

STATEMENT OF ALLARD K. LOWENSTEIN AND PAUL SCHRADE

December 15, 1974 *at NYC press conference*

We are very troubled by questions that have arisen during our extensive inquiries into the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. If these questions are not dealt with satisfactorily, the suspicion must increase that the official version of the assassination is defective.

This is an issue which we raise publicly with great reluctance, and only after more than a year of efforts to get explanations of serious gaps and inconsistencies from the authorities. We had hoped that the authorities would be able to provide such explanations, or, failing that, would themselves want to reopen the case until answers could be found. Neither of these responses has been forthcoming, however, a fact which has disappointed us and added to our determination to pursue these questions wherever the answers may lead.

The three most troubling problems are each separately disturbing. In combination, they are almost overwhelming:

1. How could only eight bullets have caused all the bullet holes found after the shooting stopped?
2. How can the eyewitness testimony about the location of Sirhan and his gun be reconciled with the autopsy report?
3. How can the apparent ballistic differences in the bullets found in Senator Kennedy's neck and William Weisel's stomach be reconciled with the notion that all bullets were fired from the same gun?

Ancillary to these problems is a shroud of additional confusing items. These might be unimportant if the central questions were resolved, but as matters now stand they add to our misgivings and cannot be dismissed.

The authorities insist that Sirhan's conviction closed the issues we address today. They hope, however, that no one will remember that Sirhan's case has never been tried on its merits. Sirhan's lawyers conceded that he had killed Senator Kennedy, but argued that he be spared the death penalty on the grounds of diminished mental capacity. Thus, the Sirhan trial did not deal at all with evidentiary problems. Grant Cooper, the chief defense attorney, now says that had he known during the trial what he has since learned, he would have conducted a different defense. And Sirhan's current attorney is planning to seek a legal remedy for his client.

But our concern is not a narrow legal one. Sirhan Sirhan was not an innocent bystander improperly imprisoned. He was in the pantry shooting a .22 revolver at the time in question, and five persons were struck by bullets that he fired.

We believe, however, that the health of the Republic depends on finding out the whole truth about events that change it's fortunes so profoundly. That is why we had hoped the authorities, confronted with vital questions they could not answer themselves, would have wanted to do everything possible to get to the bottom of the matter.

That has not been their reaction, however, and we must now take these questions to the public. We believe everyone who becomes aware of the difficulty of squaring the evidence with the official version will join us in insisting that answerable questions be answered honestly, and that scientific evidence be assessed scientifically and impartially.

In this connection, the following steps could be easily taken, and would help immensely in dealing with serious evidentiary problems:

1. Test fire H53725, the Sirhan gun.
2. Convene an independent group of ballistics experts to conduct a new and full study of the bullet ballistics and wound ballistics; and to study and report on questions which have been raised about both.
3. Administer Neutron Activation Tests to determine the metallic composition of all bullets and fragments of bullets that were recovered.
4. Release (or conduct) a trajectory study to explain how bullets fired from Sirhan's gun could have caused all the bullet damage in the pantry.
5. Release the 10 volumes of the official report of "Special Unit Senator" and permit reasonable access to other important items of evidence.

If the authorities in Los Angeles do not undertake these limited and reasonable steps at once, independent parties must press other suitable forums to continue the investigation. We will ourselves participate in this effort, and have been assured of support from officials, journalists, and other people in responsible positions. We welcome the decision of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences to review the ballistics evidence at its convention in Chicago in February.

For many years we were so convinced of the indisputable truth of the "lone assassin" view that we refused even to think about, much less examine, other possible explanations of odd circumstances that arose with some of the assassinations. The nation is fortunate that some public-spirited citizens were less closed-minded than we, and kept up a drumbeat of questions and alternative theories.



We offer no answers today - only questions. Nor have we any prejudice or preconception about what may ultimately be found to be the whole truth about the assassination of Senator Kennedy. We acknowledge our long-term error in dismissing peremptorily the possibility of conspiracy when assassinations occurred. Official theories of "lone assassins" must be tested as other theories, even though we, like most Americans, have found it more comfortable to accept the official versions.

In short, facts must be determined free of any dogged pre-commitment to any theory. The circumstances of the Robert Kennedy assassination must be re-examined by disinterested, qualified people if doubts raised by the hard evidence are ever to be resolved. The best way to resolve these doubts is to implement immediately the measures we have suggested.