

Jonathan Daniel wasted that wonderful speech he made to the World Press Institute so far as LOOK and Fletcher Knebel are concerned, and the late President Kennedy's aside to the New York TIMES, that the country would have been spared the disaster of the Bay of Pigs, had the press not constituted itself a fourth branch of the government, is forgotten before its lesson could be learned.

Ironically, it was in an attack on a book that questions the official account of the assassination of President Kennedy that his wise counsel was ignored. Edward Jay Epstein wrote the book, "Inquest". Viking published it. LOOK and Mr. Knebel do not like it. It is my "competition", but I think it is important.

It is important because Mr. Epstein interviewed members of the President's Commission on the assassination and senior members of its staff. In their own words he documents their misgivings and apprehensions about what they did and errors they made. A viable and honorable attack upon the book requires proof of misquotation or misinterpretation. This Mr. Knebel does not give. Until it is shown that Epstein misused what he was told, all the literary gnat-straining serves only to fortify his central thesis, that the staff of the Commission knew it was doing wrong even while it was erring.

The book deals with one of the major events in our history, the inquiry into the assassination of an American President. If there is any subject that requires a full, open and impartial airing, this certainly is it; yet the assassination of President Kennedy did not get it. The "Whitewash", as my book terms the inquiry, was not full, not open, and not impartial. In his own way, Mr. Epstein documents this, and his documentation survives Mr. Knebel's assault, which really ignores it.

Viking is to be commended for its courage (no matter how late they found it), for printing the book, and Mr. Epstein for writing it; for it is clear that there has been nothing that reasonable people can call an investigation of this horrible crime.

Imagine! A President of the United States has foully murdered and questions remain to be asked and answered, and he who asks the questions is berated for it! Can there be a time when such questions must not be asked? Must the questions still not be answered? Is it somehow evil to seek to resurrect the national honor, to belatedly right a wrong, or to seek assassins if they are free? Is it somehow irresponsible or reprehensible?

Anything that affects a President affects every American. He is not only the embodiment of the power and majesty of the country, he is the symbol of us all. Can there be an unsolved Presidential murder with succeeding Presidents remaining free, with the institution safe, with the country secure?

Or is it that Mr. Knebel has had too much of the "Night of Camp David"? Is it wrong for Mr. Epstein to deal with fact about the alleged investigation of a Presidential murder and right for Mr. Knebel to get rich on a fiction across whose cover is emblazoned the horrifying question, "WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WENT STARK - RAVING MAD?"

What happens to a United States whose President is killed and the murder has no satisfactory inquest, Mr. Knebel? This is Epstein's question, as it is mine and that of thousands of other Americans.

It is a question he asks as non-fiction. It is not answered with fiction.

LOOK has yet to face it.

What happens, LOOK?