

May 5, 1975

PRESS RELEASE

For further information: Cyril H. Wecht, Coroner, Allegheny County,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (412) 355-4460

Three forensic scientists today attacked the Rockefeller Commission investigating domestic activities of the CIA, charging that the Commission has set up a panel of "governmental sychophants" to defend the Warren Report. Recent news stories have disclosed that the Rockefeller Commission has secretly appointed a team of medical specialists to review the JFK autopsy materials and related evidence in the JFK assassination, apparently in response to numerous allegations of possible CIA involvement in the assassination.

Speaking as individuals, Dr. Robert Joling of Phoenix, Arizona, current President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, along with Dr. Cyril H. Wecht of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,* and Professor Herbert L. MacDonell of Corning, New York,** presented a resolution signed by four past Presidents of the Academy calling for full disclosure of all the medical and scientific evidence in the assassinations of both John and Robert Kennedy. They also called for the appointment of an independent panel of forensic scientists to review the evidence and make a thorough study of both cases as part of a genuine re-investigation of the assassinations. They noted that all the members of the panel appointed by the Rockefeller Commission have strong ties to the federal government and close professional relationships with individuals who have formerly participated in studies defending the Warren Report.

*Coroner, Allegheny County

**Professor of Criminalistics, Elmira College

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Dr. Wecht pointed to the fact that David W. Belin, Executive Director for the Commission, was "one of the principal architects of the Warren Report, a man who has spent much of the past ten years in defending the Report and attacking its critics." The panel, itself, according to Dr. Wecht, is "made of people who are or have been associated with the Baltimore Medical Examiner's Office, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Department of Radiology, and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, three facilities which either supplied the members of the original autopsy team or from which selected members of a previous panel had been appointed by the Justice Department in 1968 to defend the Warren Report."

Dr. Wecht also charged that the panel appointed by the Rockefeller Commission has done nothing to secure the release of certain items of medical and scientific evidence in the JFK assassination, whereas he and other critics have persisted for years in their efforts to obtain these materials. "It is only by a full disclosure of all the facts that these cases can be resolved," said Dr. Wecht, "and it is not clear from the statements attributed to the members that the Belin-appointed panel is even aware of some of this evidence."

To buttress his point, Dr. Wecht made available two recently disclosed items that had been withheld by the government for more than ten years. A so-called "Memorandum of Transfer", prepared in 1965 by Admiral George Burkley, then White House physician, and given to Dr. Wecht only three weeks ago, shows that numerous tissue sections and possibly the President's brain

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had been turned over to Evelyn Lincoln, the assassinated President's secretary, while Mrs. Lincoln was working at the National Archives on papers for the JFK Library. "We know from this memorandum that these materials existed at that time, and that they were in the possession of responsible persons", said Dr. Wecht. "They are extremely important autopsy materials essential to a thorough, scientific review of the case. Yet no one has been allowed to examine them since 1963, and we do not even know what happened to them after they were transferred to Mrs. Lincoln in 1965. How can the Belin panel do a competent job without seeing these materials?"

Dr. Wecht also disclosed a batch of FBI Laboratory papers and notes concerning a specialized analysis of bullet fragments from the case, given to him by Director Clarence Kelley only a week ago. "These data have been withheld far too long", said Dr. Wecht. "Yet there has never been so much as a peep from Belin or his appointed experts to ask for their disclosure. It seems that only the critics of the Warren Report ever do anything to get the facts before the public."

Wecht said that because the data have just been released, it is too early to draw conclusions as to their significance. "But regardless of what they show, for or against the Warren Report, I shall say so," he said, "and I just wish that David Belin and his panel would be equally honest in their assessment of the facts."

Morse on Wecht/5/5/75 Press Conference

HW 5/5/75

After reading the Lardner story, which has a text of about 10 inches, I suddenly remembered part of Wecht's prepared statement for the press conference and his intent, explicit in it, to give out copies of the spectro and NAA tests.

On the latter, does giving out sheets of workpapers have any meaning if they are entirely unexplained.

"Wecht said that because the data have just been released, it is too early to draw conclusions as to their significance. 'But regardless of what they show, for or against the Warren Report, (I read I) shall say so."

Well, he had them for a week. I saw more than enough as soon as I got them to "draw conclusions as to their significance" and did, promptly, with regard to both sets of tests. The right tests were not made, there was deliberate fakery, the Commission knew both and did nothing, and what else does one need to draw conclusions?

If one knows his business, that is.

Lardner boiled down much and leiminated parts of what he did. Nonetheless, the conclusions he attributes ot me are specific and significant?

Headling, "Author Maintains FBI Omitted JFK Lab Test."

Lead: "...failed to conduct tests that could have upset the commission's findings..."

Among the not done specified is not testing any clothing or some fragments by NAA.

Conclusion quoted, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ "That had to be done if they were going to say that Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet."

Too early to conclude?

The more self-importa nt Cyril is the more ridiculous he is. This reminds me of when I sent him a copy of the Clark panel reportm phoned him and found he didn't understand it! I then rushed through a part of Post Mortem to be sure I saw all of it myself and had that done and backgrounded/briefed him prior to his testimony so he could testify to what he had failed to see and/or understand.

He's got this scientist Bob Smith on his county payroll. Bob is supposed to be some kind of expert besides and assassination expert, he and the CTIA and Wecht say. Smith knows so little of the subject he could not draw conclusions for Cyril?

It gets crazier by the incident and the possibility of non-self-seeking seems more remote with each incident.

I don't think many of the few reporters at the press conference by 9:30 a.m. had read the Post's obit page, but if they did, or did later, it ought not be reassuring to them to read obvious conclusions based on stated facts and then to recall that the "expert" had said it was too early to draw any conclusions.