

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# Russo Charges NBC Tried to Buy Testimony

Key Kennedy death plot witness Perry R. Russo has resisted a National Broadcasting Co. attack on his testimony and charged a team of NBC reporters with trying to buy his cooperation.

Russo's statement, made during a news conference at District Attorney Jim Garrison's office yesterday afternoon, was denied immediately by NBC and its local affiliate, WDSU-TV.

The new controversy was picked up when NBC aired a special hour-long documentary on the Garrison investigation Monday night.

IT QUOTED RUSSO, the young insurance salesman who said he overheard Clay L. Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald and the late David W. Ferrie plotting John F. Kennedy's death, as saying he was sorry he ever got involved in the investigation.

At his press conference yesterday, Russo faced newsmen with apparent confidence and declared that an NBC newsmen, Walter Sheridan, "twisted" his words.

Russo said Sheridan, WDSU-TV reporter Richard Townley and Saturday Evening Post writer James Phelan repeatedly visited his home in attempts to persuade him to cooperate with "NBC and the defense."

Russo said he met with the trio with the full knowledge of the district attorney's office and reported everything that happened to Asst. DA Andrew Sciamora.

RUSSO SAID, "SHERIDAN offered to set me up in California, protect my job and guarantee that Garrison would never get me extradited back to Louisiana" if he cooperated.

He accused Townley of threatening him with public humiliation unless he changed his story and cooperated with the NBC program.

The 25-year-old witness said members of the trio told him both "NBC and the Central Intelligence Agency are out to wreck Garrison's investigation."

Russo's statements drew an immediate denial from the network and spokesmen for Townley.

The WDSU-TV news director, Ed Planer, said Russo's "versions of his conversations with Richard Townley are not the same as the dated and timed memorandum that Townley wrote following their conversations."

IN NEW YORK, a spokesman for NBC said Townley talked with Russo on several occasions but "denied telling him he was working closely with the defense or threatening to ruin Russo's reputation."

"On the contrary," the NBC source said, "Townley says it was Russo who brought up the subject of reputation and says Russo admitted the defense could 'tear him apart.'"

Townley issued a blanket denial of any CIA complicity, the spokesman said, and said that Russo asked the NBC team to "find a way out" for him.

He said there was "absolutely no truth" to Russo's allegations about Sheridan offering him money or support.

RUSSO WAS ASKED by newsmen if he had testified truthfully during the preliminary hearing after which 24-

year-old Shaw was bound over for trial on charges of plotting Kennedy's murder.

It was the "absolute truth," the witness replied.

At Washington, D. C., yesterday, the Federal Communications Commission acknowledged receipt of a formal complaint against NBC filed by Garrison.

The DA has charged the network with interfering with a case under investigation and has asked the FCC to take disciplinary action.

An FCC spokesman said the complaint will be sent to the network, which will be given 20 days to reply. The FCC then will determine whether there has been any violation of Federal law or regulations.

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STATES-ITEM

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