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CONGRESSMAN Reinecke: Doubts.

Hopelessness?

Reinecke: Nagging Doubts About The Kennedy Murder

By LIONEL ROLFE
Signal Staff Writer

Congressman Edwin Reinecke sat forward in his huge swivel chair Saturday afternoon, and with a bothered look spreading over his tanned jowls, he told a group of his constituents that their chances of finding out about the assassination of President John Kennedy from the federal government are slim.

Yet for more than an hour, it was evident as the conversation got deeper and deeper, the Congressman counted himself strongly among those who had more than nagging doubts about who murdered Kennedy that tragic day in Dallas' Dealey Plaza in 1963.

By the time it was all over, seven people, mostly from Valencia Valley, got up, shook his hand, listened to the Congressman reassure them he was "sincere" and "concerned" and walked outside the Van Nuys insurance building where he maintains his office.

They had even heard Reinecke use a phrase that is common among Warren Commission critics, except perhaps in a different context, "I want to save my country. How the hell are we going to save our country."

The group, led by Mr. and Mrs. Larry Van Duker, 19346 Cedarcreek St. in Saugus, were unsure what to make of the session. Reinecke had conveyed for them, perhaps unintentionally, a picture of their congress and government that was both shocking and terrifying.

Some among the group were depressed by what appeared to be the hopelessness of the situation. Others were strangely elated by Reinecke's unexpected candidness.

The Congressman had made the group of Warren Commission critics three promises. He said he would see what is involved in opening the national archives on the case; he would see what the chances are of opening a new investigation of the assassination, and he also said he would contact Governor Reagan to try and convince him to

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extradite three California men wanted by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison in his sensational Kennedy assassination trial.

But he had warned them that there was little chance of any of these promises becoming realities.

"Most people in the House have a lot of questions about the Warren Commission," he said. Commission, of course, was the presidential panel that had said the young President was murdered by a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

"The report just didn't leave the legislators filled with confidence."

But he also added that the dominant feeling amongst the Congress is why reopen the case? What difference would it make now to find out the Warren Commission was wrong? he said.

"John Kennedy, whom I never met, was a well-liked man, even by people who didn't agree with him," Reinecke said. "Most congressmen feel it would not be a proper way to honor him by reopening the case. It's past history.

When Reinecke had finished this speech, he was quickly called to task by the group.

"Doesn't it bother you that the men who killed our President may still be walking the streets?" Mrs. Karen N. Roberts, a pert Saugus housewife, asked him.

And Mrs. Zelma Stonefield, a neighbor down the street from the Van Duker's, piped in and asked Reinecke if Congress isn't interested in the truth, even if it hurts?

Reinecke quickly retorted, almost defensively, that "no man would not say he isn't interested in the truth. Any man would have to say he is interested in the truth, and mean it."

Nonetheless, he added, "If it had been my family, my brother who had been killed, I would leave no stone unturned to find out who did it."

Then, he uttered, almost as an afterthought, "as long as we have this current administration, we will probably never find out.

"It's just a matter of getting the administration to do it – it all comes back to the President. He's been asked before. But it's hopeless, they'll never do it.

"There may be political ramifications. I don't know what they would be, but with an election year, and the relationships being what they are between the Kennedy family and the White House..." and he drifted off here. "It could have enormous consequences."

Later he speculated that "The FBI probably knows the story of what happened, but they are not the ones who would release it. I have tremendous faith in the FBI."

The contingent had enumerated for Reinecke some of the documents now closed in the interests of "national security" in the National Archives.

Among them, they said they would like particularly to see two files entitled "Lee Oswald and the CIA" and "Jack Ruby and the CIA." Ruby was the man who murdered Oswald.

Reinecke replied that as far as he knew, the only person who could open the files in the National Archives – probably the best protected building in Washington, D.C., he added – would be President Johnson.

"You would think if they had nothing to hide, they would open the archives. Maybe they would with a GOP administration," he mused.

But Reinecke said that he doubted the CIA was in on the plot as Garrison has alleged for his upcoming trial later this month of New Orleans civic leader Clay Shaw.

"I don't know the CIA wasn't involved for a fact. It's just a faith. I have faith in the CIA like I do in the military establishment," Reinecke said by way of a concession. "Perhaps it's just because I want to believe the CIA wasn't involved."

Yet earlier Reinecke had told the group, in considerable detail, some of which he asked to be kept "off the record" of how the CIA, the government's super-secret sleuth organization works.

There is a secret committee in Congress – the name of which even most congressmen don't know – which presides over the CIA's budget, he said.

In fact, he added, even which congressmen are on that committee is a closely guarded secret.

"I happened to find out who one of them was, just by accident," he said. "I cannot give you his name."

He then assured the group that this particular Congressman, anyway, was an honorable and good man.

Reinecke, however, also hedged his bet by declaring that Garrison - who has received mostly bad press since he announced his startling investigation – "is a sincere man.

"I don't think he is a publicity seeker or a nut," he said. "He may have overblown the importance of the evidence he does have, but I think he is sincere."

Reinecke illustrated how difficult a time even congressmen have getting information when the administration doesn't want them to.

"Last Thursday I asked the Pentagon for a briefing on the Pueblo affair. They told me that had already given two briefings and would not give more.

"It was the first time I think the Pentagon ever refused to give a briefing.

"I asked one man who the Pentagon had said had been in on a briefing about it. He had never heard of it.

"The other man said he had been given a briefing. But he also said it wasn't a briefing, it was a phony front."

Reinecke said that likewise on the Warren Commission he had had some long Conversations with Jerry Ford, the Michigan representative who served on the Warren Commission.

"He said the commission members themselves just hadn't had time to listen to the evidence. They saw very little of it themselves. They had to rely on the word of experts.

"This is what bothers me about the Warren report. The fact is it wasn't put together by the commission, it was put together by second and third line officials.

"The concept of checks and balances is wholefully lacking," he said. "You won't get anything the White House doesn't want you to get."

Asked if he would introduce a bill to get a new investigation, he said he doubted that was the way it could be done.

"I think it would have to go to the Judiciary Committee, and that committee is headed by Manny Cellars," and here he chuckled a little grotesquely, explaining that Cellars, a New York Democrat, was a staunch administration man.

"I'm trying to be realistic. I don't think it can be done – and I agree with you it should be."

In summation, Reinecke asked the group to put together a recital of the questionable points in the Warren Commission. "I'll take these and see what I can do to get a new investigation," he said.

The group promised they would do this, and then one of the women asked him if "letters would help."

"It's past that point now," Reinecke said. "All the letters in the world wouldn't help.

This particularly bothered the local group.

"My God," said one, "isn't this a government that's supposed to belong to us, aren't we supposed to run it?"

Reinecke leaned back in his chair, and almost lugubriously pleaded with the group.

"You have to think realistically, of what you can accomplish. What is the old saying, God gave me only one life? If you can't do anything, what's the use of getting frustrated. One man can only try to do his best and no more than that."