3/20/70

Dr. James B. Rhoads, Archivist
The National Archives
Washington, D.C. 20408

Dear Dr. Rhoads,

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 is out of 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 judgements, should not offer opinions on performance. And I strongly protest the inclusion as part of the "Records of the President's Commission" of such abject works of sycophancy as the CBS shows of 1967. They have no place in such an archive, certainlynot 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 an impartial custodian of a precious national heritage. This is but 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 12 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 probative evidence in your custody. It likewise is inappropriate to say the arraignments (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 can taken to be referred to "caused many people xx...to suspect the existence of a...conspiracy".

The language on page three, not essential to an inventory, can be taken to affirm 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 debate with any you select whether the Commission's work was thorough and whether its investigation was independent. In any event, where is the relevance of such argument in an inventory, a guide to scholars? Cannot you permit those who study your archives to reach uninfluenced conclusions of their own?

On pages 3 and 4 there is reference to the seeking of data from four Congressional committees. I did not note receipt of any itemized. If there is any material from such Committees, may I please be referred to it? Which are these committees?

Also unfortunate and inappropriate is the inaccurate and misleading

reference to the position and function of Walter Craig, to the ignored representation of these 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 no 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? How can you say this was done "in fairness to his family" when his mother, certainly a part of his "family", so obviously and again explicitly regarded it as not fair?

Under Item 8, page 10, it says "A few of the documents are missing". Is there a list of those missing? When I first examined CD102, much 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 10?

There is another intrusion of unfactual propegande under Item 18, in a gratuitous insertion of an unnecessary and inaccurate conclusions,"...Lee Harvey Oswald distributing literature on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee". With Oswald dead and no word from him on this, the presence of mind-reading in an "inventory" is dubious. But with the unquestioned FBI and Commission conclusion, that there was no FPCC 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 film an edited version of the second?

Item 32 describes the page proofs of both the Report and hearings as 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 fact and will further mislead most who use this inventory into believing this was true of all proofs.

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

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg