

SCHOLAR UPHOLDS WARREN REPORT

Briton Says Its Critics Are
Reckless and Foolish

By ANTHONY LEWIS

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Dec. 13—A noted British scholar, in a comprehensive analysis of all the skeptical literature on the assassination of President Kennedy, concluded today that the skeptics had made no persuasive case.

John Sparrow, warden of All Souls College, Oxford, published an 18,000-word article in The Times Literary Supplement. Without accepting everything said by the commission under Chief Justice Earl Warren, he agreed with its finding that Lee Harvey Oswald alone had killed the President.

Mr. Sparrow examines in detail the books by such critics of the commission as Mark Lane, Prof. Richard Popkin, Edward Jay Epstein and Harold Weisberg. Without questioning their sincerity, he accuses them of foolishness and recklessness.

There is no need to suppose any concerted plan of action on the part of the critics or to

impute sinister motives to any of them," he says. "To do so would be to fall into their own besetting error."

In his detailed discussion of the many points raised by the skeptics, Mr. Sparrow makes a number of fresh observations about the situation in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Grassy Knoll Theory

One of the theories he considers—advanced by Mr. Lane and others—is that one or more assassins fired at President Kennedy from a grassy knoll while Oswald or still another person fired from the Texas

School Book Depository.

"If it is hard to believe that Oswald hit his target in two out of three quick shots it is harder still to suppose that two men, more than 100 yards apart and unable to see or communicate with each other, could have synchronized their fire so perfectly," Mr. Sparrow says.

And it is hardest of all to imagine that conspirators would have allowed the success of their plan to depend on such a feat of synchronization."

As for the grassy knoll itself, Mr. Sparrow argues that it is difficult to see how anyone could have fired repeatedly from this open area and "got clean away in full view of the public." He adds:

"It is really impossible to suppose that anyone planning an assassination would have placed him [a gunman] there for the purpose, in total ignorance of how many lookers-on, when the procession passed, would be standing nearby or perhaps actually occupying the place selected as his firing point."

Nearly Whole Bullet

Another conspiratorial charge derided by Mr. Sparrow is the one that a nearly whole bullet found in Parkland Hospital after the President and Gov. John Connally Jr. of Texas had been taken there—and identified by the commission as the killing bullet—must have been planted.

Mr. Sparrow calls it "a practical improbability" that a conspirator would have succeeded in reaching the hospital four miles away, in gaining access through its maze of wards and passages to the right place, in identifying the stretcher [where the bullet was found] and planting the bullet in it unobserved."

Mr. Sparrow, a former barrister, was named in 1952 to the position at All Souls, which is one of the most prestigious in British university life. He has long taken a close interest in the investigation of the assassination.

In general, Mr. Sparrow finds nothing in the many critical works on the Warren Commission that suggests the existence of any conspiracy to kill the President.

"If there really had been a conspiracy in 1963," he writes, "surely some trace of it, in a country where secrets are not easy to keep, would by now have come to light."

He says that Mr. Lane, the "limerant demonologist," has "for once performed a service to the truth."



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John Sparrow