

February 3, 1998

Mr. Jim DiEugenio
Chairman
CTKA
P.O. Box 3317
Culver City, CA 90231

Dear Mr. DiEugenio:

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the article entitled, "The Review Board's Public Comments (Part II)," that appeared in Probe, Vol. 5, No. 2 January- February, 1998. Balanced and fair journalism called out for the Review Board to have been given an opportunity to respond to the statements made about the members in the Probe article. Unfortunately, the Board was not afforded that opportunity.

First, the statutory mission of the Board under the JFK Act is to release records related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (as opposed to reaching any substantive conclusions about who killed the President) and that is the sole measure by which it should be judged. By this measure, the Board has done an outstanding job. Publication of this Probe issue comes at a time when the Board has once again demonstrated its effectiveness by processing 5,000 additional records in January for public release, more than any other previous month. The Board has taken a firm stance against the CIA, the FBI, and other federal agencies in dealing with important issues related to the release of records. Similarly, the Board and the staff have been aggressive in locating additional records both within and outside of government.

Second, in all of the closed meetings, no Board member has ever argued that something should not be released because it did or did not support any theory of the assassination. The Board has scrupulously opened all information without regard to any particular belief about the assassination. For the Board's work of declassifying records, theories are not relevant. Hence the Board members have put aside their own personal opinions and have done a professional and objective job. Moreover, in hiring the staff, the Board never once imposed a litmus test or even asked what staff member opinions are relative to the assassination.

Third, apparently Probe does not want to measure the Board by the results of its work, but chose instead to make judgements based on a form of "political correctness" of Board members' individual opinions. Your point seems to be that if the views of individual Board members do not conform with Probe's views, then these views are "politically incorrect" and should not be articulated. The irony is that it is the members of this Board who are responsible for the release of so many records that you argue support your theory that there was a conspiracy. For example, you cite the importance of releasing Gerald Ford's edits to the Warren Commission's draft of the final report that dealt with President Kennedy's non-fatal wound. The release of this document alone demonstrates that the personal opinions of Board members, whatever they may be, have had absolutely no influence on the Board doing its job: releasing records. Let's let the released records speak rather than criticize the very people who are making them available.

Fourth, contrary to what is stated in the Probe article, Board members do not "collect two full paychecks for working what is essentially a part-time job." In fact, Board members are compensated solely for the time that they are attending Board meetings in Washington, D.C., or traveling somewhere else on Board business, such as the public hearing in Los Angeles. Since becoming a federal judge, Chairman Tunheim receives no compensation for his time or work.

Probe subscribers should be assured that Review Board members have consistently approached their task based on the facts and the law. As members of a Board created by a law to further openness in government, they have been more open than anyone could reasonably have expected. Their work demonstrates that there are no hidden agendas and that they are dedicated to making the record surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy as complete as possible and available to the American public. It is regrettable that Probe failed to acknowledge the Board's contributions and the number of released documents that allow Probe subscribers the opportunity they deserve to research a fuller historical record.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Samoluk
Deputy Director