

MEMORANDUM

February 4, 1998

To: Assassination Records Review Board

From: T. Jeremy Gunn

Subject: Experts Conference

I am attaching a revised list of proposed invitees to the Experts Conference. This revised list reflects suggestions from Anna's January 30 memo.

Background thoughts

David Garrow and Page Miller have accepted the invitations to participate.

Keeping in mind that the group of invitees presumably will include no more than 8-10 additional invitees, I would like to offer three comments. First, it would be reasonable to limit the number of historians-academics. There are, already, four distinguished historians-academics on the Board. Whoever is invited from this group should be particularly knowledgeable about either government records management or declassification. Second, although we do not want party-line people from the agencies (or academe), I think it would be prudent to include some government officials who have relevant experience and who may be able to make realistic suggestions. It would be better to have people who can reasonably disagree and discuss the issues rather than limit participation to those who essentially agree and who essentially approach the issue from the same vantage point. Finally, I do think that it would be appropriate to have one or two people who are familiar with the nitty-gritty of the FOIA process. Selecting who that person or persons might be is, of course, problematic.

We continue to live under the Sunshine Act, which restricts the deliberative process to official meetings. With regard to a final selection of names, the following are some options for consideration:

First, the names of potential invitees could be distributed to the Board in a notation-vote format.

Second, based upon the informal discussions with Board members, I could prepare a final list of invitees and distribute it to the Board for an up or down notation vote.

Third, we could schedule an open meeting for a discussion and decision.

Fourth, the staff could make the selections.

Although there are notable advantages and disadvantages to each of these approaches, I would prefer the first option. This provides the Board with the maximum role as decision maker.

Proposal

During the conference call tomorrow (or in separate calls to me), I suggest that the Board Members advise whether there are any additional names that they would like to add to the list or to remove from the list. When I have received those comments, I will redistribute a final list on Thursday afternoon with a space for members to vote "1," "2," or "3" by each candidate. As soon as I receive the votes, I will add up the totals and then distribute a final list of invitees. Unless Board members object to names on the final list, I will then send out invitations on Monday. Because we cannot expect that everyone who is invited will attend, we will have fall-back candidates.

I await your thoughts.