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A140

WARREN REPORT-PRESS CRITICISM (620)

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWS EXECUTIVES TOOK FULL COGNIZANCE OF THE WARREN COMMISSION'S CRITICISM YESTERDAY OF NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION, BUT ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT NEWS-GATHERING ORGANIZATIONS HAD THE PRIMARY OBLIGATION OF FULLY COVERING SUCH AN HISTORIC EVENT.

THE COMMISSION COMPLAINED THAT NEWS PERSONNEL IN DALLAS AT THE TIME OF THE ASSASSINATION SHOWED A "LACK OF SELF-DISCIPLINE" AND CREATED "GENERAL DISORDER" IN DALLAS POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

THE EXECUTIVES SAID STUDIES WERE BEING INITIATED TO FIND MEANS OF RESOLVING FUTURE DIFFICULTIES.

THE COMMISSION URGED NEWS MEDIA TO DRAW UP A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SUCH SITUATIONS.

THE WARREN REPORT SAID BOTH NEWS MEDIA AND POLICE AUTHORITIES MUST SHARE BLAME FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF SECURITY INVOLVED IN THE SHOOTING OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD, THE ASSASSIN, WHO WAS SHOT BY NIGHTCLUB OWNER JACK RUBY AS NEWSMEN AND BROADCAST CREWS LOOKED ON IN A POLICE DEPARTMENT BASEMENT.

COMMISSIONERS ALSO SAID THE NEWS OUTPOURING OF "UNDIGESTED EVIDENCE" CONTRIBUTED TO MYTHS AND RUMORS.

MILES H. WOLFF, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE GREENSBORO (N.C.) DAILY NEWS AND PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS, SAID A SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEE PLANNED CONSULTATIONS WITH RADIO-TELEVISION OFFICIALS ON THE PROBLEMS.

ALFRED FRIENDLY, ASNE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, AND MANAGING EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON POST, SAID THE COMMISSION'S CRITICISMS "MUST OBVIOUSLY BE WEIGHED THOUGHTFULLY BY EVERYONE CONCERNED WITH THE FUNCTIONS OF NEWS PRESENTATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY."

FRIENDLY SAID A PRELIMINARY REPORT TO BE ISSUED SOON BY HIS COMMITTEE WOULD RECOMMEND A SYSTEM FOR "POOLING OF NEWSMEN IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES" WHERE LARGE NUMBERS OF THEM COULD CREATE CONFUSION.

ESAM RAGAN, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS MANAGING EDITORS ASSOCIATION, NAMED A SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF EDITORS TO STUDY THE QUESTION AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS.

RAGAN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE NEWS AND OBSERVER, RALEIGH, N.C., AND THE RALEIGH TIMES, SAID "NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA HAVE BEEN FOR SOME TIME DEEPLY CONSCIOUS OF THE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM MASS COVERAGE OF MAJOR NEWS EVENTS."

HE SAID THE COMMISSION'S CRITICISMS "MERIT OUR SERIOUS CONCERN AND STUDY," ADDING:

"IT IS MY OPINION, HOWEVER, THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORDERLY COVERAGE OF SUCH EVENTS LIES WITH THE PROPER AUTHORITIES IN CHARGE AT THE TIME. SUCH AUTHORITIES, OF COURSE, MUST HAVE THE COOPERATION OF NEWS MEDIA."

GEORGE BEEBE, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE MIAMI HERALD, WAS NAMED TO HEAD THE STUDY COMMITTEE.

GENE ROBB, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION AND PUBLISHER OF THE ALBANY (N.Y.) TIMES-UNION AND THE KNICKERBOCKER NEWS, SAID THE ANPA ALSO HAS SIMILAR STUDIES IN PROGRESS.

WES GALLAGHER, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, SAID THAT "UNDOUBTEDLY THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE IN CURBINB THE EXCESSES OF MASS REPORTING."

"HOWEVER," GALLAGHER SAID, "TO TRY TO APPLY THE ORDINARY CRITERIA OF WHAT SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT BE REPORTED IN A CRIMINAL CASE TO THE ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT ONLY BE FUTILE BUT BASICALLY WRONG.

"IN AN AGE WHERE MUCH LESS THAN THE ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT COULD TRIGGER AN ATOMIC WAR, TO DELAY FACTS AS TO WHO THE KILLER WAS, WHAT HIS BACKGROUND WAS AND WHETHER HE WAS PART OF A CONSPIRACY WOULD NOT ONLY BE A DISSERVICE TO THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD BUT HIGHLY DANGEROUS."

IN A CASE OF THIS KIND, GALLAGHER SAID, THE PREDOMINANT CONSIDERATION IS THE URGENCY OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC. HE SAID THE WARREN REPORT CONFIRMS THAT THE AMERICAN PRESS DID AN "OUTSTANDING JOB" OF THAT.

HOWEVER, GALLAGHER CONTINUED, "THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS COULD NOT HAVE CONDUCTED THEMSELVES BETTER OR OBTAINED THEIR INFORMATION IN A MORE ORDERLY FASHION AT DALLAS. MASS REPORTING HAS CAUSED INCREASING PROBLEMS IN RECENT YEARS, HINDERING GETTING THE NEWS TO THE PUBLIC RATHER THAN SPEEDING IT."

A142

EARL J. JOHNSON, VICE PRESIDENT AND EDITOR OF UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, COMMENTED:

"WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE REPRESENTED AT ALL NEWSWORTHY EVENTS BY REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS BECAUSE WE AND THE AP ARE PRIMARY FOR DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND BROADCASTERS.

"I WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO SAY HOW MANY SPECIALS SHOULD BE ON THE SCENE OF A BIG STORY. THAT IS FOR THEIR EDITORS TO DECIDE. THE AUTHORITIES CAN ALWAYS LIMIT THE NUMBER TO SUIT SECURITY REQUIREMENTS.

"IT WAS NOT THE NUMBER OF REPORTERS PRESENT WHICH PERMITTED RUBY TO SHOOT OSWALD IN DALLAS."

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST JR., EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF HEARST PUBLICATIONS, SAID IT HAS "BECOME CLEAR THAT WE HAVE A PROBLEM WHEN REPORTERS DESCEND ON ONE SPOT EN MASSE."

THE TROUBLE, HEARST SAID, IS THAT THERE IS SCANT OPPORTUNITY FOR "SETTING UP ORDERLY INFORMATION PROCEDURES IN THESE EMERGENCIES."

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