and the grassy knoll) on a motorcycle located just where the acoustics experts said it would be (and there are photographs so locating it, contrary to Tom Wicker's recent column).

Since echoes reflect at known angles, there would have to be another Dealey Plaza somewhere else in the world that reflects these echoes on the Dallas police tape. In addition, the wave-forms of the acoustic tape have the unique signatures of supersonic bullets. They also match up with the reactions of Kennedy and Connally on the Zapruder film. The wave-forms on the tape exactly match the course of the motorcycle, with lower spikes on the graph when the shots came over the windshield before it turned into Dealey Plaza, and higher spikes after it turned into Dealey Plaza and the sound of the shots came from the side or rear of the motorcycle. (A duplicate experiment, using the same model motorcycle and transmitting equipment, confirmed this.) Photographs confirm this course of the motorcycle.

These are remarkable coincidences indeed. Lacking other evidence, it takes a greater leap of faith to disbelieve the acoustics evidence than to believe it.

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