

July 1966

My dear Mrs Meagher,  
Your patience with me is most exemplary  
and much appreciated. You have every reason  
to think my dilatory responses to your informative  
accounts of developments in the struggle to  
demolish the Warren Commission's findings result from  
lagging interest. But be assured it is not so. My  
concern is as zealous as ever. My reactions  
are slow where they should be swift because  
of fatigue, nagging illness, and difficulty in

putting thought to paper. I strive for clarity and logical development, and they come hard.

An overcritical demon rides my pen and punishes me with the necessity of frequent revision. Precise nuances of meaning and subtle connotative and imagist effects trouble me. I envy writers whose thought and form are born wedded in style. I envy fluency. It is a priceless gift.

When I think back over the course we have all trod in our various ways and revisions

The work of analysis and exposure wrought by many hands and minds, I  
am impelled, I should say constrained, to conclude its sum is the  
utter demolition of the Commission's case. The siege guns of the first genera-  
tion of critics, among whom may be included Joesten, Buchanan, Lane,  
Seavage, Trevor Roper, and others; and the sapping work of their followers  
in time - Feldman, Salandria, Weisberg, Fox, Penn Jones, and now Epstein -  
have left the case a shambles. Thus far, if we except the anonymous  
monstrosity created by Macdonald and the misbegotten offspring  
by Congressman Ford, no serious work in defense of the  
Commission has appeared apart from evanescent  
magazine pieces, but one may soon do so if

Mr. Jacob Cohen, completes the book on which  
he is working, according to the Nation of July 11.

This has been my view for some time. When I  
expressed it to Vincent Salandria he agreed. It  
is a thought which follows from a consideration  
of developments in our field as a broad stream  
composed of many affluents, now flowing slowly,  
even glacially, and again rippling over stones  
and other obstacles, as it makes its way toward  
the turbulent sea of truth. How far we

must travel, through what mountains of doubt, over what cliffs of controversy, and for what span of time, no one can now say or foretell. But the end is sure; "even the weariest river," Swinburne assures us, "winds somewhere out to sea."

A somewhat different view is implied in your review of Epstein's book in the July issue of *The Minority of One*, in which you wrote "Epstein ... has just shot down the Warren Report for all time ..."; it is a thought you seem to share with ~~Professor~~ Campbell

who made it the conclusion of his review of Inquest  
in the New Republic. ~~Epstein~~<sup>Campbell</sup>, a political journalist  
who writes on a variety of topical subjects, is  
probably unaware of the persistent work done by  
so many uncoordinated hands to overthrow the  
Commission's findings. But what of Sylvia Meagher?  
Does she really believe that all the work of  
Epstein's predecessors, including her own, was  
to no avail? Does she think Epstein is the  
lone marksman the Commission found Oswald to

be? That there was no "conspiracy" of common effort and combined result? Does she suggest, moreover, that Epstein's coup de grace makes unnecessary further research and polemic to overcome the Commission's brood of lies?

But did Epstein really bring down the Commission? What ammunition did he use? It seems to me he fired many shots two of which inflicted serious but hardly fatal wounds. Of stunning impact is his disclosure of the irreconcilable contradiction

between aspects of the autopsy and of the FBI reports of Dec. 9, 1963 and January 13, 1964 submitted to the President and forwarded by the White House to the Commission. And Damming is his indictment of the Commission for ignoring and failing to clarify the conflict.

But Epstein was not content to rest the matter at this point. Injudiciously he weakened his unassailable position by arguing for the validity of the FBI reports with the aim of proving the autopsy spurious. In doing so,



he went beyond the "primary subject" of his study which he defined as "not the assassination itself," but an attempt "to answer the question: How did the Commission go about searching for such an elusive and many-faced quarry as the truth?" Unfortunately, he did so badly.

On what does Epstein rely for his advocacy of the validity of the FBI reports?

He cites ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> consistency

with the evidence of the Kennedy clothing, which is convincing, but the misuse of which in the Report, ~~is~~ unremarked by Epstein, is germane to the primary subject of his book. Less persuasive is his attempt to prove the autopsy was altered. Incidentally, it never seems to have occurred to Epstein that an originally false autopsy ~~is~~ consistent with the instant secretion of the autopsy photographs and the burning of Humes' notes, whereas the idea of a true report later altered deepens the mystery.

surrounding the disappearance of the photographs.

Epstein's proof the autopsy was altered rests on references in the FBI reports to "medical examination of the President's body," which he takes to mean "only... the Bethesda autopsy; and to the assertions "There can be no doubt that the autopsy findings were known to the FBI when it prepared the Summary Report." In support of the latter claim, he wrote "Two FBI agents were present at the autopsy." And "the autopsy


report was forwarded to the FBI." It is obvious, I think, that the presence of two or twenty FBI or other agents at the autopsy in itself proves nothing. At best it can have only corroborative or supporting value. What the agents saw and what they testified might be significant. For example, Kellerman refers to a shoulder wound. But Epstein does not cite their testimony - why? Epstein says the autopsy was forwarded to the FBI. The basis for this assertion is his interview

with senior Counsel Francis W.H. Adams, who says Epstein, "came to Washington only a few days" during the entire investigation, "because his New York law firm needed his services," and who very nearly was asked by chief counsel Rawlin to resign. Whatever value Epstein's proof may have had from Adams was lost when he later told Jacob Cohen "he did not remember talking to Epstein, did not have Epstein's name in his calendar for July 8, 1965, the date Epstein claims he

interview took place and, most important, that he had no knowledge whatsoever of whether or not the FBI had seen the autopsy and photographs" (Nation, July 11, 1966, p. 46, col 2).

Oddly, Epstein ignores incontrovertible evidence of the untruth of the autopsy. I refer to the Zapruder motion picture film which demonstrates conclusively that the fatal shot which took Kennedy's life was fired from the side and front of his <sup>Presidential</sup> limousine, not from the rear as the autopsy states. Why he failed to cite this evidence I do not know.

↳ The irony of Epstein's position is that he may be entirely correct in what he claims. The pity of it is that his proof is as vulnerable as the Commission's case of a solo gunman. It rests on arbitrary statements and speculative deductions, a common and injurious fault of both the Commission and many of its critics.



A second grievous wound inflicted on the Commission by Epstein is his revelation of its internal life. I feel sure that much of what he wrote is true but his documentation is meager and his case rests essentially on verbal interviews and is subject to effective, even if untruthful, denial as has been demonstrated by the various hostile journalistic reviews of his book. In the end either he or someone else, will have to validate his charges. Publication of



Lebel's 26-page memorandum should be useful.

↳ On the whole, Epstein contributes support for the contention, long made by others, the assassination was accomplished by at least two gunmen, was a work of conspiracy. His contribution is corroborative, not definitive. His attack on the Commission is weakened by his calculated bias in favor of its finding of Oswald's guilt, <sup>by</sup> his studied refusal to pursue the implications of his conclusion.

of a conspiracy with an exploration of its source and aims because of the convenient and circumspect self imposed limitation of his subject ("not the assassination"); and by the gratuitous rationale he supplies for the Commission's crimes - that it was motivated by the need to serve the national interest which he calls political truth. Thereby he subscribes to the cynical credo of the incompatibility of truth and justice and of the governmental need to manipulate truth in the service of national policy.

For one who is concerned to establish what took place on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, when the administration and policy of the U.S. Government were changed by rifle fire, and who believes that truth must be served in order that individual and social justice eventually be done, Epstein's book is only a little helpful.

Hopefully

Thos. Stamm  
7/18/66