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BUSINESS MEETING

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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.


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

Ms. Berning. Mr. Stokes.

Mr. Stokes. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Devine.

Mr. Devine. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Preyer.

Mr. Preyer. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. McKinney.

Mr. McKinney. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fauntroy.

Mr. Fauntroy. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Thone.

(No response.)

Ms. Berning. Mrs. Burke.

Mrs. Burke. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Sawyer.

(No response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Dodd.

(No response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Ford.

(No response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fithian.

(No response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Edgar.
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NA FORM 14000 (1-86)
Let me raise with the committee a second question. You have had passed to you copies of photographs. The source was from Time-Life. They are enlarged. The individual you see sitting on the curb there is the so-called "umbrella man," with a front view of him. It would be possible if you knew him, I suppose, to identify him. These pictures came into our possession in this form only a week or so ago and the issue I present to you for your resolution is,
would it be advisable for the committee, with due dignity, to release these to the press with an effort being made to solicit anyone who could identify the individuals?

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

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

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

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

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

I don't know that there is an easy answer either way. 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
it would require a committee resolution to make them public.

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

Mr. Dodd. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stokes. Mr. Dodd.

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

Mr. Blakey. Yes.

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

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

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

Mr. Blakey. No, we don't. It is part of the Zapruder
film. You can see right below where the President is. It
actually raises just before the assassination. These are
separate pictures. You can see the umbrella laying right
here to the right of the light post. This is indeed an
umbrella man.
Mr. Fauntroy. The thing that has always puzzled me about this is, with all the attention focused upon this theory, we have had no one to come forward from Day One to say "I am he."

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Stokes. Mr. Edgar.

Mr. Edgar. One of the suggestions I would have on a public pronouncement would be to make, on the first or second day of public hearings, a major emphasis on this photograph. That way you would have major TV coverage with a statement that at the beginning of our hearings -- and this is one of the unanswered questions -- I kind of agree with Walter, if we
go out to the public now on this one picture, people will pick that up and say, "Oh, they are only pursuing that idea and that thought."

It would have to be handled very well.

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

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

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

The individual himself would be crazy to come forward.

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

If the background was given to the newspaper people and the statement was made, "This is only one among a number of things being pursued by the committee and it is not of central importance to us, but is a question raised by the critics and it is a matter of some interest that he be identified --"
Mr. Devine. Have we other photographs we could have identified at the same time to lessen the focus on this one?

Mrs. Burke. I suspect there are other photographs.

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

I think you just invite that reaction from the press.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Burke. This photograph is after the shooting. He is calmly sitting there on the curb.
Mr. Fauntroy. This photograph is after the shooting.

Mr. Stokes. Yes.

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

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

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

Mrs. Burke. About 65.

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

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

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

It does have the thrust of a new photograph and if it is presented in the right light so it does not appear we have bought the umbrella man theory, it might indicate the committee's desire to be thorough and follow up all leads. Otherwise, we could be accused of not following up an obvious step.
Mr. Devine. Must he be identified with the umbrella?

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Bakey. Yes.

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

Mr. Goldsmith. If you saw the rest of the picture, you would see in the background people running around, up the grassy knoll. There was a series of seven photographs. This is one of the seven. You can see people running in the background. It is just mass confusion. The photographs before
the assassination, people are standing there watching.

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

Mr. Goldsmith. I couldn't say that.

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

Mr. Goldsmith. That is right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Goldsmith. He was raising and lowering the umbrella
and raising it again. Then you lose the umbrella and you can see the President.

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

Chairman Stokes. Mr. Devine has offered a very good suggestion.

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

Mr. McKinney. I would so move.

Chairman Stokes. You have heard the resolution. Do you want a record vote?

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

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

The committee is going into court on Monday in Memphis to examine the records of a hospital dealing with
If he is going to be in Colorado for any period of time, it might be appropriate to have an executive session in which he could talk to the President about the situation. Some time in the next thirty days he probably ought to be talked to and I would solicit your advice on the way in which that occurs.

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 days he probably ought to be talked to and I would solicit your advice on the way in which that occurs.
time, it might be appropriate for three members of the committee to go out and see him. I would suppose that prior to contacting him in a formal sense, it might be appropriate for the chairman to call him and outline for him the general areas of our interest and concern.

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

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

I could inquire and find out when he will be in the Washington area.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Dodd. Are we going to pursue that in the committee?
Mrs. Burke. It is likely Governor Connally might be a
witness in the hearings. We didn't feel it was necessary
to present him to you in executive session.

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

Mr. Blakey. Absolutely.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Devine. It doesn't make any difference to me.

However you want to do it.

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

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

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

Mr. McKinney. Let's call it impossible.

Mr. Edgar. I would rather come on a Saturday or make one of them nine to twelve or nine to five to make up for the
loss of hours. The Wednesday after election doesn't seem to
be a good day for any of us.

Mr. Blakey. Would Thursday after election?

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

I would urge not to use Wednesday.

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

Mr. Stokes. Is there anything further?

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

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

Mrs. Burke. Let me out line the strategy involved in
setting this up. We are obviously dealing with problems.
If you push it in one place, it will push out in another
direction. I think the first two things that have to be
said is that the committee has to begin its public hearings
before the end of September on both King and Kennedy because
we will have to come up in September for additional money to
go through December.

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

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

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

If we don't begin in a substantial way demonstrating
our competency, our professionalism and our serious dedication
prior to the votes in September, I doubt that the Congress
would finance it. This means, in my judgment, we would have
to begin in August and September. Then I think in September
we should finish Kennedy as a whole, so that people can watch
it as a whole and not have it broken up.

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

Mr. Stokes. Yes.

(Discussion off the record.)

Mr. Stokes. Back on the record.

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

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

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