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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Members present at this point: The Chairman, Representative Ford, and Mr. McCloy.)

The Chairman. The Commission will be in order.

Rep. Ford. Mr. Chief Justice, and members of the Commission, my comments at this point concern a number of news stories that have recently appeared in the press throughout the country. I don't know where these writers have obtained their information. I don't know what their reports are based on.

However, the article in the Christian Science Monitor of a day or so ago is rather typical.

It says, in effect, and I quote -- "Commission members have come to the conclusion that President Kennedy's assassination was the act of a lone individual. There is no evidence that he was working in any way as an agent of a foreign government."

Now, I would like to make at least one point.

First. Any statement that Commission members have come to this or that conclusion is obviously false, because the Commission has not discussed these matters as a Commission to my knowledge. I don't like being quoted when I have not made any final judgment.

And the Commission as a whole, as far as I know, has made no final judgment.

Now, the staff of the Commission, individually or collectively, may have come to certain conclusions such as this. However, the

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staff, individually or collectively, have no right to make such implications to the press, nor has any Federal agency, nor has any individual member of the Commission.

I regretfully say that if these news stories persist, I possibly have no other alternative than the obligation to express to the press some or all of the views that I have stated here.

The Chairman. Well, Congressman, may I say, so far as I am concerned, I share your feelings exactly. I personally cannot account for any of these stories. I have talked to no one from the Christian Science Monitor or to anybody from any of the newspapers about this matter.

And I have urged Mr. Rankin, and I am sure he has urged the staff, not to discuss them either.

I am inclined to think that much of this comes from thin air and from speculation.

I have no knowledge of anybody talking to anybody.

I, myself, have had no conference with any newspaperman on any of these subjects -- although I have seen them in the press.

I don't know how, however, we can let them bait us into making some statements that would deny it. That is my only problem. We don't get any place by denying that certain things are the facts. If I knew that anybody from the Commission or the staff has been discussing these things with the press, I would feel very badly about it. But I don't have any belief that they have.

Rep. Ford. I have read these articles, Mr. Chief Justice,

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that appeared in not only the Christian Science Monitor but the New York Times and a multitude of other newspapers throughout the country. And most of them, if not all, start out or contain in the substance of the article a Commission source, or a source close to the Commission.

The Chairman. A spokesman for the Commission. I saw that just a couple of days ago.

Rep. Ford. Now, I am implicating no one. And I deplore, as I am sure you know, these articles, I deplore it for two reasons -- or at least one major one.

By these kinds of articles, they are creating an atmosphere throughout the country that will, I think, create a predetermined public opinion of what we may or may not have come to.

(At this point, Mr. Dulles entered the hearing room.)

Rep. Ford. In my judgment, somebody somewhere is planting or leaking these stories. And I must go back, if I might, to a letter that I think you received on behalf of the Commission early in December where, as I recall, Mr. Katzenbach wrote and asked, among other things, one, if the Commission would release a statement to the effect that there was no foreign involvement, there was no conspiracy, or in the alternative that we as a Commission would authorize the Department of Justice to make such a release.

I think the Commission used good judgment in denying both

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requests.

But I happen to know that subsequent to that meeting, where we made the decision that I think was right, both the Associated Press and the United Press, on the same day, with the same dateline, had stories that in effect are the same stories that are now appearing.

Now, I have checked a little bit with some of my newspaper friends, and they tell me that any time AP and UP have a story with the same dateline, there is no doubt that it was a leaked story by a government official, or by anybody else who was involved.

And ever since that time, and in a growing intensity, and in growing volume now, there is this kind of newspaper propaganda with the same intent in mind.

I have some personal conclusions, but I cannot prove them, so I don't want to make any allegations.

But it disturbs me.

As I said in my prepared statement, I want no newspaperman nor some individual or Federal agency implying that I have made a decision or that the Commission has made a decision when the facts are I have come to no specific conclusion yet, and as far as I know the Commission itself has come to no such conclusion.

The Chairman. That is right.

I saw two or three days ago a short article -- it wasn't a very big one -- which said that the Commission was split on the question

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of whether Oswald was the sole perpetrator of this crime or not.

Did the rest of you see that?

Mr. Dulles. I saw an article to that effect.

The Chairman. Yes.

They said that the Commission was split on the question of whether he was the lone perpetrator of it or not.

Rep. Ford. Was that UP or AP?

The Chairman. Really, I cannot tell you. I don't recall.

Rep. Ford. I didn't see it.

The Chairman. But it was in the local press here. It was either in the Washington Post or the Washington Star.

Mr. Redlich. Also, in the New York Times, I believe.

The Chairman. I have no idea where that could possibly have come from.

Rep. Ford. I don't, either.

Well, these are disturbing to me. And I am sure, from what you said, and from what I know you have said before, they are disturbing to you.

The Chairman. They certainly are.

Rep. Ford. But if they are going to increase in tempo and in number, at least until we make a decision, they are inaccurate.

The Chairman. No question about it.

Rep. Ford. I think the Commission ought to at least think about at this point at least making a statement to the effect that,

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one, no decision has been made.

The Chairman. That is right.

Rep. Ford. And perhaps that is enough. At least that would nullify the guts of what most of these stories include. It would undercut the speculation which is rampant at this point.

The Chairman. I am just wondering if that would give furtherance to the statement, though, that we are split on it.

Rep. Ford. This is a matter of judgment. But I think it is something that ought to be --

The Chairman. I don't know.

Rep. Ford. That is why I brought it up.

The Chairman. I think it is good to bring those things up. We ought to discuss them.

Jack, what do you have to say about this?

Mr. McCloy. I am absolutely astounded at this spate of articles, and where they come from. They must come from some place very close to this Commission.

Mr. Dulles. The long one in the Times in particular.

Mr. McCloy. Yes -- "A spokesman for the Commission." It says as much as that. And then in respect of the trend of the testimony that we have had, they probably are 80 or 85 percent accurate.

I don't know how many times I have been stopped in New York and people saying, "I see, Jack, what your Commission is going to come out with. The report has already been written for you."

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hasn't it?"

It was in Newsweek and World Report -- not Newsweek -- U.S. News and World Report, and this long article in the New York Times.

I think the thing has gotten to a point where I believe the Commission should say we have come to no conclusions on this thing yet, that the articles to the effect that conclusions of the Commission have already been found totally inaccurate; that we do hope to have a report within a relatively short period of time in which our conclusions will be stated, but they are now merely in the process of formulation.

The Chairman. I don't see any objection to that -- if it is desired to say that.

Rep. Ford. I only brought it up because these stories have bothered me, because they are, in effect, preempting what we may or may not say.

The Chairman. Yes.

The only thing I can say is this: There isn't anything in the articles that you have mentioned that were not in the newspapers months ago. But I can see that as the time gets shorter and it looks as though we are getting to the point where we are going to file a report, that these things, they are starting to speculate about them more and more as time goes on until it comes out.

Now, that is one possibility for these things.

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There was a time there when we met here and took testimony and there was absolutely nothing in the press. But now they do know that we are getting down to the time when we must make a report, and I suppose maybe some city editor says, "Well, get what you can on this thing," and they start speculating on it. They do those things.

And that might have something to do with it. I don't know.

Rep. Ford. But you see the trouble now, Mr. Chief Justice, is as we get down to the wire, they, by their own initiative or otherwise, are putting the imprimatur of the Commission, when they say a source close to the Commission, or a spokesman for, or something else.

The Chairman. That is right.

Rep. Ford. Three months ago it was pure speculation. But now they are adding an unofficial stamp to what they are writing.

The Chairman. Yes.

Rep. Ford. I brought it up because I feel very strongly about it, and I think whatever the Commission decides, I will go along with.

But when we see this practically every day now, and in responsible and highly regarded newspapers, I think it has gotten to a point where something ought to be done.

Mr. McCloy. I agree that something should be done. I think we ought to put a statement out.

The Chairman. Well, Jack has suggested something. Suppose we

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made a statement to the effect that the taking of testimony is nearing an end, that the Commission is giving consideration now to the report that it hopes to write in the near future, that it has made no final conclusions as yet, in fact has not discussed final conclusions as a Commission.

Rep. Ford. That couldn't be better.

The Chairman. If that is agreeable to everyone, we will put that out after this meeting.

Rep. Ford. I think it clears the air, and I think it is the kind of action that will, I hope, put to rest some of these speculative stories.

The Chairman. Yes, I do, too.

Professor, do you have that?

Mr. Redlich. I have been writing it down, yes.

Mr. McCloy. Include the note that we are continuing to take some testimony.

The Chairman. Yes -- nearing completion, I said.

Mr. McCloy. Until you complete the testimony, you cannot have a final conclusion.

The Chairman. That is right.

Rep. Ford. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. All right. We will see if this won't stop it.

I hope so.

Mr. McCloy. I do feel in times past the Department of Justice has put out some material that they have -- there has been something

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that has moved out from there. But I don't know that it has been done recently.

The Chairman. Well, if you will remember, at the beginning we had very great concern about the things coming out day by day before they came to us even in this connection. But for a long time, we saw none of that. I can't account for these other things.

Very well.

That statement will be issued immediately at the conclusion of this session.

Gentlemen, is there anything further before we hear these witnesses?

All right, Mr. Specter, you may call your witnesses in, and we will swear them in one group, after you have stated the purpose of the meeting.

(Whereupon, at 2:10 p.m., the Commission recessed, to go into further business.)

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