

A Firm Investigator

William Warren Scranton

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 1— It was a stifling August day in Jackson, Miss. In a motel banquet room, flanked by huge photographs of a dormitory sprayed with bullet holes, a television reporter talked about the night of May 14. "Would you play the tape?" he was asked. And then the President's Commission on Campus Unrest heard the sounds that accompanied two deaths and 12 injuries at Jackson State College.

"A bottle smashed," W. Matthew Byrne, the commission's director, said later in describing the sounds. "Then there's an undetermined 'pop.' Then, within a second, there is the most incredible, constant sound of crashing gunfire that goes on without stop for 28 seconds. That may not sound like very long, but just look at your watch for 28 seconds and realize that all that time, that's buckshot pouring into a women's dormitory with people all around."

The commission was dumbfounded. One member slowly dropped his pencil. Another visibly blanched. The head of William W. Scranton, the chairman, dropped into his hands.

In that moment, Mr. Scranton recalled later, all his reasons for having returned to public service, were confirmed:

"We have to act against the fear and hatred that divide America today, between white and black, young and old. We have to act against the uncivilized intolerance and violence. We need an internal and external cease-fire, an end to racism, a restoration of understanding and compassion."

For those reasons, he agreed when President Nixon asked him last June to head the new emergency commission. Those views, shared by his eight fellow commissioners and intensified by experiences like that at Jackson, are clearly evident in the reports now being issued.

"I can tell you why I agreed," he said, "but I haven't the slightest idea why the President asked. Perhaps it's because he knows I don't want a political future."



United Press International

Punctual, patrician, private and perplexing.

William Warren Scranton is a punctual, patrician, private and, to many, perplexing man, who once appeared to have a bright political future.

As a Representative from the Pennsylvania city named for his forbears and as a successful Governor, he was heralded as a "Republican Kennedy." But then, in 1964, he launched an on-again, off-again, on-again campaign to wrest the Republican Presidential nomination from Barry Goldwater.

Moderate Alternative

His aim was not so much personal ambition, he said, as offering his party a moderate alternative.

At the time, he was asked if he considered himself a possible candidate.

"No, an impossible one," he responded.

After his term as Governor, he resolved firmly never again to enter public life on a permanent basis.

The Presidential candidacy was costly. To many, it painted him as decent and principled, but flawed by indecision and weakness.

To his short-term associates on the commission on unrest, that opinion is incredible.

Joseph Rhodes Jr., the youngest of the nine commissioners, who was in high school in 1964, said, "I can't imagine why anyone would think of him as that. My impression is exactly the opposite of weak."

Mr. Rhodes, a black junior fellow at Harvard University, told of the time, during the commission's hearings in Jackson, when 15 suspicious, angry black students were denouncing the commission for insensitivity.

"I asked the Governor if he's come in," Mr. Rhodes recalled. "I told him I couldn't imagine a more hostile crowd."

Mr. Scranton came. For an hour, he listened and spoke occasionally with great tact and feeling.

"And then they went away," Mr. Rhodes said, "quiet and, I think, confident in the commission. It was amazing."

Other commissioners share this view.

"Firmness is the word that fits him best," said one.

"He is more than firm," said another. "For sheer skill in the combined role of moderator diplomat and human relationist, I've never seen a more brilliant performance."

Mr. Scranton was born July 19, 1917, to great wealth, grew up in Scranton, and lives there now with his wife, Mary, in the mansion built by his parents. Susan, the eldest of their four children, is married. Bill and Joe are at Yale, and Peter is at prep school.

Mr. Scranton sees and sympathizes with "the great internal turbulence" of youth in his own children.

"When I was in college, I was a strong internationalist," he said. "I had a commitment. That may be the present problem. Young people now can't be sure just what their commitment ought to be."

His present commitment is clear: to win the President's confidence in the reconciliation-directed recommendations of the commission.

He has had the President's confidence before. True to his resolve to stay out of permanent public office, he said, he declined the opportunity to become Secretary of State. But he has taken on a series of other temporary assignments, including a fact-finding tour of the Middle East.

Three weeks ago, a framed picture of the President arrived. It was inscribed, "To Bill Scranton, a trouble-shooter who is really willing to take on trouble. With respect and high regard, Dick Nixon."