

Announcer: While investigating the assassination of President John Kennedy, the Warren Commission amassed a vast quantity of information, much of which was classified. Only 10 per cent of it is still secret, but according to one Congressional Committee, the Warren Commission never had the legal authority to classify any of that information in the first place. Katherine Ferguson reports from Washington:

Ferguson: In September of 1964 the Warren Commission completed its investigation of John Kennedy's death and published its report finding Lee Harvey Oswald the lone assassin. The records of that investigation were turned over to the National Archives. Now, 11 years later, the Archives says that 90 per cent of the Warren Commission's internal memos and transcripts of its meetings have been made public. The reason it's taken so long is because many were classified for national security reasons, some by government agencies like the CIA and FBI, who wanted to protect their confidential sources, others by the Warren Commission itself.

But a House Subcommittee investigation has found that President Johnson, who set up the panel to look into Kennedy's death, never officially gave the Commission the authority to classify materials. Apparently Chief Justice Earl Warren, who headed the investigation, assumed his panel had the authority and ordered its counsel, J. Lee Rankin, to have some documents marked classified. The head of the National Archives, Dr. James B. Rhodes,* told a government operations subcommittee today that he assumed the committee [sic; commission?] was authorized to classify material, but he promised chairwoman Bella Abzug of New York that the National Archives would review the documents still secret and any independently classified by the Commission would be made public. Neither Rhodes nor committee staff were able to say exactly how many that might be.

But even when these are available, some material, originally classified by the CIA and the FBI, will remain secret. Rhodes said that only a government agency which classified a document has the final decision to make it public, not the Archives. Sen. Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania, who is investigating the CIA's relationship with the Warren Commission for the Senate Intelligence Committee, believes there are 130 secret FBI and CIA documents, pertaining to the Kennedy assassination, in the National Archives.

The Archives has published a list of Kennedy documents in its possession, but Rhodes said it may not be complete. He thinks two or three numbered [indistinct] documents are missing and said there may be others. The Archives often discovers something is missing, explained Rhodes, when a researcher asks for a particular document and it isn't around. He added that some government agencies may have material relevant to the assassination which they never gave the Commission, but the Archives has no way of knowing. For Pacifica Radio in Washington, this is Katherine Ferguson reporting.

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* Should be spelled Rhoads throughout.