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FACE THE NATION

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GUEST: HONORABLE HALE BOGGS (Louisiana)
House Democratic Whip

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MR. HERMAN: Mr. Boggs, the recent public opinion polls show that 30 per cent of the American people think there is something missing in the Warren Commission Report and are not completely satisfied with it. Do you think that is a serious enough area of doubt in the public mind so that something should be done about it?

MR. BOGGS: Well, frankly, in light of all of the books that have been written and all of the newspaper articles, I am surprised that more than thirty per cent don't think so. I think, however, that what the Warren Commission did was a very comprehensive job.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS Washington, in color, FACE THE NATION, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview, with Representative Hale Boggs, of Louisiana, the House Democratic Whip.

Mr. Boggs will be questioned by Richard Harwood, of The Washington Post; CBS News Correspondent George Herman, who will lead the questioning; and CBS News Correspondent David Schoumacher.

We shall resume the interview with Congressman Boggs in just a moment.

MR. HERMAN: Mr. Boggs, do I gather from your answer a moment ago that you feel the situation is such that nothing needs be done and the pendulum of public opinion will swing back by itself without any further investigation?

MR. BOGGS: No, Mr. Herman, I didn't. I didn't say that. I said that I had complete confidence in the Commission report. As far as I am concerned, as a member of that Commission, if new evidence can be presented then it should be looked at objectively. The only thing that I have seen that has been presented in all of these books, essays, speeches, comments, has been the fact that the Commission did not look at the x-rays of the President's body made at the autopsy. Of course the members of the Commission themselves are not doctors. Looking at them, just looking at x-rays would not prove anything to me. I don't know how to read medical x-rays. We brought before the Commission the man who performed the autopsy. We examined him in great detail.

Now, if it would please anyone, if it would help to clarify any doubts that may exist

in the minds of objective people, then I would say that if the Attorney General or some appropriate authority wants to appoint a totally objective group to -- of doctors and others -- to look into these x-rays, maybe it should be done. But I would try to dis-associate myself from those who are making these comments for gain, for notoriety, for profit rather than those who have legitimate questions in their minds.

I might say that all of the questions that I have seen raised so far were raised before the Commission.

MR. HARWOOD: Mr. Boggs, did you agree with the Commission's general finding that it was very likely that one bullet struck President Kennedy and Governor Connally?

MR. BOGGS: The language that we used in the Commission Report -- and I have it here; I reviewed it just a few minutes ago -- we use the word "persuasive." And the evidence is very persuasive, Mr. Harwood. To begin with, we examined very closely the clothes that President Kennedy wore on that dreadful day. We discovered that there was a bullet hole

right here in the collar, right where the tie is tied, which indicated that a missile penetrated his body. We knew that one other missile had hit his skull and had been the fatal one, that killed the President. It was very obvious that this missile had come from the rear, the one that penetrated his tie. And it was -- to use the word -- it was persuasive that this bullet had also penetrated Governor Connally.

Now, we said in the Report that we were trying to prove by negatives. The idea that you can prove a case beyond any shadow of a question in a situation like this is utterly impossible. But we examined every conceivable witness. We had about 500 witnesses before the Commission. There must have been -- well, there were many millions of words of testimony, twenty-six volumes of them all together. The Report is 900 pages long. I have it here. And, assuming for the moment that Governor Connally is right, that he was struck by a bullet other than the bullet which penetrated the body of President Kennedy, I think is still very well established that all of the bullets came from

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the rear, which is a significant point.

MR. SCHOUMACHER: Mr. Boggs, you say -- rather the Commission says in its report that this persuasive evidence, in any event, that this wasn't necessary to any essential finding of the Commission. And you have just said that again. But, according to the film, isn't it true that two bullets could not have struck the men and have come from that same rifle, that even though they may have come from behind, that that then meant that there was a second gun being fired at the motorcade?

MR. BOGGS: No, I don't think the films prove that. I think the films have to be viewed in light of the whole context of evidence before the Commission. To begin with, the notion that any member of the Commission or any member of the staff of the Commission sought to do anything except establish the truth is one that I reject offhand, as I am sure that all of you gentlemen do. We conducted an exhaustive research into everything that transpired on that day in November, including the life of Oswald from the time he was born. And everything, every scintilla of evidence

So?

pointed up to the fact that this man was
what Mr. Hoover called a "loner." He was
a man who didn't have associates, who was
not conspiratorial, who didn't bring in other
people. In looking at the assassination, you,
must examine Oswald's life and his character
and how he lived, aside from all the physical
evidence. And all of the physical evidence
points to the fact that the bullets came from
the rear.

And the members of the Commission went
to Dallas and went to the Book Depository.
I sat there where Mr. Oswald sat and I raised
the rifle that he used to my own shoulder. I
looked through the sight that he had. The
idea that you had to be an expert marksman,
for instance, is one that I reject. This car
was moving this way, away from the building.
Almost any marksman, using a telescopic sight,
could have performed that dastardly deed. So
these are the things that have to be considered
in any appraisal of the matter.

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MR. SCHOUMACHER: Mr. Boggs, in talking
about this single bullet -- and I just proposed
the question to you that if it wasn't one bullet

it had to be two and therefore there had to be more than one gun. And the only answer really you have given here is that Lee Harvey Oswald generally was a loner, which doesn't seem to me, at least --

MR. BOGGS: No, no. I think you misunderstood me. I said that you must examine all of the facts and the facts do indicate that he was a loner. But, in addition to that, all of the evidence -- all of the evidence before the Commission shows that the bullets came from the rear, which indicates that they all came from Oswald's gun. None of these people have said that a bullet came from the front. This is a significant point.

MR. HERMAN: But the discrepancy that does exist, which was pointed out, or which is claimed to exist -- I don't say myself that it does exist because I don't think anybody can -- but it is claimed that when you look at the Zapruder movie film, made by Abraham Zapruder, an amateur photographer, when you look at this film of the President's death and you check the point where the President is visibly hit, you check the point where the President is visibly

hit again and you check the point where Governor Connally and his wife think he was hit, that comes at a point such that no one could have fired the gun those three times.

MR. BOGGS: Well, now wait just a minute, We are talking in terms of split seconds --

MR. HERMAN: Indeed. Fractions of seconds.

MR. BOGGS: -- fractions of seconds. And these determinations are made by people who in many cases are something less than expert. Merriman Smith, who was one of the witnesses to the assassination, wrote a very exhaustive piece about this very matter in last week's Washington Post. He goes into these very issues that you are talking about.

Now, every person that has had anything to do with the investigation, Mr. Hoover of the FBI, Governor Connally, who was there -- the members of the Commission have all said that we have examined every conceivable piece of testimony. All I am saying to you is this, that we established as best that competent men can establish that Oswald assassinated President Kennedy and also shot Governor Connally. Now,

some evidence!

if there is any further evidence that can be turned up, I am for developing it. But the point I make is that the idea that the Commission didn't make a thorough and exhaustive and objective examination is one that I reject.

MR. HERMAN: Well, let me speak to that point then, of thorough and exhaustive -- Mr. Epstein, in his book, does considerable investigation. I believe he interviewed you in person.

MR. BOGGS: No. He did talk with me on the telephone.

MR. HERMAN: He does go at considerable length into the question of the exhaustiveness and the thoroughness -- and he is inclined to think that it was rather an "absentee" Commission. Was this a hasty, slipshod job, as some people have charged, done mostly by the staff and --

MR. BOGGS: He just couldn't be less accurate. I spent more time working on this Commission than anything I have worked on in my life. And, if I say so myself, I am inclined to work pretty hard. Many members of the

Commission, of course, didn't attend every single session, although the minutes there are not completely accurate in that they only reflected attendance if you were there when the session opened. If, for instance, a member of Congress -- which is Senator Cooper or Congressman Ford -- came in the interim, it was not shown in the minutes. But, in addition to that, every scintilla of evidence was recorded and each day we received a copy of the transcript. And many nights I stayed up until very late at night reading those transcript. I read every word of that testimony and I think all the other members of the Commission did.

Now, this volume, this is the report. It is 900 pages long. And I can tell you that each member of the Commission worked on this report. We worked on it diligently and long and hard. I take great exception to Mr. Epstein's assertion that the members of this Commission did not work hard and diligently because they did. I was there. I was an eye-witness. I was a participant.

MR. SCHOUUMACHER: Mr. Boggs, you carry tremendous weight in the House. Senator Russell

carries tremendous weight in the Senate.

And without at least the tacit approval of you two gentlemen, it is unlikely that there will be another investigation, authorized by Congress. Do you have any doubt at all that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, for personal reasons, murdered President Kennedy?

MR. BOGGS: None whatsoever. I am totally convinced of it.

MR. HERMAN: Would you actively oppose, if other persons were in favor of it, would you actively oppose a re-investigation, say, by Congress, without the introduction of new evidence, simply going over the same old ground that you plowed in the Commission?

MR. BOGGS: Well, I would not actively oppose it. I would be for -- if any new evidence exists, for it being brought out. The Attorney General -- remember, the Warren Commission has been dismissed. We have finished our work. We were formally terminated by the President who appointed us. Now if there is new evidence, certainly it should be gone into. But, remember this, Mr. Herman, there are many people who would rather believe

that there was a conspiracy. This is unfortunately human nature. I come from Louisiana. We had an assassination there some years ago, Senator Long, Senator Huey Long was assassinated. And I think the evidence pretty well established, very well established who assassinated Senator Long. But even now there are people who have a contrary theory. The assassination of President Lincoln is still a matter of conjecture on the part of people many places in this country and elsewhere in the world. And outside the United States people find it very difficult to believe that there wasn't a conspiracy, because they have lived with conspiracies. They inherited conspiracies from the days of the kings and the monarchies and the struggle for power when someone would conspire to kill someone else. The notion that a loner could do this is one that many people elsewhere in the world just can't accept. But, believe me, I have not seen anything, read anything, or heard anything that has changed my mind.

MR. HARWOOD: Mr. Boggs, one of the

objectives or, I believe it was Chief Justice Warren, was to write the report in language that every member of the Commission could agree to.

MR. BOGGS: May I say to you, Mr. Harwood, that we all wrote the report --

MR. HARWOOD: All right.

MR. BOGGS: --- jointly.

MR. HARWOOD: My question is, though, that at one point a draft of your summary paragraph was prepared and supposedly you and Senator Russell and Senator Cooper dissented from some key clause or sentence in that paragraph. Would you explain what that dissent was about?

MR. BOGGS: Well, I would say, trying to recollect all of the details of the report, 900 pages long, that there were numerous places -- I don't want to use the word "numerous" but there were several places where among the seven Commissioners there was some disagreement about language. I know at no time of any disagreement on the fundamental conclusion.

MR. HARWOOD: Didn't you dissent on

the single bullet theory?

MR. BOGGS: We -- I don't like to say I dissented or anyone else dissented. We use the word "persuasive," because obviously we cannot prove that.

MR. HARWOOD: Well, it seemed that the film certainly would raise a question.

MR. BOGGS: I have admitted that.

MR. SCHOUUMACHER: Mr. Boggs, would you say that at this moment --

MR. BOGGS: And the question -- let me make this point -- the question was what is in the Commission report, not by Mr. Epstein or these other people. We are the ones who raised the question. We went into it. We examined it. But Governor Connally was the one who originally raised it. He says that the Commission report is entirely accurate.

MR. SCHOUUMACHER: Would you say that an investigation at this time would do more harm than good, that is, it would only explore the same old question?

MR. BOGGS: Well, again, I don't like to say anything would do more harm than good. But if the investigation, if the objective of

the investigation is to pursue new evidence, that is one thing. If the objective is to answer some of the things that have been raised up to the present, I would say that I would have grave questions about it.

MR. HERMAN: Let me give this --

MR. BOGGS: Except for the autopsy or x-rays.

MR. HERMAN: Let me give this a slightly different turn. You have considerable experience with criminology and legal affairs in your long term in and out of Congress. Do you think that Lee Harvey Oswald could have been convicted under the laws of your state by the evidence that you saw?

MR. BOGGS: Oh, no question about it.

MR. HERMAN: The evidence was legally binding? None of it would have been thrown out by constitutionality rules and so forth?

MR. BOGGS: I don't think there is any question about the fact that he could have been convicted of first-degree murder.

MR. HERMAN: Okay. We have a number of questions we want to ask you on another series of subjects and we will resume the questioning