

Finance Minister Mitchell Sharp has said

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Doubt About Warren Report Damages Prestige of Court

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Some Americans are recording a vote of no confidence in the report on John F. Kennedy's assassination prepared under the direction of Chief Justice Earl Warren. This poses a question: Does the no confidence extend to the investigating commission and its chairman?

Warren was chairman of the bi-partisan commission set up by President Johnson to establish the who, how and why of Kennedy's assassination. An official inquiry and an official verdict were urgently necessary to establish the facts and to lay to rest the fancies that enveloped the tragic incident.

Half-truths, no-truths and fantasies accepted as facts in the hysteria of the moment include the suspicion that there had been a conspiracy of which the assassin merely was the agent, that Kennedy was the victim of a rightist plot, that two gunmen were involved and that Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald to assure that he would not talk.

The Warren Commission discovered no conspiracy, no second gunman and no such motive as had been suggested. The pollsters now discover the American people to be suspicious of the Warren report. This may follow from skillful Madison Avenue manipulation of publicity in behalf of books now current which challenge the report. That is the more likely explanation of public doubt that Warren and his associates came up with the whole truth.

Scoffers brush aside these expressions of public opinion, asserting that they reflect merely the uninformed opinions of persons who never read the Warren report and probably did not read far beyond the headlines of the news stories about it. Maybe so, but that is about as well informed as public opinion ever comes to be.

We accept as valid the election of presidents and lesser officials by voters who probably do not know any more about

the campaign issues involved than they know about the Warren Report.

Surviving, therefore, is the questions whether the suspected inadequacy of the Warren Report will cause a substantial number of citizens to identify the chief justice with a superficial job of fact finding and evidence sifting. A chief justice of the United States is headman of the U.S. judiciary whose function is to sift evidence and to determine facts.

An uneasy feeling of no confidence in the chief justice would have powerful political impact if it became at all general among the voters. This impact would have no kinship with the far rightists' dream of impeaching Earl Warren. The political impact would be in the area of dispute about the so-called Warren court's extension of its own powers in the field of legislation.

The current Supreme Court has discovered in the Constitution federal powers and prohibitions that escaped the notice of preceding justices. This usually has been true from generation to generation as one clutch of Supreme Court justices succeeded another. Apart from civil rights and the court's umbrella of protection over the personal rights of suspected criminals as opposed to the collective rights of law-abiding citizens, the Warren court probably reached further into legislative apportionment than into any other controversial field.

Conceding that the chief justice is not engaged in a popularity contest, it must be conceded also that his prestige would be much damaged by identification with an embarrassing folly, such as a superficial report on a presidential assassination.

