

World Puzzles Over

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Is it a thoughtful challenge to the Warren Report on President Kennedy's assassination? Or is it simply a make-money gimmick?

That is the film world's puzzle over a new film, "Executive Action," which is billed as "probably the most controversial film of our time." Audiences in New York and Los Angeles will be able to judge for themselves when the film opens Wednesday.

Although it was made on a modest budget "Executive Action" is no shoestring film. It stars Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan and Will Geer, and was created by three topflight film makers — producer Edward Lewis, director David Miller and writer Dalton Trumbo. The cost was held down because all worked for minimum salaries except Lewis, who was paid nothing.

Lewis told how he became involved in the project:

"Donald Sutherland (the actor) originally developed the property with Mark Lane — author of 'Rush to Judgment' — and Donald Freed over a two-year period. Sutherland got turned down by every company in town, and I bought it from him.

"It seemed to me that this story offered a terrific chance to put across the idea that we need to be reported to on official matters. I feel that we have not been told the whole

truth about the Kennedy assassination; the officials have only handed out self-serving statements."

The premise of "Executive Action" is that Lee Harvey Oswald could not have pulled off the assassination alone, hence there was a conspiracy. But the film does not attempt to document the conspiracy; it offers a fictional hypothesis on how it could have happened.

"The picture is really a strange animal, a mixture of

Reason For 'Executive Action'

fact and fiction that has never been attempted before," said the producer. "The story we tell is entirely fictional, but many of the characters are real-life figures shown in news footage, which occupies 30 per cent of the picture.

"The only real-life figures who are portrayed by actors are Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby."

Lewis took the story to veteran screen writer Dalton Trumbo, who had written such

films as "Spartacus" for the producer. Trumbo's original reaction was negative.

"I don't think history proceeds through conspiracy," he said.

Lewis gave the writer a small library of books on the Kennedy assassination and showed him the 8mm home movie taken when the shots hit the Dallas motorcade. "That convinced me utterly that the shots came from two directions," said Trumbo.