

The Washington Star

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Needed: soft shoe and circumspection

When members of the House Assassinations Committee were secretly discussing on March 17 how to keep the committee alive, the suggestion was made that the committee might hold a 45-minute public meeting to explain what direction it was taking and what evidence it could disclose. The committee's deputy chief counsel observed, "I think when you talk about 45 minutes, I would have to do a little 'soft shoe dance' in the middle of it."

That the private discussion got on the record was due to committee bumbling: a transcript of the meeting was released inadvertently. Well, the committee got its new lease on life through a House vote March 30 to continue it for two years, but its operations — and, more basically, its evidence — don't seem to have improved.

The committee is rehashing what one reporter called "twice-told tales" and doing it in a fashion that smacks of incompetence.

Charles Weisberg, who has written books on the Kennedy and King assassinations, was quoted the other day as saying: "There's not one thing they've come up with that has established relevance. They've been in business six months, they've had a staff of 73 people, and they can't even read accurately from other people's work. I have never seen a more total confession of bankruptcy."

The results of the latest round of committee work are one dead man (a former mental patient, George deMohrenschildt, who reportedly committed suicide when the committee sought to question him) and a spate of headlines linking the late Texas oil and catsup millionaire H. L. Hunt to the Kennedy assassination.

The evidence — if it even can be called evidence — is, as one congressman charged, "hearsay, twice removed." It allegedly comes from Mr. deMohrenschildt, by way of a Dutch journalist. Mr. deMohrenschildt, incidentally, was checked out extensively by the Warren Commission that investigated the Kennedy assassination.

Being dead, Mr. Hunt, whose name also gets mentioned in connection with the King assassination, can't defend himself. Whatever one thinks of Mr. Hunt, it is unfair to smear him on the flimsy evidence that has come out so far.

Our interpretation of the secret March 17 discussion was that the committee didn't have much to go on but was in desperate need of some way to make everyone think it had a lot. The situation doesn't seem to have changed. Maybe the deputy chief counsel ought to do a little "soft shoe"; that might at least be entertaining, and it couldn't cause much damage.

MIDNIGHT

April 12, 1977

Can you picture HENRY "The Fonz" WINKLER playing LEE HARVEY OSWALD, JFK's assassin? He's excited about the script shown him by the producers of an upcoming ABC 4-hour TV special, but his "Happy Days" producers — and Henry too — worry how it might hurt his image with teenage fans. So no firm decision as yet.