

Books

Fifth Estate Collective

1967

a review of

- *The Scavengers and Critics of the Warren Report* by Richard Warren Lewis based on an investigation by Lawrence Schiller. Dell Original 95 cents
- *The Truth About the Assassination* by Charles Roberts. Grosset & Dunlap, Original Paperback \$1

"If I learned anything in Dallas that day, besides what it's like to be numbed by shock and grief," says Charles Roberts in his book (p. 13), "it was that eye-witness testimony is the worst kind."

With this thesis Roberts and Richard Warren Lewis (*The Scavengers*) set out to discredit Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein, Penn Jones, Harold Weisberg and the other critics of *The Warren Report*.

It does not seem important to either Roberts or Lewis that the greatest majority of witnesses thought the shots, or at least some of the shots, came from the area of the grassy knoll. Neither seem concerned that Lane and Jones and others have questioned these witnesses. Rather, our critics of the critics, discount entirely these first hand sources and turn to ridiculing the critics for their scavenging efforts to make a buck.

It is unfortunate that these men do not examine the evidence as evidence, but only attempt to make the critics appear as barkers and revivalists. Instead of going to the source (to Dallas, to those involved); instead of sitting in with the Commission (as Epstein has done); instead of photographing the Plaza from a helicopter as Penn Jones has done, the "critics" have reclined with the assurance of arm chair quarterbacks to make books out of their book "reviews" and character assassination.

Roberts's book is a goulsh red, yellow and black paperback with a photo of Air Force One on the inside back cover. Roberts is circled (but hazed out) behind LBJ taking the oath of office. Roberts seems ready to tell us he was there but admonishes the critics for using eyewitnesses!

Lewis deals with less facts than Roberts and is more adept at character assassination. He examines the critics from personal interviews with them. He told all the critics he was doing (he and Schiller) a book in their favor. An old journalism trick, of course...

The primary difference between these "new critics" and Lane, Jones, Weisberg, et al is that the real critics are dealing with the facts as presented in the Report and the 26 volumes of evidence. Lewis, Schiller and Roberts are dealing only in personality invasion.

One example of the Lewis-Schiller style is that they try to make us think Penn Jones is an alcoholic. They set this up by asking him if there was any liquor around. Jones, editor of the *Midlothian Mirror* (a little town 25 miles south of Dallas) went across the street and got them a bottle. Then they all commenced to take a little drink. In the book, there is no mention that Lewis-Schiller touched a drop.

Finally, after this hatchet work is done, the publishers ask "important personalities" to do introductions. Bob Considine calls the Lewis-Schiller book "the Rosetta Stone of the Report." And if this is not enough mundane

metaphor, he adds: "If this is not the ultimate word on the assassination and the sternest rebuke to the grave robbers, it will at least be required reading for the historian of the future..." Uh-uh.

Pierre Salinger's foreword to the Robert's book is even worse. "The books about the Warren Commission," he says, "divide into three categories: those written with a scholarly approach to whom we must attribute the best motive, those written by persons with a desire for notoriety or money, and those written for persons who clearly have to be labeled as psychotic."

Is it not enough that these characters feel they can tell us *why* the critics are doing what they are doing by simply talking with them a few minutes (over gin), or must we even go further (right?) and let Salinger's kind of minor league psychoanalysis end all debate?



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