

1/20/70

Dr. James B. Rhodes, Archivist  
The National Archives  
Washington, D.C. 20540

Dear Dr. Rhodes,

Having just gone over the "preliminary inventory", I write you about it, with questions and with what I hope you can accept as constructive criticism.

There is editorializing which I believe in any or place in such a document. I would expect such a paper to be restricted to simple fact about which there is and can be no question. It should not contain value judgments, should not offer opinions on performance. And I strongly protest the inclusion as part of the "Records of the President's Commission" of such subject matter of sympathy as the OIG shows of 1967. They have no place in such an archive, certainly not as part of official files, and your inclusion, it seems to me, of such over-advertised triviality, requires at the very least that you also incorporate all works critical of the government's accounting of the crime. In the past I have complained that your agency has acted as a partisan, not as impartial custodian of a precious national heritage. This is yet another example of what leads to this feeling.

I suggest the "introduction" is an inadequate reflection of the Commission's mandate. If you deem it necessary to incorporate such a commentary, it should be complete. In saying that Oswald was arraigned "within 18 hours of his arrest" you may have had the best intentions, but that he was arraigned at all on the second charge can be disputed by positive evidence in your custody. It likewise is inappropriate to say the arraignment (there are said to have been two) were "on the basis of evidence provided by Federal, State and local agencies" or that the limited things that are taken to be referred to "caused many people to suspect the existence of a...conspiracy".

The language on page three, not essential to an inventory, can be taken to imply that the Commission did "conduct a thorough and independent investigation". Both are subject to at least question, and when the Commission had no single investigator of its own on its staff or working for it, this kind of formulation is particularly unfortunate and can, by those who have studied this matter deeply, be taken as no more than propaganda. I will undertake to write you if you select whether the Commission's work was thorough and whether its investigation was independent. In any event, there is the relevance of such argument in an inventory, a guide to scholars? Come: you permit those who study your archive to reach uninfluenced conclusions of their own?

On pages 5 and 6 there is reference to the working of data from four Congressional committees. I did not note receipt of any material. If there is any material from such committees, say I please be referred to it? What are these committees?

Also unfortunate and inappropriate is the inaccurate and misleading

reference to the position and function of Walter Craig, to the ignored references of those in the transcripts and other records and most particularly to this misrepresentation of the purpose, "This was done in fairness to the alleged assassin and his family and was agreeable to counsel for Oswald's widow". If for some reason that seems to have an bearing on an inventory it was deemed necessary to say this "was agreeable to counsel for Oswald's widow", how could you possibly not say that it explicitly was not agreeable to either his mother or his mother's counsel? Now can you say this was done "in fairness to his family" when his mother, certainly "part of his family", so obviously and again explicitly regarded it as not fair?

Under Item 8, page 18, it says "A few of the documents are missing". Is there a list of those missing? When I first examined OJCS, such was missing. Has any of this been located? Have the agencies of origin been asked to replace what is still missing after more than five years? If not, I would like such a list so that I might ask the agencies of origin to replace the missing evidence, as all, certainly, should be able to.

Is there a list of the files in Item 18?

There is certain intrusion of unfactual propaganda under Item 18, is a gratuitous insertion of an unnecessary and inaccurate conclusion, "...the Harvey Oswald distributing literature on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee". With such dead end no word from him on this, the presence of mine-reading in an "inventory" is dubious. But with the unquestioned FBI and Commission conclusion, that there was an ERG in New Orleans, one can only wonder why and how such prejudicial misinformation found its way into a document described as this one is. And is not the third file an earlier version of the second?

Item 18 describes the page proofs of both the "Report and Hearings" by inference (specifically with the Report) as having no changes other than "stylistic changes of words or phrases". I suggest this is not consistent with what and will further mislead most who use this inventory list. Believing this to, trace of all proofs.

The preparation of such an inventory is valuable. Had some of the time and space devoted to the most dubious comment been devoted upon further detail, it could have been more valuable. I would hope you would see fit to remove the comment in this document and restrict it to what one normally expects to find in an "inventory".

Sincerely,

Herold Weisberg