

RADIO FREE AMERICA

by Lawrence Lipton

Free Press Jim Garrison: Exercise in futility 3-14-68

Months ago I called attention in this column to the prospect that when he finally takes his case into court Jim Garrison might be faced with the impossible task of trying to prove his whole case with unfriendly witnesses, in the hope of pulling a TV Perry Mason courtroom miracle: that is, getting unfriendly and reluctant witnesses to convict themselves in court through clever prosecution questioning, direct and indirect. The only trouble with this procedure is the Garrison didn't have script control of the show, the way Perry Mason has, and the result was frustrating, for himself, his assistants and all of us who were hoping he could turn the trick and come up with at least a guilty of conspiracy verdict. But it should have been obvious to Garrison that it wasn't in the cards. Maybe he WAS sick during the trial and couldn't prosecute in person till the last summation to the jury, or was it a sickness of the heart and a sinking realization that he was headed for defeat?

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about the whole affair. Does he possess evidence that was inadmissible in court because of the rigid rules of evidence that so often put "legality" above disclosure? If so, will he now publish his evidence in a book, bringing his case, if any, before a higher court of justice than the Establishment's legal machinery—the court of public opinion. The prosecution of Shaw for perjury will not accomplish such a purpose, and Garrison knows it, I'm sure. Only a book can do the trick now, if it can be done at all, a book, where the courtroom rules of evidence do not apply and there is room for deduction, induction, hunches, educated guesses, intuitions and brilliant reconstructions of the event. A book, in short, like Emil Zola's "I Accuse!" which was based on less, perhaps, on the Dreyfus case, than Garrison has in his files on the JFK case. (NOTE: for those who have forgotten; Dreyfus was finally cleared, but not before Zola was tried and sentenced to prison for attacking the French military in "I Accuse!" and had to flee to England for a time. Garrison I'm sure, knows THAT story, and I'm also sure he's got the guts to pull another Zola—IF he's got just a little more on the case than he was able to bring into court.)

Postscript: Where in the hell was that savior of his country Mort Sahl when the chips were down in New Orleans? Do I remember correctly that at least one night he was on the Steve Allen show in his recurring campaign to clean up his skirts and make a comeback in Show Biz? That would make it the third time, if I haven't lost count, that Mort has jumped on and off band wagons. So who's going to save the country NOW, Mort?

Let us now praise famous men —

Chalk up one for Woody Allen. On the Tonight show he pretended he was writing a book on his (amusing) boasts about his cockmanship. The name of the book: "How to achieve advanced sexual positions without laughing." For that funny line I can forgive him, well almost, for selling out his early political satire and insisting (now) that "I was always apolitical."

When Hans Conried and his phony, stagey Englishman act got too phony for the new style films in Hollywood he was promptly snapped up by Mad Avenue to do TV dinner commercials. Old Shakespearean actor finally makes good!

Heresiarch Bishop James Pike, who was tried (on his insistence) by his fellow bishops because he had begun to have his doubts about the holy ghostly immaculate conception has now plumped for ghostly rendezvous with his suicided son.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones have secured a court order blocking the new Vasser rule that allows girls to entertain men in their dormitories all night. Her argument: "Suppose a girl wants to go to the bathroom at night, she'll have to get almost completely dressed to go out in the hall in case a boy is there. (Besides) I just can't see why an unmarried girl would want to have a male guest all night." The times they are a changin', Mr. and Mrs. Jones. And—it's later than you think.