

'Assassin Laws' and Congress

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WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders yesterday promised to back Warren Commission recommendations with laws to protect the President of the United States.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will meet today behind closed doors to consider such legislation.

A law making it a Federal offense to attempt to take the life of the President or Vice President is a virtual certainty to pass, leaders of both parties agreed.

There was widespread doubt, however, that Congress can pass any laws to protect the President in the waning days of its current session.

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield said, "I think Congress should stay on."

President Johnson himself is expected to meet in a few days with a cabinet-level committee to put the Commission's report into action.

One critical decision is whether or not the Secret Service will be allowed to continue to guard the President.

Criticism of the FBI and Secret Service was the only portion of the Warren Commission report which did not find complete support on Capitol Hill yesterday.

Senate Republican leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois said he read the Commission's criticism and said "I'm not sure how well taken" it was.

(The Warren Committee criticized the FBI for not turning over its information on Lee Harvey Oswald to the Secret Service before President Kennedy visited Dallas, and criticized both services for their procedures. Neither service has commented.)

Dirksen said, "For one thing, there were no charges against Oswald and no ground on which to hold him before the assassination."

And Republican Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont added, "It is one thing to make recommendations (to protect the President) and another to enforce them."

Speaking of possible legislation, Senate Republican whip Thomas H. Kuchel of California said that permitting a defector like Oswald to return to the country "almost automatically" is a "grievous error."

Sen. J. William Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, said he will support the commission's recommendations, but said he doubts they will deter "these unbalanced people" (such as Oswald).

Rep. Richard Poff, Republican of Virginia, suggested that Congress—if it stays in session — should also tackle the problem of presidential succession. There is no law now outlining what should be done when a President is incapacitated, he noted.

President Johnson's own cabinet-level committee, headed unofficially by Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillion, met yesterday.

It is to study the Warren report and make recommendations to President Johnson as to which suggestions can be handled administratively and which will require Congressional action.