

Sheridan Due Before Jury In 'Bribe' Quiz

A television network newsman accused by Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison of attempting to bribe a witness in the DA's Kennedy death plot investigation was scheduled to appear before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury today.

National Broadcasting Co. reporter Walter Sheridan was subpoenaed yesterday as he appeared to post \$5,000 bond in the public bribery case.

MEANWHILE, U. S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., brother of the slain President, vigorously defended the 41-year-old reporter in a statement released at Washington.

Kennedy declared he has known Sheridan for many years and added:

"It is not possible that Mr. Sheridan would do anything which would in the slightest degree compromise the truth

in regard to the investigation in New Orleans."

APPEARING voluntarily, yesterday, Sheridan said he is innocent of the bribery charge. He accused Garrison of trying to intimidate newsmen who develop information detrimental to the investigation.

The charge against Sheridan grew out of activities of an NBC news team prior to the June 19 airing of an hour-long network program which said Garrison's case against 54-year-old Clay Shaw is based, in part, on faulty testimony.

Ten days ago, the DA charged that Sheridan offered star prosecution witness Perry R. Russo a home in California, the services of an attorney and protection against extradition if he would change his story.

RUSSO HELD a news con-

ference the day after the NBC program was broadcast and told reporters Sheridan offered to "set me up in California" if he would recant the testimony he gave at a preliminary hearing.

Russo, a Baton Rouge insurance salesman, told the preliminary hearing for Shaw

that he overheard the retired New Orleans businessman help plan Kennedy's Dallas slaying.

NBC claimed Russo was placed on the witness stand despite a lie detector test which did not substantiate his testimony. Russo and DA aides denied the witness had failed a lie test.

The statement issued yesterday by Kennedy asserted: "I have been fortunate to know and work with Walter Sheridan for many years. Like all of those who have known him and his work, I have the utmost confidence in his integrity, both personal and professional.

"This view was shared by President Kennedy, himself, with whom Mr. Sheridan was associated for many years in a relationship of utmost trust, confidence and affection."

SHERIDAN, A former official of the U.S. Justice Department, was chief investigator for the Senate Rackets Committee when Robert Kennedy was chief counsel for that body. He later served under Kennedy in the Justice Department when the latter was attorney-general.

In other developments, a newsman for WDSU-TV, NBC's New Orleans affiliate, has pleaded innocent to a bri-

bery charge similar to the one placed against Sheridan.

The DA's office charged that Richard L. Townley attempted both to bribe and intimidate Russo. Townley posted \$7,500 bond.

Answering Sheridan's accusation that he is trying to stifle freedom of the press, Garrison said:

"Mr. Walter Sheridan insults the concept of freedom of the press when he attempts to use it to make himself look heroic. Freedom of the press does not include the right to destroy a state's case

so that a defendant can escape justice."

HE SAID Sheridan produced "the notorious National Broadcasting Co. program concerning the New Orleans investigation," adding:

"Aside from the fact that it insulted the intelligence of every American, it was a very clear attempt to prejudice in advance possible jurors in the case.

"This program will probably stand for years as a symbol of the lengths to which some powerful outside interests will go in order to interfere with state government."

Noting that Sheridan is a "known intimate" of Robert Kennedy, Garrison questioned how the newsman could be loyal to both the senator and NBC. **END**

DA Seeks Sheridan Hearing for Monday

The Orleans Parish district attorney's office will ask for an open hearing Monday to determine whether National Broadcasting Co. investigator Walter Sheridan has to go before the Orleans Parish grand jury.

Assistant DA James L. Alcock today said he will file an answer tomorrow to Sheridan's motion filed yesterday seeking, among other things, to quash the subpoena requiring him to appear before the jury.

Judge Bernard J. Bagert yesterday put off Sheridan's appearance until a hearing could be held on the motion.

Originally, Sheridan was subpoenaed to go before the jury yesterday, ostensibly to repeat under oath NBC's charge against Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's Kennedy assassination plot probe.

SHERIDAN WAS a prime source of the information used on an NBC hour-long broadcast last month in which Garrison's office was charged with a number of instances of misconduct, principally bribing and threatening witnesses.

Two weeks ago, Garrison retaliated by charging Sheridan with public bribery and intimidation.

When Sheridan went to the Criminal Courts Building Tuesday to post a \$5,000 cash bond, he was spotted by members of the DA's staff and served with the grand jury subpoena.

In the motion yesterday, Sheridan alleged that the subpoena "can only be an attempt by the district attorney to back up his bill of information with an indictment," and that it was issued merely "to coerce and intimidate" Sheridan.

The five-point motion also asked for a hearing to determine the legality of the makeup of the current grand jury.

IRONICALLY, the motion will be heard by Judge Bagert, who personally picked the 12

members of the current jury, whose six-month term expires at the end of August.

The motion charged that Garrison is "subverting the historical purpose of the grand jury" by using it for his own purpose.

Garrison's opponents in the probe have repeatedly stated that the current jurors are "in Garrison's pocket," and yesterday the DA's former aide, William Gurvich, said that the "hand picked" jury "came right out of the locker room of the NOAC" (New Orleans Athletic Club).

Gurvich, who left the DA's office a month ago, firing charges of misconduct at Garrison, showed up at the courts building yesterday as the Sheridan motion was being filed, "just to see what happens."

Judge Bagert said he did not set a specific time for the hearing, but would wait to see how much time the DA's office would require.

Asst. Dist. Atty. James L. Alcock said he would ask for the hearing "in the next couple of days," probably tomorrow. He indicated that if Sheridan's attorneys lose the motion, the NBC man will be ordered to testify next Wednesday at the next grand jury meeting.

JUDGE BAGERT said he would make no comment yesterday concerning the makeup of the current jury, adding that he will apparently be called upon as a witness later to testify concerning his method of picking the jurors.

The judge said he feels he will be asked to take the stand

when attorneys for Clay L. Shaw—the only man charged with the alleged assassination plot—file a new motion to quash Shaw's grand jury indictment.

Shaw's attorneys have also indicated they plan to contest the picking of jurors. **END.**

SUBPENAS

DA,

JURORS IN

SHERIDAN

HEARING

All members of the Orleans Parish Grand Jury, Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and some members of his staff were subpoenaed today to appear at a hearing on a motion to quash the jury's subpoena of television newsman Walter Sheridan.

Sheridan is accused of public bribery by the district attorney's office. The Grand Jury has been investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

THE SUBPENAS, which also went to

others, were issued at the request of Sheridan's defense attorney, Milton Brener.

Sheridan, an investigative reporter for NBC, has been charged with public bribery in connection with Garrison's Kennedy probe following an NBC documentary that was highly critical of the investigation.

The newsman, when subpoenaed to appear before the Grand Jury, charged that Garrison is manipulating the jury to suit his own purposes.

HE THEN FILED a motion to quash the subpoena of himself.

772 The date for the hearing on the motion has not yet been set. The subpoenas issued today were issued for the persons to appear "when the hearing date is set."

Besides the Grand Jury members and Garrison, subpoenas have been issued to: First Assistant DA Charles Ray Ward. William Gurvich, former chief investigative aide to Garrison, who has been highly critical of the DA since he resigned from the staff.

JAMES ALCOCK, an assistant DA who has played a leading role in the investigation.

Willard E. Robertson, the New Orleans businessman who was instrumental in forming "Truth and Consequences of New Orleans Inc.," the organization formed to bankroll the Garrison probe with private funds so he could act in secrecy.

Three members of the Orleans Parish Jury Commission—Noel Radai, chairman; Mrs. Louise Bistes, commissioner, and Julian Murphy, clerk. *END*