

ASSASSINATION PANEL NAMES TOP COUNSEL

Lawyer Who Sent Boyle to Prison Will Head Inquiry Into Killing of President Kennedy and Dr. King

By **BEN A. FRANKLIN**
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 4—Richard A. Sprague, who led the investigation that finally brought the arrest and murder conviction of W. A. Boyle, the deposed head of the United Mine Workers Union, has agreed to head a new Congressional examination of the assassinations of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Sprague appointment was announced today by Representative Thomas N. Downing of Virginia, chairman of a new Select Committee on Assassinations in the House of Representatives, and confirmed by Mr. Sprague, now a lawyer in private practice in Philadelphia.

Mr. Sprague, who is expected to be sworn in as chief counsel this Thursday,



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Richard A. Sprague

was an assistant to the Philadelphia district attorney, Arlen Specter, who had served in the Warren Commission investigation of the 1963 Kennedy assassination when he was named by Pennsylvania officials in 1970 to unravel the murders of Joseph A. Yablonski and his wife and daughter.

In tracking the Yablonski killers, hired gunmen who did not know their principal but whose Appalachian fears and loyalties the prosecutor was able to play off against one another, Mr. Sprague sent Mr. Boyle to prison for life.

Mr. Yablonski was shot to death in his sleep in December 1969 by killers who also killed his wife and daughter because they were in the family's home in Clarksville, Pa. Mr. Yablonski had unsuccessfully challenged Mr. Boyle for the union leadership.

Arnold R. Miller replaced Mr. Yablonski and unseated Mr. Boyle in a Government-supervised rerun of the union election in 1972.

Representative Downing, a 57-year-old Democrat from Newport News, Va., is retiring from Congress and will relinquish the new Assassination Committee chairmanship at the end of the year. An appropriation of \$150,000 for preliminary staffing was approved by the House last Thursday.

Convinced of a Conspiracy

Mr. Downing is expected to be succeeded as chairman in the next Congress by Representative Henry B. Gonzalez, a Democrat from Texas. Both Congressmen have expressed their conviction that there was a conspiracy behind the death of President Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, and have seemed open to the view that the assassination may have been linked to the shooting of Dr. King in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

Mr. Sprague said in a telephone interview today that he was "reserving judgment" on such questions until the committee investigation was under way.

The selection of Mr. Sprague as both chief counsel and staff director of the committee was known to be satisfactory to members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who have long sought a review of the King assassination.

The appointment also was praised as "the best possible choice" by Mark Lane, the director here of the Citizens Commission of Inquiry, a conspiracy-oriented private investigating group. Mr. Lane is the author of a best-selling book criticizing the Warren Commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin of President Kennedy.