

February 25, 1964

PC9

TO THE STAFF

The President's Commission made the following announcement today:

"Within twenty-four hours of the assassination of President Kennedy, Lee H. Oswald was formally charged with his murder. On the following day, while in the custody of the local authorities, he, too, was shot to death, before having an opportunity to make any defense that he might have had, or even to consult with a lawyer of his own choice concerning the charge against him. That there was reasonable cause to believe he was the assassin is unquestioned, but he did not have the opportunity to meet the accusation according to the American way of justice.

"More than two months of marshalling the facts available have not caused the Commission to doubt the reasonableness of the action of the authorities in charging Oswald, but his guilt was not proved at a trial, and there is still much evidence to be received and evaluated. There can be no trial because Oswald is dead. The Commission is not a prosecuting agency, but it must eventually report its conclusion as to the facts concerning the person or persons responsible for the death of the President.

"The Commission is of the opinion that some independent lawyer should be assigned the task of examining every facet of the case pointing toward the involvement of Lee H. Oswald, in his absence, and in fairness to his family, advise the Commission in that regard so that it may not


*W. J. Brennan*

overlook any proper consideration in determining that the test of truth has been met in accordance with American principles of justice.

"The Commission has accordingly requested Mr. Walter E. Craig, President of the American Bar Association, to personally undertake this task with the assistance of such associates as he may himself choose. Mr. Craig has accepted this responsibility as a public service. There will be made available to him all the materials available to the Commission and its staff.

"No stone will be left unturned in faithfully reporting all the facts surrounding the assassination of our late President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy."

This action by the Commission does not relieve any of us of our obligation to continue to examine every aspect of this matter pointing toward the involvement of Lee H. Oswald with the greatest care.



J. Lee Rankin  
General Counsel