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BUSINESS MEETING

- - -

FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1978

House of Representatives,
Select Committee on Assassinations,
Washington, D. C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:40 a.m., in Room B-236, United States Capitol, Hon. Louis Stokes, chairman, presiding.

Present: Representatives Stokes, Preyer, Fauntroy, Burke, Dodd, Edgar, Devine and McKinney.

Also present: B. R. Blakey, K. Klein, M. Goldsmith, J. Smith, E. Berning, G. Cornwell and S. Brady.

- - -

Mr. Stokes. A quorum is now present. The committee will be in order.

The Chair will recognize Professor Blakey.

Mr. Blakey. Mr. Chairman, the matters that will be brought before the committee this morning deal with the substance of what procedure of investigation; it would be appropriate therefore that the meeting be in executive session.

Mr. Stokes. The Chair will entertain a motion.

Mr. Preyer. I so move, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stokes. It has been properly moved that the committee

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1 go into executive session for reasons stated and the Clerk
2 will call the roll.

3 Ms. Berning. Mr. Stokes.

4 Mr. Stokes. Aye.

5 Ms. Berning. Mr. Devine.

6 Mr. Devine. Aye.

7 Ms. Berning. Mr. Preyer.

8 Mr. Preyer. Aye.

9 Ms. Berning. Mr. McKinney.

10 Mr. McKinney. Aye.

11 Ms. Berning. Mr. Fauntroy.

12 Mr. Fauntroy. Aye.

13 Ms. Berning. Mr. Thone.

14 (No response.)

15 Ms. Berning. Mrs. Burke.

16 Mrs. Burke. Aye.

17 Ms. Berning. Mr. Sawyer.

18 (No response.)

19 Ms. Berning. Mr. Dodd.

20 (No response.)

21 Ms. Berning. Mr. Ford.

22 (No response.)

23 Ms. Berning. Mr. Fithian.

24 (No response.)

25 Ms. Berning. Mr. Edgar.

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WITHDRAWAL NOTICE

18 Let me raise with the committee a second question.
19 You have had passed to you copies of photographs. The source
20 was from Time-Life. They are enlarged. The individual you
21 see sitting on the curb there is the so-called "umbrella
22 man," with a front view of him. It would be possible if
23 you knew him, I suppose, to identify him. These pictures
24 came into our possession in this form only a week or so
25 ago and the issue I present to you for your resolution is,

1 would it be advisable for the committee, with due dignity, to
2 release these to the press with an effort being made to
3 solicit anyone who could identify the individuals?

4 The umbrella man is in no sense a central figure in the
5 committee's investigation. He is a central figure in the
6 critical literature. The argument is made that he had an
7 umbrella on a sunny day and that the umbrella was raised
8 just before the assassination and was somehow a signal
9 relating to the assassination.

10 If it were possible to identify him and have him come
11 forward, it might be one way which that aspect of the
12 critical literature could be explained.

13 Our ability to identify him simply by showing this
14 photograph to people in Dallas is limited. If we release
15 it to the press, they could obviously give it nation-wide
16 circulation.

17 There are plusses and minuses if we did this. It might
18 appear to some credible people we are pursuing the umbrella
19 man theory, which lacks a certain credibility.

20 On the other hand, if these are printed and we indicate
21 we don't know who the person is, I suppose one of the first
22 things that will be raised is, "Why didn't you give it to the
23 press earlier? We could have identified him at any time."

24 I don't know that there is an easy answer either way.
25 I also don't know that this is a terribly important issue,
but if we were to do it, it probably ought to be done now and

1 it would require a committee resolution to make them public.

2 I might add it might also require the permission of Time-
3 Life, since they are their photographs.

4 Mr. Dodd. Mr. Chairman.

5 Mr. Stokes. Mr. Dodd.

6 Mr. Dodd. I have read that one "Thirty Seconds in
7 Dallas." In fact, they even have it that there is a gun in
8 there; that you open it up and it fires. I just wonder how
9 many theories there are. I know the signal theory and I know
10 about you opening it up and somehow there is a triggering
11 mechanism in the top of the thing. Those are basically the
12 two.

13 Mr. Blakey. Yes.

14 Mr. Dodd. The former having a lot more support, I
15 presume even among the critics, than the latter.

16 Mr. Blakey. He is one of the mystery figures. It is the
17 kind of thing people want explained. Why would a man have an
18 umbrella up on a sunny day?

19 Mr. Edgar. Do we have that picture with us?

20 Mr. Blakey. No, we don't. It is part of the Zapruder
21 film. You can see right below where the President is. It
22 actually raises just before the assassination. These are
23 separate pictures. You can see the umbrella laying right
24 here to the right of the light post. This is indeed an
25 umbrella man.

1 Mr. Fauntroy. The thing that has always puzzled me about
2 this is, with all the attention focused upon this theory,
3 we have had no one to come forward from Day One to say "I am
4 he."

5 With respect, therefore, to the question, shall we
6 publish this in the hope of finding the person, I tend
7 rather to be pessimistic about the prospects.

8 Mr. Devine. He looks like he is 65 years old in that
9 picture. That would make him 80 today.

10 Mr. Fauntroy. No, that is not the man.

11 The question is, what public relations value is there
12 to feeling that we are pursuing every lead? I just don't
13 think it will be productive. If people have been talking
14 about the umbrella man and he hasn't come forward --

15 Mr. Dodd. If that is our only public pronouncement, I
16 think it is going to focus an awful lot of attention on this
17 one single aspect of the thing. It makes it look as
18 though we place a lot of credibility in that.

19 Mr. Stokes. Mr. Edgar.

20 Mr. Edgar. One of the suggestions I would have on a
21 public pronouncement would be to make, on the first or second
22 day of public hearings, a major emphasis on this photograph.
23 That way you would have major TV coverage with a statement
24 that at the beginning of our hearings -- and this is one of
25 the unanswered questions -- I kind of agree with Walter, if we

1 go out to the public now on this one picture, people will
2 pick that up and say, "Oh, they are only pursuing that idea
3 and that thought."

4 It would have to be handled very well.

5 Mr. McKinney. Obviously if I were "the umbrella man"
6 and all of a sudden people were writing about me, I would
7 be the last person to come forward.

8 A president has been shot and who wants the FBI, Secret
9 Service and everybody else pouring over them because they
10 were sitting there with an umbrella.

11 This is the first time we have seen this man's face
12 and I think we should say many of the critics have mentioned
13 this umbrella man and we have found no vast importance to
14 it, but here is his face and would someone please come
15 forward and tell us if they know him?

16 The individual himself would be crazy to come forward.

17 Mr. Blakey. This is the first time there has been a
18 picture of him from the front. In the past it has always
19 been a person from behind.

20 If the background was given to the newspaper people
21 and the statement was made, "This is only one among a number
22 of things being pursued by the committee and it is not of
23 central importance to us, but is a question raised by the
24 critics and it is a matter of some interest that he be
25 identified --"

1 Mr. Devine. Have we other photographs we could have
2 identified at the same time to lessen the focus on this one?

3 Mrs. Burke. I suspect there are other photographs.

4 Mr. Stokes. When you release this photo and ask the
5 press to find out for you who he is, doesn't this lend
6 credence then to precisely what the press is saying? "See
7 there, I told you; they haven't found out anything."

8 I think you just invite that reaction from the press.

9 Mrs. Burke. Of course, we could indicate we have found
10 a photograph of the umbrella man, which nobody else has until
11 now.

12 Mr. Devine. But we would want to talk to him as a
13 witness rather than as a suspect.

14 Mr. Fauntroy. It would be nice to clear that up one
15 way or the other.

16 Mr. McKinney. One thing the critics will say is that
17 they didn't follow up the umbrella man.

18 Mr. Dodd. They are going to be saying things for the
19 next hundred years. If we go into this thing with that in
20 mind, we will be basket cases.

21 Mr. Fauntroy. The idea of a fellow having an umbrella
22 on a sunny day that is opened up just as the President is
23 coming by --

24 Mrs. Burke. This photograph is after the shooting.
25 He is calmly sitting there on the curb.

1 Mr. Fauntroy. This photograph is after the shooting.

2 Mr. Stokes. Yes.

3 Mr. McKinney. He is probably lifting his black umbrella
4 to indicate some protest.

5 Mr. Fauntroy. After he is shot he sits down and says
6 "Well, let's wait here."

7 Mr. Devine. Do you know what was the temperature that
8 day?

9 Mrs. Burke. About 65.

10 Mr. Devine. Some people have an umbrella to shield
11 themselves from the hot sun on a hot day, but 65 in November
12 wouldn't apply.

13 Mr. Preyer. Mr. Chairman, would it be possible for Mr.
14 Blakey to draw up the proposed press release they would
15 propose to use to release this and see whether it would
16 meet with your approval?

17 I agree that how it is presented is crucial. Of course,
18 it could be misinterpreted regardless of how it is presented.
19 We are going to be a loser on this one any way we go.

20 It does have the thrust of a new photograph and if it
21 is presented in the right light so it does not appear we
22 have bought the umbrella man theory, it might indicate the
23 committee's desire to be thorough and follow up all leads.
24 Otherwise, we could be accused of not following up an obvious
25 step.

1 Mr. Devine. Must he be identified with the umbrella?

2 Mrs. Burke. We could say this was a man whose photo-
3 graph we have and we have not been able to identify him and
4 if anybody knows him, will they please write us.

5 Mr. McKinney. Are there any modern photography
6 techniques that will upgrade those pictures?

7 Mrs. Burke. No. This is about the size of a pinhead
8 in an eight by ten. It has already been enlarged and en-
9 hanced and the grain is caused by the lack of information.
10 There is no information there. If you saw the original
11 8 by 10, this is maybe just a one-inch -- the umbrella man
12 may be one inch by one inch and the photograph is eight by
13 ten.

14 Mr. Dodd. If you use anything like that, you are going
15 to get confusion over which one you are talking about.

16 Mr. Stokes. Time-Life has never printed this picture?
17 It is just something that was in their files?

18 Mr. Blakey. Yes.

19 Mr. Stokes. How do you establish the fact, Micky,
20 that it was a photograph taken after?

21 Mr. Goldsmith. If you saw the rest of the picture,
22 you would see in the background people running around, up
23 the grassy knoll. There was a series of seven photographs.
24 This is one of the seven. You can see people running in the
25 background. It is just mass confusion. The photographs before

1 the assassination, people are standing there watching.

2 Mr. Devine. How many seconds per frame would you
3 estimate?

4 Mr. Goldsmith. I couldn't say that.

5 Mr. Devine. Each frame is supposed to be in a second
6 segment. Is this just a straight photo and not part of a
7 motion picture?

8 Mr. Goldsmith. That is right.

9 Mr. Stokes. What does Zapruder show the umbrella man
10 doing?

11 Mr. Goldsmith. You can only see the umbrella. You can
12 see it opening up, being raised, lowered, raised again,
13 simultaneous with the shooting.

14 When Caputo pans in you see the umbrella go up and
15 down but you then continue watching the President and you lose
16 the umbrella.

17 Mr. Stokes. What is the proximity of the umbrella man
18 to the President's car?

19 Mr. Goldsmith. He is standing on the edge of the curb.
20 I don't think he shot the President.

21 Mr. Stokes. We have this man sitting down while you
22 say people are running around all behind him with the
23 President having just been shot. He is raising his umbrella
24 and then calmly sits down?

25 Mr. Goldsmith. He was raising and lowering the umbrella

1 and raising it again. Then you lose the umbrella and you can
2 see the President.

3 We have photographs taken by other people immediately
4 after the shooting. Everyone in the plaza is facing the
5 knoll, running in that direction, and the umbrella man and
6 his friend are the only two people standing facing the
7 complete opposite direction and then the umbrella man is
8 sitting down, which no one else is doing. That is why the
9 critics have focused on him so much, though they have never
10 seen this particular photograph.

Chairman

11 ~~Mr.~~ Stokes. Mr. Devine has offered a very good suggestion.

12 Mrs. Burke. Could I suggest a resolution that would
13 authorize the Chairman, in his discretion, to approve the
14 press release, consistent with the dignity of the committee,
15 not involving the committee in an umbrella theory and consist-
16 ent with Time-Life's permits.

17 Mr. McKinney. I would so move.

Chairman

18 ~~Mr.~~ Stokes. You have heard the resolution. Do you
19 want a record vote?

20 Mr. Blakey. I don't think that is necessary.

21 There are a couple of matters of information you should
22 be aware of.

23 The committee is going into court on Monday in Memphis
24 to examine the records of a hospital dealing with
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There are two other matters I would bring to your attention. One is an outstanding issue. Former President Ford was a member of the Warren Commission. Some time in the next ~~thirty to sixty~~ ^{30 to 60} days he probably ought to be talked to and I would solicit your advice on the way in which that occurs.

If he is in town for another purpose, it might be appropriate to have an executive session in which he could come in and talk about the Warren Commission and his role on it.

If he is going to be in Colorado for any period of

1 time, it might be appropriate for three members of the
2 committee to go out and see him. I would suppose that prior
3 to contacting him in a formal sense, it might be appropriate
4 for the chairman to call him and outline for him the general
5 areas of our interest and concern.

6 Most of the other principal figures in the Warren
7 Commission and cabinet who we have talked to, of all of them,
8 obviously President Ford presents a special problem.

9 Mr. Devine. I know he has accepted an engagement at the
10 Danny Thomas Hospital out there.

11 I could in-quire and find out when he will be in the
12 Washington area.

13 Mrs. Burke. Given our financial situation, if he is
14 here, it would be preferred if we could do it here.

15 Mr. Devine. He will be glad to do this without
16 publicity because if the word gets out we are going to question
17 him, it would be difficult. Perhaps he could be met somewhere
18 off the Hill.

19 Mrs. Burke. I am sure that could be arranged.

20 Mr. Dodd. This doesn't relate directly to President
21 Ford, but are we going to bother with inhabitants of the
22 car --

23 Mrs. Burke. We have talked to Governor Connally.
24 We have not talked to Mrs. Connally.

25 Mr. Dodd. Are we going to pursue that in the committee?

Blaine?

1 Mrs. Burke. It is likely Governor Connally might be a
2 witness in the hearings. We didn't feel it was necessary
3 to present him to you in executive session.

4 Mr. Dodd. We will be apprised of what he will be
5 saying.

6 Mr. Blakey. Absolutely.

7 Mr. Dodd. There is no reason to call Mrs. Kennedy, I
8 presume?

9 Mr. Blakey. I hadn't thought about it. I have not
10 talked to the former First Lady.

11 Mr. Devine. I can anticipate a
12 from President Ford, what do you want to talk about?

13 Mrs. Burke. If you are going to make that phone call
14 what we should give you before hand is a briefing memorandum
15 where we outline for you the various areas. Frankly, I think
16 the committee probably has a duty to, in addition to going
17 over how it was formed, and the pressures under which it
18 worked, airing what came out of the release of the FBI
19 document. That is, had Congressman Ford served as an
20 information conduit for the FBI from the Warren Commission.
21 There are memoranda written by de Loach indicating that is
22 the case. I am aware that the newspapers or, I think it is
23 CBS, has talked to President Ford about that and he has an
24 explanation for it. I do not think that interview has been
25 aired. I believe it was NBC, where Carl Stern talked to him.

1 We will be able to give you a memorandum.

2 Do I sense a consensus on the part of the committee
3 that is the way we should proceed?

4 Mr. Devine. It doesn't make any difference to me.
5 However you want to do it.

6 Mr. Stokes. It would appear that then is the way we
7 should proceed.

8 Mr. Blakey. there is one other item I would bring
9 up at this time before I suggest we go into the briefing and
10 that is if the committee wants to discuss the memorandum that
11 I circulated to you with the suggested date for the King
12 hearings, the Kennedy hearings, and the King hearings again
13 in the public meetings -- I think, Mr. Edgar, you wanted to
14 speak to that.

15 Mr. Edgar. I have a couple of questions, or one specific
16 one that I need to raise and that is, Floyd Fithian and I
17 have been fairly active in the Kingone and we have tough
18 elections and we may be counting fifty votes or one hundred
19 votes at four o'clock in the morning. I notice in the
20 schedule the day after the election we are scheduled to be
21 heard at nine o'clock for a public session. I think that is
22 inappropriate.

23 Mr. McKinney. Let's call it impossible.

24 Mr. Edgar. I would rather come on a Saturday or make
25 one of them nine to twelve or nine to five to make up for the

1 loss of hours. The Wednesday after election doesn't seem to
2 be a good day for any of us.

3 Mr. Blakey. Would Thursday after election?

4 Mr. Edgar. I think I could probably make it by
5 Thursday if I am not packing.

6 I would urge not to use Wednesday.

7 Mr. McKinney. the consensus is unanimous that you are
8 right.

9 Mr. Stokes. Is there anything further?

10 Mr. Dodd. I would like to use a few minutes to discuss
11 his. I have discussed this in the past and I have mentioned
12 it to a few people on the floor over the last couple of days
13 about the scheduling itself. We are looking at the week
14 in August and then the full month of September. I know,
15 Bob, you have expressed the feeling that it would be almost
16 impossible to conduct public hearings and be through by the
17 31st of December. I would like to raise for purposes of dis-
18 cussion here, whether or not we want to proceed with this
19 intensive public session in September.

20 Two, whether or not it is possible to conduct more
21 shifts on part or all of this until November, December and
22 write up the report simultaneously, if that is possible.

23 Mrs. Burke. Let me out line the strategy involved in
24 setting this up. We are obviously dealing with problems.
25 If you push it in one place, it will push out in another

1 direction. I think the first two things that have to be
2 said is that the committee has to begin its public hearings
3 before the end of September on both King and Kennedy because
4 we will have to come up in September for additional money to
5 go through December.

6 While I am certainly not an expert in politics, having
7 sat through the hearings and the floor debate on our money
8 bill the last time, it is difficult for me to believe that the
9 floor would give this committee more money unless it had
10 started its hearings.

11 I think preferably we should finish our hearings as an
12 integral presentation on both sides. It is just not possible
13 to do that before September.

14 In addition, the King hearings would have a special
15 problem with the appearance of James Earl Ray. We can
16 anticipate that he will present new material of some kind and
17 therefore we probably ought to get him out of the way in
18 August and then finish up the King hearings in November or
19 we will have the opportunity in September and October to run
20 down anything he says is new.

21 If we don't begin in a substantial way demonstrating
22 our competency, our professionalism and our serious dedication
23 prior to the votes in September, I doubt that the Congress
24 would finance it. This means, in my judgment, we would have
25 to begin in August and September. Then I think in September

1 we should finish Kennedy as a whole, so that people can watch
2 it as a whole and not have it broken up.

3 Mr.Dodd. May we go off the record, Mr. Chairman?

4 Mr.Stokes. Yes.

5 (Discussion off the record.)

6 Mr. Stokes. Back on the record.

7 Mr. Blakey. Mr. Chairman, I have no further business
8 to bring before the committee.

9 Mr. Stokes. There being no further business before the
10 committee, the committee meeting is adjourned subject to the
11 call of the Chair.

12 (Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the committee adjourned, to
13 reconvene at the call of the Chair.)

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