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Mr. Anthony Howard
The London Observer
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Howard,

Having nothing to do with your opinion of the Epstein book, already apparently dumped by Viking, I am taking the liberty to making a suggestion to you, based on your lengthy piece in the Sunday Observer of August 7.

Those familiar with the evidence cannot agree with your suggestion that publication of the photographs and X-rays of the autopsy could resolve doubts about the assassination or the Report of it. All it can do is raise additional questions now, the most obvious being the dependability of the films themselves.

On the fact, all they can do is confirm the location of the wounds. They cannot in any major way support the conclusions of the Report itself. This is rapidly building into a very big red herring. Those wounds can be exactly ~~where~~ where the doctors said they were without any bearing on the major evidence. For one of the most apparent things, they would not resolve the question of the number of shots. Nor would they make it possible for a single bullet to have remained virtually intact, undeformed and unmutated while inflicting seven such wounds and smashing an uncountable number of bones. The evidence on this is monolithic. The Report simply lied about it. I am sorry you seem to recall so little of my book. You will find these aspects detailed in the last two chapters.

Even were these things not as I say, and were many others of the charges against the Report without validity (which is not the case), it still cannot be right. I hope you will not be deceived on this and am quite ready to prove it to you.

The publication date of the Epstein book was June 29. Harwood hastened it a little. It has already been sold to Bantam, whose paperback edition is due in two weeks, with additions about which I have already written both publishers. They seem to come from my work.

If there is any way in which I can help you, please let me know. Should your paper, as many English papers already have, get interested in the strange upsetting of the actuarial table by people associated with the assassination and the investigation, especially those not providing stories consistent with the official account, my information is second hand. The best source of which I know and one more dependable than some who might suggest themselves, is Penn Jones, Jr., editor, The Midlothian Mirror, Midlothian, Texas. He is a courageous man.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg

WARREN COMMISSION STORM

from ANTHONY HOWARD

The clamour rises for Kennedy X-rays

WASHINGTON, August 6

SOMEWHERE in Washington—though no one will say where—a collection of photographs and X-ray plates has lain hidden now for almost three years. They were taken in the morgue of Bethesda Naval Hospital on the night of November 22, 1963, the day on which President Kennedy was killed in Dallas, and were immediately handed over to the White House Secret Service. No one has seen them from that day to this.

What the photographs, however, are known to show is the dead President's mutilated body together with detailed X-ray examinations of his heart, his brain and parts of his abdomen.

For two years and more out of understandable feelings of respect and deference towards the Kennedy family, both the actual photographs and the X-ray pictures have been allowed to lie in peace. Now suddenly insistent, and in some cases strident, demands are being made for them to be submitted to outside independent examination, if not actually to be shown in public.

Curiously, the clamour comes

A political row is brewing in the United States following the publication of a book which reveals for the first time the inadequacy of the Warren Commission's investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy.

both from those who uphold the Warren Commission findings and from those who have relentlessly attacked them since the day they were published. Only direct, hard evidence, both sides today claim, can now put doubts at rest.

How has it all happened? Earlier this year, when it became known that a new flood of books on the Dallas assassination was due to come on the market, most Americans seemed to feel merely a sense of irritation.

It was certainly understandable. The United States had, after all, been through all this before with the first wave of critics, many of whom (like Bertrand Russell) rushed into print without even waiting to read the Warren Com-

mission's report. The alleged shots from the overpass, the confusion over whether the President's wounds were in the front or the back, the downward or upward trajectory of one of the bullets—the whole argument had become as stale and unappetising as a re-hash of the Profumo case would be for most people in Britain today.

No melodrama

For the bulk of American public opinion it was enough that a distinguished and patently unsubornable seven-man Commission had deliberated on all the issues at stake for a period of more than eight months and at the end had come up with a clear-cut answer rejecting any conspiracy theory and naming Lee Harvey Oswald as the lone assassin.

Today, however, it is the majestic Warren Commission itself that is in the dock, rather than the lonely Oswald. The change has come about largely as a result of one book that wastes little time on melodramatic theories (such as the present fashionable one of an Oswald double) and instead settles down to

a painstaking examination of the way in which the Commission worked, the approach its members and legal staff brought to their tasks, together with the confusion over objectives that seems from the beginning to have dogged the whole inquiry's footsteps.

The indictment—and this is what it turns out to be—is made not by any sensational journalist nor even by a committed political campaigner: it comes instead from the pen of a young academic, Mr Edward Jay Epstein, who two years ago started on a master's thesis at Cornell University. His project was the problem of how a Government organisation functions in an extraordinary situation without rules or precedents to guide it.

For obvious reasons Mr Epstein, who is now a doctoral student at Harvard, decided to take the Warren Commission as his case-history without apparently realising for a moment what he would stumble on to. The tale that he ends up by unfolding is a terrifying one—not, of course, of dishonesty or deceit but of superficiality and haste.

Tautly argued

In one sense Mr Epstein was clearly fortunate. Approaching Commission members as a serious student—and one, what is more, with the full backing of Professor Andrew Hacker, one of the most distinguished political scientists in America—he was plainly given much freer access to information than would ever have been granted to a newspaperman.

It is fair to say, too, that there is claimed to be some question whether all those who talked to him realised that the end-product would eventually turn out to be not a complex thesis left mouldering in some university library but rather a terse, tautly argued book that is already beginning its climb up the American best-seller lists.

Yet talk the Commission and its staff certainly did—two or three of the lawyers seemed scarcely able to wait to get their bottled-up complaints off their chests. One of the Commission's senior counsel even supplied Mr Epstein with a full set of working papers, thus enabling him to give a complete chronological plan of the Commission's work and the way it was done. In addition, five of the seven Commission members (though not Chief Justice Warren himself) granted him interviews.

Naturally, Mr Epstein's book has to give some attention to what

actually happened in Dallas that Friday morning 33 months ago—and one incident in particular is central to his thesis. His main concern throughout, however, is the adequacy of the investigation which followed—an investigation that he ends up by branding "extremely superficial."

That, however, is scarcely the most disturbing charge he makes. Time and again the reader is brought back to the Commission's dual purpose. Was the aim to ascertain and publish the facts or was it to protect America's national interest by dispelling rumours? Of course, if all the rumours were untrue—as most of the Commission members seem to have assumed from the beginning—there was no contradiction. The incompatibility in the two purposes could arise only if a damaging story on investigation proved to be supported by evidence.

Ironically, the Commission was brought face to face with this conflict at the very start of its inquiries. A report had been received that Oswald had been a paid informant of the FBI. Describing the report as "a very dirty rumour," the Commission's special counsel urged that "it must be wiped out in so far as it is possible to do so." The seven Commission members clearly agreed. Neither then nor later did they themselves make any effort to investigate it, beyond asking the FBI itself to deny it. This throughout seems all too often to have been the approach to evidence (however fragile) that threatened to upset preconceived notions.

Yet this attitude was not confined just to the Commission. Two years ago, when the Warren Report was published, the *New York Times* hailed it as "an exhaustive inquiry into every particle of evidence," leaving "no material question unresolved so far as the death of President Kennedy is concerned." Nor was this thirst to be reassured limited to merely American newspapers.

Even in the offices of the normally suspicious *New Statesman* there was, as I recall it, a distinct reluctance to question the seemingly definitive official explanation of what had occurred. I can vividly remember a visit to the *New Statesman* made that summer by Mr Mark Lane, the indefatigable campaigner on the subject of the assassination who has his own book, "Rush to Judgment," coming out in America next week.

Mr Lane's avowed purpose was to try to persuade us not to accept uncritically the Commission's find-

ings. We listened to him for an hour and more but when eventually he had left collectively shook our heads. What we had heard, we decided, was at best fantastic and at worst neurotic.

Would we, I now wonder, have thought that if we had known then what today, two years later, is in the public domain? That, for example, the Commission itself was split down the middle on a central and vital issue. That it hayered and wavered between the two-shot and single-bullet theory. That one of its own major conclusions drew a 26-page memorandum of protest from one of its staff members. And, finally, that the men whose names were more than any other factor responsible for the confidence of the outside world had on an average attended only 45 per cent of the hearings.

Technically these no doubt still have to be treated as mere allegations—though, significantly, they have not been rebutted. Already the fact that they have been made has been enough to persuade one close associate of the Kennedy family, Mr Richard Goodwin, a former White House aide, to call for an impartial investigation to discover whether a fresh full-scale inquiry may not be necessary.

Explosive

It is at this point, of course, that the discussion ceases to be legalistic or even forensic and becomes instead politically explosive. For if one thing is clear, it is that the Commission was every inch President Johnson's own creation.

He virtually hijacked a very reluctant US Chief Justice, Earl Warren, into presiding over it. He worked night and day to persuade his old friend, Senator Richard Russell, of Georgia, to serve—who then attended to hear only 6 per cent of the testimony. And all the time his was the pressure in the background to get the report out well before the 1964 election.

Probably the most alarming single revelation to have come out is the degree to which the Commission—at least in its crucial writing

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 the reason was
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 "shots," one of
 the time, "is
 that there
 precisely this
 Warren Commission
 confront. Instead, in what
 was called the "battle of adjectives," it was smoothed over by a compromise in language.

Some Commission members, we now know, remained wedded to the simplest but impossible FBI theory that there had been three shots—two of which hit the President and one Governor Connally. Others who (like Allen Dulles, former head of CIA) saw the significance of the time factor, insisted that both men must initially have been hit by the same bullet.

In view of the vital importance of a unanimous report it was resolved, apparently in desperation, simply to say that there was "very persuasive evidence" for the single-bullet theory, while at the same time freely admitting a "difference of opinion" on the point.

What no one on the Commission seems to have realised is that that difference of opinion could have been resolved then and there.

Nothing in the whole story of the Warren Commission seems in retrospect more remarkable than its failure to demand to see the photographic evidence which would have shown not only the full details of the wounds on the President's body, but also presumably the path of the crucial bullet.

The final irony is that the man who is believed originally to have been more than anyone else

responsible for this insistence on decency and privacy was none other than the former President's brother, Senator Robert Kennedy. His total silence so far on the entire controversy must be beginning to be a worrying omen for the White House. Senator Edward Kennedy announced this week that, although he had not read it, he accepted the Warren Commission report as "conclusive." No such blank cheque endorsement has come from his elder brother.

Highest sum

How long the dead President's political heir can manage to maintain even a non-committal attitude is perhaps the most intriguing question in American politics today. Next week sees the commercial release of a two-and-a-half-hour documentary film made by Mr Emil de Antonio (the producer of the famous Joe McCarthy indictment) attacking the Warren Commission findings point by point; early next year comes the publication of "Death of a President," a book commissioned by Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, to tell the story of the whole Dallas episode, which has already been bought by *Look* magazine for \$650,000, the highest sum in serial rights ever paid in America.

In face of all this, will Robert Kennedy be able to avoid taking public position? Certainly, as all of America is slowly beginning to realise, no man has more to gain simply from the growing public suspicion that the inquiry set up by President Johnson into his predecessor's murder was somehow botched.

SAYINGS OF THE WEEK

KINGS and presidents have their own personal planes and they are just kings and presidents of one country. I am the champion of the whole wide world.—**Mr Muhammad Ali** (Cassius Clay).

HAPPY is the man with a wife to tell him what to do and a secretary to do it.—**Lord Mancroft**.

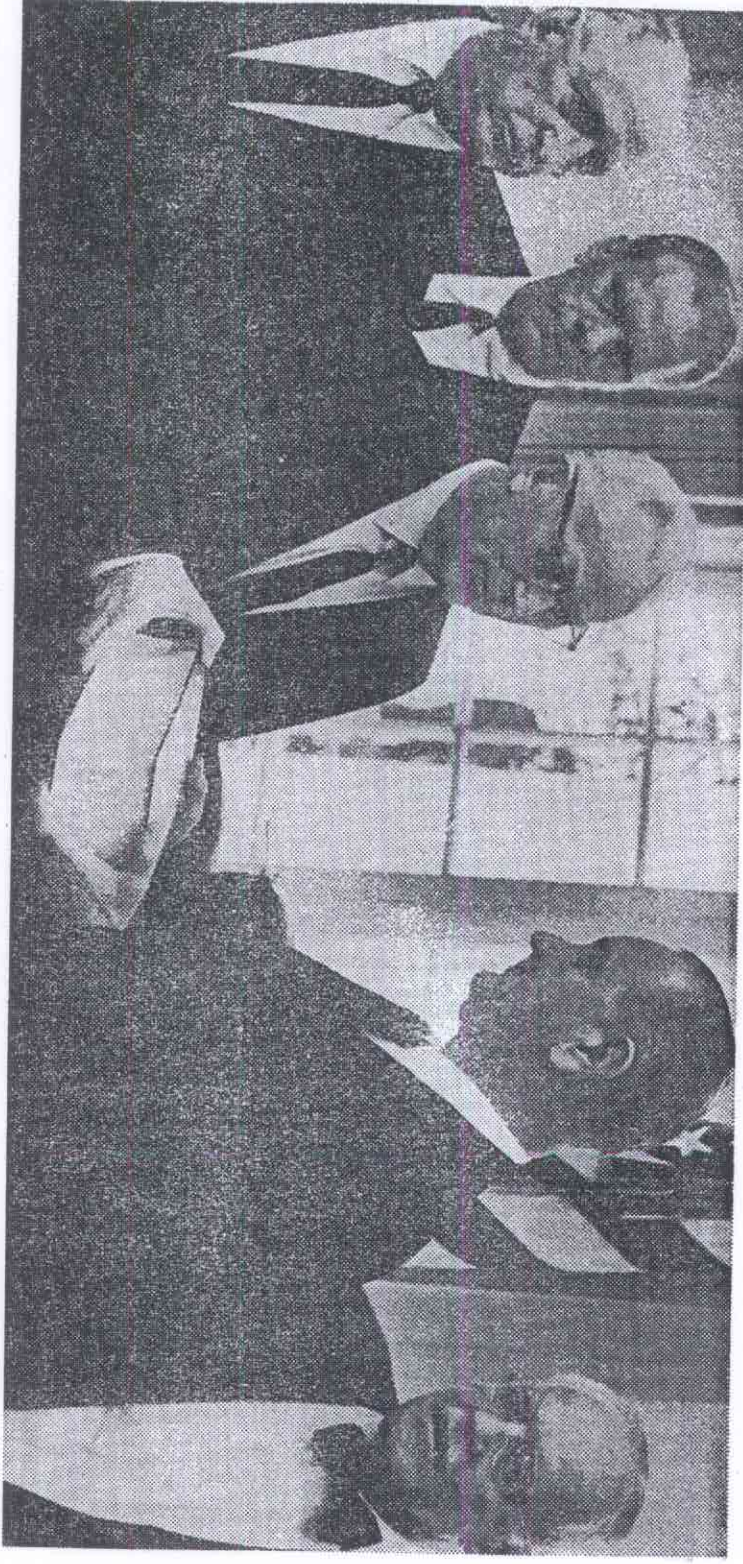
A PERSON shall not, after a warning by a library officer, per-

sist in sleeping in the library.—**Dept. of Education and Science**, suggestion for new by-law.

IF YOU ask a bloke to volunteer, he may. If you say "volunteer or else" he will say, "to hell with you."—**Mr Reginald Maudling, M.P.**

IF YOU pay in peanuts, you must expect to get monkeys.—**Mr Leslie Coulthard**, writing in *The Director* on directors' salaries.

AUGUST 7, 1966



At the White House Chief Justice Warren, accompanied by members of the Commission, presents the report on the Kennedy assassination to President Johnson. Mr Allen Dulles, former head of CIA, is on the right.