

Lowenstein Says Year's Study of Evidence Shows

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Former representative Allard K. Lowenstein said yesterday that a year-long examination of the evidence bearing on the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy had led him to conclude that Sirhan B. Sirhan had not fired the fatal bullet.

But Mr. Lowenstein and Paul Schrade, a former Kennedy associate who was among five persons wounded when the Senator was fatally shot June 5, 1968, the night of his victory in the California Presidential primary, emphasized that they were not proposing that Mr. Sirhan had been part of a larger conspiracy. They also said they were prepared to suggest who might have inflicted Mr. Kennedy's fatal wounds.

"I reject conspiracy theories until the evidence is in," Mr. Schrade, a former United Auto-

mobile Workers official, told a news conference at the Statler Hilton Hotel that was called to make public some of Mr. Lowenstein's findings.

"We're asking the questions and we want the answers," he said.

Mr. Lowenstein, who served from 1968 to 1971 as a Democratic Representative from Nassau County, said he based his conclusion chiefly on the following points arising from testimony at the 1969 murder trial at which Mr. Sirhan was convicted, and related evidence:

• "Apparent ballistic differences" between one bullet recovered from Senator Kennedy's body and another removed from William Weisel, a television producer who was also wounded in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, that cast doubt on the

official conclusion that all the bullets fired that night came from Mr. Sirhan's eight-shot, .22-caliber revolver.

• Discrepancies between bystanders' recollections that Mr. Sirhan was from 2 to 10 feet from Mr. Kennedy when the Senator was shot and the conclusions of Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi, the Los Angeles County Coroner, and DeWayne A. Wolfer, a Police Department criminologist, that Mr. Kennedy was shot from a distance of one to six inches.

'Enormous Significance'

• Three bullet holes in the ceiling, plus the fact that seven bullets were recovered from Mr. Kennedy and the five other victims, which Mr. Lowenstein said suggested that more than eight shots were fired that night.

"I do not believe on the basis

of the evidence in its present state," Mr. Lowenstein asserted, "that Sirhan Sirhan is the murderer of Robert Kennedy."

"I don't view this as a matter of historical curiosity but as a question of enormous significance for the country."

He said that Los Angeles County officials, including Joseph Busch, the district attorney, had declined his request to reopen the Sirhan investigation and that he was prepared "to meet with other authorities and appeal to them to take these steps."

Mr. Lowenstein and Mr. Schrade called for a refiring of the Sirhan gun, which has not been discharged since it was test-fired by the police following the Kennedy shooting, so that new bullets could be compared with those taken from Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Weisel.

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Sirhan Was Not Assassin of Kennedy

They also called for a panel of independent ballistics experts to assess evidence already compiled in the case as well as the results of refiring, and for a radioactive examination of the Kennedy and Weisel bullets to determine the likelihood that both were fired by Mr. Sirhan.

No Innocent Bystander

Mr. Lowenstein said he did not mean to suggest that Mr. Sirhan was "an innocent bystander improperly imprisoned," and that the young Jordanian immigrant "was in the pantry shooting a .22 revolver at the time in question and persons were struck by bullets that he fired."

He asserted that the Sirhan case had never been "tried on its merits," in part because Mr. Sirhan's lawyers has conceded

that he had killed Senator Kennedy.

But he noted that Grant Cooper, who headed the defense team, had recently said "that had he known during the trial what he has since learned, he would have conducted a different defense."

Although Mr. Lowenstein said after the news conference that he knew "a lot more" about the circumstances surrounding the assassination than he had thus far disclosed, his elaboration yesterday consisted mainly of interpreting facts already made public in other forums.

Mr. Lowenstein, who said he was returning to Los Angeles this week to continue his inquiries, was asked what prompted him to become involved in such an investigation

nearly seven years after the assassination.

He replied that he had been moved to do so by the "recalcitrance of the authorities" to make all of the Sirhan evidence public, and that in the light of Watergate, "the country now understands what it didn't before—that things that 'never could have occurred' have occurred."

"We must take these questions to the public," he said.

Sickness Costs Work Days

United States wage earnings lost 297 million work days annually because of acute illness, according to the health insurance institute. This averages out to about four days idleness a year for each worker, United Press International reports.

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