

Judicial Farce in New Orleans

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ISSUE: A jury has exonerated Clay Shaw of the conspiracy charge against him. But what should be the fate of his prosecutor?

It took a New Orleans jury less than an hour to put an end to the two-year ordeal of Clay Shaw and give a proper legal burial to the absurd and malicious case which Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison had concocted against him. Justice was thus done, if only belatedly and after the processes of justice had been outrageously abused.

But the inexcusable persecution which went before, and which continues now with charges of "perjury" against Shaw, cannot simply be forgotten.

The American Bar Assn. has said it will recommend that the Louisiana Bar Assn. consider disciplinary action against Garrison. Surely this is the very least that could be asked or expected. That a jury unanimously found Shaw innocent of the charge against him in no way reduces Garrison's culpability in the matter.

From the beginning he had sought to show that the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy was a deliberate attempt to cover up what the district attorney maintained was a conspiracy to commit murder. To attack the credibility of the report and support his own sensational allegation, Garrison had to prove a conspiracy. Shaw was his vehicle—and his victim—in that effort.

The conspiracy case collapsed under its own fantastic pretensions and, ultimately, admissions of perjury. As weird a collection of witnesses as ever decorated a

courtroom was brought in by the prosecution, only to destroy themselves by their own testimony. It was not a question of Garrison failing to prove his case against Shaw. It was a question of Garrison having no case at all.

It has been said by some who know Garrison that he is sincere in his belief of a conspiracy. Perhaps this is true. But what is also apparent is that this belief became an obsession, one in which the means were taken to justify the end. The victimization of Clay Shaw was nothing more than a convenient tool by which Garrison hoped to make his point.

The really frightening thing about all this is that Shaw could have been any man.

His involvement in the case, after all, was based on the most tenuous of evidential supposition, along with a great deal of imagination by the prosecution. In this tragic Kafkaesque nightmare, fate and Jim Garrison might have singled out any citizen. Could one less rich and less well placed socially have survived—emotionally and financially—as Shaw did?

If there is one fact proven beyond all dispute in the Shaw case it is that Jim Garrison is unfit to hold public office. Decency, to say nothing of a sense of common humility, requires that he resign. Since that is probably expecting too much, the voters of Orleans Parish should expel him from office in the election later this year.

Garrison's continued occupancy of his position is an affront to American justice, one on a par with the indictment and prosecution of Clay Shaw.