

Warren Panel Member Suggests Independent Group Study Kennedy X-Rays

By PETER KIHSS

A member of the Warren Commission suggested yesterday that the Attorney General or another appropriate authority might name a "group of doctors and others" to look at X-rays of President Kennedy's body taken after the assassination.

Representative Hale Boggs, Democrat, of Louisiana, who served on the investigating panel headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, insisted that all questions so far raised by critics of the Warren report had been considered by the commission.

He made an exception, however, of calls for an independent look at the X-rays.

Meanwhile, two New York members of the House said yesterday they favored a review by Congress or the Executive branch of the current questions about the case.

They were Representatives Ogden R. Reid, Republican of Westchester, and William F. Ryan, Democrat of Manhattan, appearing here on the WCBS-TV's "Legislative Hearing."

Defends Panel's Finding

Mr. Boggs, the Democratic whip of the House, took part in the Columbia Broadcasting System's "Face the Nation" telecast from Washington. He defended the commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald alone assassinated Mr. Kennedy.

Asked if the evidence against Oswald—who was himself killed two days later—would have been legally sufficient, Mr. Boggs declared:

"I don't think there is any question about the fact that he could have been convicted of first-degree murder."

As to any new inquiry, Mr. Boggs said:

"If the objective of the investigation is to pursue new evidence, that is one thing. If the objective is to answer some of the things that have been raised up to the present, I would say that I would have grave questions about it—except for the autopsy or X-rays."

Cites Lack of Expertise

"The only thing that I have seen that has been presented in all these books, essays, speeches, comments has been the fact that the commission did not look at the X-rays of the President's body at the autopsy," he said, continuing:

"Of course, the members of the commission themselves are not doctors. Looking at them, just looking at X-rays, would not prove anything for me. I don't know how to read medical X-rays. We brought before the commission the man who performed the autopsy. We examined him in great detail.

"Now if it would please anyone, if it would help to clarify any doubts that may exist in the minds of objective people, then I would say that if the Attorney General or some appropriate authority wants to appoint a totally objective group—of doctors and others—to look into these X-rays, maybe it should be done.

"But I would try to disassociate myself from those who are making these comments for gain, for notoriety, for profit rather than those who have legitimate questions in their minds."

Last Thursday, Dr. J. Thornton Boswell, who took part in the autopsy, said the X-rays and photographs of the President's body—placed in the National Archives Oct. 31—would verify the location of a disputed wound at the back base of the neck. But he noted that medical interpretation would remain necessary to trace the path of a bullet through the body and out the front.

Backed Single-Bullet Idea

"Inquest," a book by Edward Jay Epstein, has asserted that the Warren Commission was "more or less evenly split" on whether this bullet could have gone on to wound Gov. John B. Connally Jr. of Texas, who was sitting in front of President Kennedy.

Inside the commission, Mr. Epstein said, Senators Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, and John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Mr. Boggs tended to accept the view that separate bullets hit the President and the Governor.

Mr. Epstein wrote that Representative Gerald R. Ford, Republican of Michigan, Allen W. Dulles and John J. McCloy leaned to the single-bullet hypothesis.

At issue is the question whether there was enough time for separate shots to wound the President and Governor with Oswald's bolt-action rifle, which required 2.3 seconds between shots.

Mr. Boggs said yesterday that he did not like to say he or anyone else "dissented" on the single-bullet theory. But "I have admitted," he said, "that a film of the assassination raised a question."

Nevertheless, Mr. Boggs contended, the evidence is very persuasive for the single-bullet theory, as the commission wrote.

Even if Governor Connally was correct in thinking he was

struck by a separate bullet, Mr. Boggs said, "I think it is still very established that all the bullets came from the rear, which is a significant point."

As to whether a second gun could have been fired from the rear, Mr. Boggs said he was convinced that Oswald was a "loner" who "didn't bring in other people," he continued:

"I sat where Mr. Oswald sat, and I raised the rifle that he used to my own shoulder. I looked through the sight that he had. The idea that you had to be an expert marksman, for instance, is one that I reject."

Talking of Split Seconds

"This car was moving this way away from the building. Almost any marksman using a telescopic sight could have performed that dastardly deed."

"We are talking in terms of split seconds, fractions of seconds," Mr. Boggs said.

"Governor Connally was the one who originally raised the question of separate bullets," he said, and the commission studied it.

Governor Connally told the commission he believed he was wounded at a point indicated between frames 231 and 234 of an amateur movie taken by Abraham Zapruder of Dallas. The commission decided President Kennedy was probably first hit between frames 210 and 225. There is about one-twentieth of a second between frames.

The commission held the single-bullet theory was "not necessary to any essential findings." Some suggestions have been made that Mr. Kennedy might have been wounded at an earlier point, when a road sign blocked the camera's view.

Mr. Boggs also took issue with Mr. Epstein's description of "absenteeism" in the Warren Commission. Mr. Epstein had written that attendance records showed most commissioners were "present for only a minor portion of the hearings."

Mr. Boggs said the records

were "not completely accurate" and "only reflected attendance if you were there when the session opened." If a member arrived during a session he was not recorded as present, he said.

But he said all evidence had been recorded, each day members received copies of transcripts, and he personally had read every word. "I spent more time working on this commission than anything I have worked on in my life," he added.

In the New York telecast, Representative Reid said he thought "some new questions have been raised, some of them by Governor Connally" and "I hope either the Executive or the Congress" will look into the issues.

Representative Ryan said he had "no doubt" that "Oswald fired shots which killed the late President."

But he said so many questions had been raised that "it would further the interests of the American people if it was taken into a Congressional committee."