

# Sirhan Jury Influenced by Unrest, Cooper Says

## Feelings of Entire Nation Reflected in Minds of Members, Defense Believes

BY LEE DYE  
Times Staff Writer

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's chief defense attorney Grant B. Cooper said Wednesday the jury that handed down the death sentence for the 25-year-old Jordanian was deciding issues far greater than the trial itself.

Cooper, obviously depressed over the verdict, told reporters after the trial that the jurors were influenced by student and civil unrest across the country and by the identity of the victim, a candidate for the office of the President of the United States.

He said several times during the press conference that he was not charging that the jurors had been unfair, but he said that "the underlying feeling of the entire United States (regarding unrest in the universities and civil disobedience) caused a backlash that has seeped into the minds of the jurors."

"The jurors are governed by the same emotions—love and hate—that you and I have, and they can't help but be affected by unrest," Cooper said.

Russell E. Parsons, Cooper's associate in the defense of Sirhan for the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, made several emotional statements much to the same effect.

### Trial Called Fair

"Things are bad in this

country," Parsons said, in reference to the unrest and lawlessness, "and it's very difficult to get a fair trial."

Cooper then repeated his claim that no member of the defense team was saying Sirhan did not have a fair trial.

Cooper said the identity of Sirhan's victim greatly influenced the outcome of the trial.

"If the victim had not been Robert Kennedy, the court would have accepted

the plea of second degree. I mean it. I believe it. With this type of situation and this type of evidence, it never would have gone this route.

### Jurors 'Had a Job'

"A candidate for the President of the United States was assassinated," he said. "They (the jurors) had a job to do."

During the press conference, Cooper stood silently amid a throng of reporters while the prosecution answered questions. His glance traveled back and forth between the prosecutors and the reporters.

Finally, he stood quietly staring at the floor until the prosecution finished.

Then, in response to a question, summed up his feelings like this:

"Of course I am disap-

pointed. I believed in our defense, and I believed he should not be executed. I feel very bad."

He said he was committed, because of the death verdict, to stay beside his client to the end.

"I've got to go forward," he said, "even if I have to spend money out of my own pocket."

### Sirhan Not Upset

Both Cooper and Parsons said Sirhan did not seem upset when the verdict was read.

Sirhan was led into the courtroom at 11:32 a.m. He turned briefly to Parsons and said: "Let's hope for the best."

Cooper said that after the verdict, Sirhan told him not to be concerned.

"Even Jesus Christ couldn't have saved me," Sirhan told him.

The motion for a new trial will be heard on May 14. Cooper said he will base the motion on three points:

First—On the grounds that the court did not accept a plea of guilty with life imprisonment, as recommended by the district attorney and his deputies.

Second—The jury was not properly constituted.

Third—Sirhan's personal notebook, which was introduced over the de-



fense's objections, should not have been admitted as evidence. Cooper said the admission of the notebook was "a grave error of constitutional dimensions."

**NEAR TEARS** — Defense attorney Grant Cooper as he told newsmen, "I feel very bad."