

New Doubt on Sirhan's Guilt

New York

Former congressman Alard K. Lowenstein said yesterday that, because of what he thinks is new evidence, he does not believe imprisoned Sirhan Sirhan actually was the killer of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Lowenstein said the evidence had been gathered by himself and others during the past 18 months and added, "If this were an ordinary murder case, it would have been reopened on the basis of the evidence."

Kennedy was killed June 5, 1968, in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles while campaigning for the presidency. Lowenstein, a Democrat who lost his congressional seat in redistricting and has failed three times to win another, said he was not offering any new theories on the assassination.

"I don't accept anyone's theory at the moment," Lowenstein told a news conference. "We simply cannot accept the official version of what happened because it doesn't square with the facts."

Lowenstein, who won notoriety in 1968 by starting the "Dump Johnson" movement, said he had three main pieces of evidence, plus another "ancillary" evidence, that calls the original investigation into question.

But he said, "We're trying to limit the inquiry to this tripod of evidence."

Lowenstein cited first the number of bullet holes in victims and walls in the

kitchen of the hotel where Kennedy was killed and five others wounded. He said Sirhan's gun held only eight bullets but trajectory evidence indicated that "at least" nine bullets were fired.

Secondly, Lowenstein said, all witnesses testified that Sirhan was "at least two feet" from Kennedy, while the autopsy report on Kennedy's body indicated the fatal shot was fired from almost point blank range — "about an inch from his right ear."

Thirdly, he said, one of the persons wounded in the melee — William Weisel, then an ABC television news producer — was wounded with a bullet apparently fired from a different gun than the one that killed Kennedy.

Lowenstein produced charts of the kitchen, special ballistics photographs and even a variety of .22-caliber cartridges to demonstrate the discrepancies in testimony.

Specifically, Lowenstein said he wants Los Angeles authorities to test-fire the Sirhan weapon for bullet comparisons and convene a special ballistics panel to study the results; release whatever trajectory reports have been made; and release the still-secret ten-volume report on the investigation.

Lowenstein said that, to date, the Los Angeles district attorney's office "has refused to conduct the scientific tests that we have outlined."

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