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Warren Report Debated for 5 Hours on British TV

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Jan. 30—"Even a dead President is entitled to some bodily repose. Let him rest in peace."

Those words, spoken by Lord Devlin, brought to an end early today nearly five hours of television on the death of President Kennedy. The British Broadcasting Company carried the program to examine doubts raised about the assassination.

Lord Devlin's conclusion must have been shared by many viewers. All the television discussion manifestly failed to carry any further the familiar arguments about the assassination.

Ninety minutes on the program were given to a film made from Mark Lane's book, "Rush to Judgment." It rehearsed Mr. Lane's contentions that the Warren Commission had erred in naming Lee Harvey Oswald as the sole assassin.

The film, a slow-moving one, consisted largely of Mr. Lane's interviewing witnesses who disagreed with some aspects of the Warren report. One reviewer today described it as "technically amateurish."

Two lawyers who worked for the Warren Commission, Arlen Specter and David W. Belin, appeared on the program to answer the criticisms of Mr. Lane, who was also in the studio, for rebuttal.

Finally, the B.B.C. had two

outside legal authorities to provide comment. They were Prof. Alexander M. Bickel of the Yale Law School and Lord Devlin, who is widely considered England's most distinguished legal figure.

Professor Bickel concluded that there was "not the shadow of a scintilla of evidence of any conspiracy."

But he said he was "not satisfied" with the medical evidence on the commission's theory that a single bullet had hit President Kennedy and Gov. John B. Connally Jr. of Texas.

It would therefore be "the part of wisdom," Professor Bickel said, to have a small, full-time commission set up to study the evidence further.

Leans to Warren Theory

Lord Devlin concluded that "Oswald was guilty." As for the question whether Oswald had acted alone, Lord Devlin said that depended on which of "three improbabilities" was true.

A single bullet from Oswald's gun hitting both the President and Governor was one "improbability." The second was Oswald's firing earlier at President Kennedy through a tree that partly obscured his view. The third was a second assassin who vanished.

Life and the law have often

turned on such improbabilities, Lord Devlin said. If he had to choose, he would agree with the commission's choice of the single bullet theory.

To have still another official inquiry would do no good, Lord Devlin suggested, because the chance of its finding any significant further evidence on those three improbabilities was slim.

The atmosphere in the studio was often bitter as Mr. Lane argued with the commission's lawyers. He accused the British Broadcasting company of doing "a great disservice to the truth" in not allowing him more time to answer the criticism of his film.

Mr. Belin said he had been invited by Mr. Lane, in a letter dated last July, to appear in the film on behalf of the commission. But when he wrote back, Mr. Belin said, Mr. Lane did not reply until December, after nine letters from Mr. Belin. Then Mr. Lane dismissed him as a "bit player," Mr. Belin said.

The program's announcers asked Mr. Lane about this

episode. He responded by talking about a number of other subjects until he was asked to stop.

In a review in The Daily Express today James Thomas said the program had disturbed him because he suspected "the motives of people who have concentrated on sowing doubts of exaggerated importance over an event which, in its tragic simplicity, still clouds the world."

Mr. Thomas said the program was "fascinating" but made him wonder whether "doubt on the Kennedy murder is not merely being turned into hard capital."

The Guardian said that "no reasonable man" could now be sure the Warren Commission had "left no stones unturned." The Times of London found the program "brilliant, highly pertinent."

The Mirror said the program had "clumsily muffed" the challenge by restraining Mr. Lane too much. The Daily Mail said Mr. Lane's film had produced a lot of detail that seemed in conflict with the Warren report but was "in fact too trivial to challenge it."