

July 7, 1997

Letter to the Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43d Street  
New York, N.Y. 10036-3959

To the Editor:

Leaving aside the complex issues relating to the King case that are raised in "The Amnesty Option" (editorial, July 6), I would like to comment on your statements concerning the Kennedy assassination.

Your claim that "there are no official investigations extant" in the Kennedy case is misleading. In fact, there is an independent federal agency that is currently working to open all U.S. Government records relating to the Kennedy assassination. This agency -- the Assassination Records Review Board -- was created by Congress in 1992 pursuant to the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act and armed with broad powers. There is currently a bill on President Clinton's desk to extend the Review Board for one more year to allow for the complete review and public release of additional secret CIA and FBI records on the assassination.

Although not empowered to re-investigate the assassination of President Kennedy, we are charged with locating and releasing all United States Government records relating to the assassination and identifying and securing relevant records in private hands. While the Review Board takes no position on any theory of the assassination, or on the question of whether a new investigation into the assassination should be convened, we are dedicated to assuring that the most complete and accurate record is compiled.

It was in pursuit of this important goal that the Review Board secured the donation of the papers of J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the Warren Commission, from his family and announced their release last week. And it was in connection with this release that the edits of a draft of the Warren Commission Report by Commission member Gerald Ford made news and found mention in your call for "greater clarity" about the Kennedy assassination.

Unfortunately your incorrect assertion that former President Ford had "disclosed" that he had "altered" the "Warren Commission *finding* (emphasis added)" concerning the location of one of President Kennedy's wounds contributes not clarity but confusion. It does a disservice to the truth, to the public, and to President Ford. Furthermore, your characterization of the recent disclosures about the CIA, the Mafia, and the assassination plots against Castro as "new" will come as a surprise to many of your readers who will recall their revelation by the Church Committee more than two decades ago and their investigation by the House select Committee on Assassinations.

While it may be that your proposal of amnesty could play a role in reaching the truth and restoring faith in our government and its institutions, it can be no substitute for the task of the review Board which is the full disclosure of all relevant records. Nor can it substitute for your task which is the careful, responsible, and accurate reporting of the facts.

Yours sincerely,