

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jack Tunheim

CC: David Marwell

FROM: Tom Samoluk

RE: Washington Post Meetings on Monday, December 12, 1994

DATE: December 9, 1994

The Schedule

You are scheduled to meet with Jeff Morley, Assistant Editor for the Outlook section of the Washington Post (334-6053) from 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. on Monday, December 12, 1994.

Jeff has also arranged for you to meet with Leonard Downie, Jr., the Executive Editor of the Post, at 2:30 p.m. The meeting will last approximately 15 minutes. Jeff will accompany us to the meeting.

The meetings will take place at The Washington Post, located at 1150 15th Street, N.W. David and I will accompany you to the Post.

The Morley Meeting

Jeff would like to get from you a general overview of the Board's work to date and the schedule for the future.

He has also mentioned the following areas to me and I expect that they will come up in your meeting:

1. The Board's schedule for future public hearings. I have told him that the Board tentatively plans some type of visits to Miami, New Orleans, Boston and Los Angeles in early 1995. I indicated that firmer plans would be made at the Board's meeting next week.

2. Any concerns we may have about future funding of the Board because the Republicans will now be in the majority in the Congress. I told Jeff that we have seen no indication of problems at this time, but as with virtually every agency we are aware of the potential impact the change in the Congress could have on the Board and intend to monitor it closely. However, I also noted that the Act creating the Board was introduced and passed with bipartisan support, and we hoped that support would continue in the future.

3. A piece he is writing on John Newman. He would not give me any details, but the story apparently has to do with "new" information which Newman has uncovered related to the Kennedy assassination. Newman has told Morley that he has been "helping the Board." Jeff would like to get a quote from you about Newman. David and I believe that you have to be very careful about what you say about Newman, so you do not appear to be endorsing him or any views which he holds or theories which he espouses. We suggest you say the following:

"Like many other researchers, John Newman has provided helpful assistance to the Review Board. The Congress made clear that the Board should be open and accessible and use the expertise which many people have gained through years of research. We intend to maintain a dialogue with the research community as we pursue our work and John is certainly included in that group.

John Newman is one of the researchers who is taking full advantage of the availability of the documents which have recently been released on the Kennedy assassination. The Congress said that the purpose of the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act was to allow the American public access to all of the records and draw their own conclusions about what happened in Dallas 31 years ago. The Board takes no position on any conclusions which are drawn by John Newman or anyone else, but John is definitely doing what the Congress wanted people to be able to do."

The Downie Meeting

As the Executive Editor, Downie is second only to the Donald Graham, the Publisher of the Post. It is an excellent opportunity for you to discuss the Board's mandate and the potentially broader implications of what the Board will be doing.

I doubt that any issues or questions will come up that you have not previously addressed. Although there is not a lot of time, I suggest that you try to make the following points during the meeting:

1. The Assassination Records Review Board is an independent federal panel.
2. The Board's mandate is to identify and secure all Kennedy assassination records.
3. It is up to the Board to determine which records are to be made public immediately and which ones will have postponed release dates.
4. The purpose of the law and the Board's work is to provide a full record to the American public and allow interested parties to draw their own conclusions about what happened in Dallas 31 years ago.

5. The Board is not re-investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Its focus is assassination records.

These basic points are important because Downie will probably not have focused on the Board too much until we get there, but additional points about the broader implications of the Board's work are also important. I suggest you attempt to work the following points into the conversation with Downie:

1. The Act which created the Review Board has given the American public an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity to gain insight into its government and recent history.

2. The Board has the opportunity not only of making publicly available records that may clarify the facts surrounding the assassination, but also, along the way, the opportunity to redefine the meaning of, and the need for, secrecy in government.

3. The unprecedented powers given to an independent panel of private citizens will also hopefully help to restore a measure of confidence in government.

4. The controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination is unlikely to disappear even after the Board's work is completed. But, the American public will know that no information about the assassination is being hidden by the government. Perhaps we will see a way for government business to be conducted more effectively -- and more openly -- in the future.