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Leftists Regard Assassinations as Potent Issue

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A three-day conference on "conspiracy in America" ended at UCLA Sunday, having made clear that the major assassinations of the 1960s, and particularly the murder of President John F. Kennedy, are presently regarded on the far left as a potent issue.

One speaker after another at the radical conference sponsored by the Campaign for Democratic Freedoms—a Los Angeles organization headed by long-time militant Donald Freed—called for a reopening of the investigation into the Kennedy assassination.

There were other speakers at the conference, from the Black Panthers, Trotskyite groups, the old antiwar movement and Chicano militant organizations, among others. But the central thrust of the meeting—formally entitled, "Conspiracy in America, from Dallas to Watergate: Officials, Violence and Coverup"—was on the assassinations.

A number of those on the left who have worked to keep the assassination controversy alive over the years

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were present at the meeting, including authors Mark Lane and George O'Toole, Berkeley Professor Peter Dale Scott and Los Angeles researcher Mae Brussell. Freed himself has sought to build the Kennedy controversy into a major national issue since 1968.

Friday night, a sellout crowd of more than 400 persons filled a UCLA lecture hall to hear extensive talks by Lane, O'Toole and Freed.

Lane, whose hour-long speech was filled with sarcastic language and witty asides, predicted that by next September a majority of the members of the House of Representatives will have endorsed a resolution offered by Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) calling for an official reopening of the Kennedy assassination investigation.

He said that if it is not reopened, he thinks next year's New Hampshire presidential primary should be turned into a referendum on the issue by offering a candidate to the electorate who will concentrate on it exclusively.

Introduced by Freed in heroic terms, Lane was given a long, standing ovation at the end of his remarks by a crowd that cheered his jibes at the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination, and greeted references to government officials such as President Ford—who sat on the commission—with hoots and derisive laughter.

O'Toole, the author of a recently published book claiming that psychological stress evaluations of tape recordings of Lee Harvey Oswald and other figures in the assassination controversy show that Oswald was innocent of the Kennedy murder, was at pains in his speech to discount the notion that Cuban Premier Fidel Castro might have been behind the crime.

He said the "Castro retaliation theory," holding that Castro was responding to reported Central Intelligence Agency plots to kill him by sending someone after Mr. Kennedy, seems to him a falling back by U.S. governmental authorities to a "contingency plan B" in what he charged is a plot to keep the truth covered up.

O'Toole and other speakers at the conference repeatedly implied that the real culprits in the Kennedy assassination were either right-wing groups or U.S. intelligence or police agencies.

After other talks on the assassination Saturday, Freed said he plans to organize a Los Angeles Sports Arena rally on the issue this fall and he told of organizing around the country to make the issue a big part of the 1976 presidential campaign.