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## Leave It Alone

Last week, the nation marked the third anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The shock, the disbelief and the grief of that moment of recent history has, in large measure, faded. But the questions that arose on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, are still being asked.

The Warren Commission, which undertook to answer those questions, is under heavy fire. In books and magazines, in thinly veiled works of fiction, in plays and from lecture platforms around the world, the commission's work has been assailed as either slipshod or deliberately misleading.

The outcry over the commission's findings, which started in the lunatic fringe, has picked up influential and respected support. Leading publications—among them Life Magazine and the New York Times—have come to the conclusion that the best interests of the nation would be served if the case were reopened.

We do not agree.

Given the circumstances of the assassination and the subsequent killing of the chief suspect, it was inevitable that the questions should arise. Nor is it in any way surprising that the doubts persist after the verdict of the official investigation was handed up.

But to argue that the Warren Commission has set out purposely to mislead the nation by covering up some awful truth is to argue a patent absurdity that can appeal only to unreasoning devotees of the conspiracy theory of history. The whitewash theory must presuppose a plot led by the chief justice of the United States and the congressional leaders of both parties with the active participation of the FBI, the CIA,

the Secret Service and the elected officials and police departments of a score of state and city governments.

And the commission investigation, far from being a slipshod affair, was almost certainly the most exhaustive study of a crime ever undertaken. During the 10 months of the study, the commission mobilized and utilized every federal and state investigative body. Some 27,000 individual interviews were conducted by or on behalf of the commission. Expert witnesses and the most advanced technological resources were called into action before the official finding was made.

There is not now, nor can there ever be, an absolute certainty about the fateful events that combined to produce the tragedy in Dallas. All that the commission could possibly do was to provide the best informed interpretation of exactly what happened and exactly why it happened. Such interpretation is, of necessity, open to criticism and to second guessing by those with axes to grind, with books to sell or with honest doubts.

But the fact remains—as J. Edgar Hoover has pointed out—that not one shred of evidence not available to the commission has been unearthed by the amateur sleuths and the doubters. Any new commission would therefore be considering precisely the same set of facts. It is difficult to conceive that it would come up with any finding other than that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, assassinated the President of the United States.

And the questions and doubts—the inevitable legacy of Dallas—would remain. Let us, therefore, leave well enough alone.

WARREN COMMISSION

WARREN COMMISSION

THIS IS WHY



11/30/33

The Editor  
The Evening Star

Dear Sir,

With the lemming-like compulsion that characterizes the work of the Warren Commission and in common with most of the press, you persist, in your editorial of Nov. 28 in defending the Report by staking the personal integrity of the members of the Commission on it. This is neither logical nor right. The Report can be defended only by fact: is it right? Your position flies into the face of the entire concept of U.S. law. We do not expect infallibility of public servants, but we do expect and provide for the rectification of error.

Never before has proclaimed ignorance been accepted as authority, but the papers recently have been full of statements from various officials all, in one form or another saying, "I do not know what I am talking about, but..." And then, it seems, they say the books they haven't read are wrong. I have yet to have an error in WHITEWASH: THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT, called to my attention, and I have seen to it that most of the people most concerned had copies, that most of the correspondents, reviewers and editors had the first copies.

It is not true that for the Report to be wrong there had to be a monster conspiracy involving everyone from the Chief Justice down to the most junior charwoman in the Department of Justice. To persist in this false and illogical outpouring may well destroy the integrity of the members of the Commission, who can be wrong without being corrupt. It may destroy their defense, which is quite possible. And it may in the end, when the truth is really understood, make the ultimate shock greater and the possibility of public understanding less likely.

Neither in WHITEWASH nor in its coming sequel, WHITEWASH II, do I assault the integrity of the members of the Commission. A careful reading of my work by those not intending to swing axes will show this.

It is time for a little less rhetoric and a little more fact, for an end *J*

endless non-sequeturs and evasions (I have seen nothing that, I know of nothing that, etc.). It is also time for a little more honesty on the part of those who make their livings writing for newspapers and for the newspapers that make a profit from sales. Is it somehow more reprehensible to be paid for writing a book that it is a news story or an editorial, evil to sell books but not papers and magazines?

But, for the record, with WHITEWASH in 22,500 copies, I have yet to get a cent from my work.

It is also time to stop kidding the people with the childish line about "new evidence". What is wrong with the old evidence that was destroyed, mutilated, misrepresented and ignored?

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg

Dear Mr. Seib,

If this is longer than you had in mind, please cut it as you or whoever handles the letters desires.

I would have liked to have written more, and would particularly like the time to do so. We urgently need an honest dialogue, with the propoganda for once forgotten, or the national trauma that can result is perhaps beyond calculation. My effort to begin this, I have challenged to debate, in any forum, all those who have written viciously. Not one has accepted, including Murrison Smith, the one man in the world who doesn't know where he was when the President was killed - and he was there and got the Pulitzer Prize for being there! Smith declined to debate me at the National Press Club on his story, my book, the work of the Commission, or any combination of his choosing. He has ignored my alternative challenge, to debate <sup>him</sup> in writing on his story, with my piece to be submitted to him in advance so that he could use his entire space in refutation. This kind of writing is not helpful.