

T-R 7/19/67 ***

RFK Defends Honesty, Integrity of Newscaster

Kennedy Backs Former Special Assistant

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., warmly defended Tuesday night the honesty and integrity of television reporter Walter Sheridan, accused by New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison of trying to bribe a witness in Garrison's investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The senator noted that Sheridan had worked with both himself and his slain brother, before taking on his present job as an investigative reporter for the National Broadcasting Co.

He said it was impossible that Sheridan might do anything to compromise the truth in the assassination investigation.

Kennedy's statement said:

UTMOST CONFIDENCE

"I have been fortunate to know and work with Walter Sheridan for many years. Like all 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.

"His personal ties to President Kennedy, as well as his own integrity, insure that he would want as much as, or more than any other man to ascertain the truth about the events of November 1963.

NOT POSSIBLE

"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."

Sheridan was a special assistant to Robert Kennedy, when the latter was attorney general in his brother's administration.

Sheridan had also worked with both men as a staff member of the McClellan committee which investigated labor rack-

ets, when John F. Kennedy was a senator and committee member and Robert was the committee's chief of staff.

Sheridan, 41, of Washington, surrendered in New Orleans Tuesday to face Garrison's charges, and was freed on \$5,000 bond.

DA Calls Sheridan 'Intimate of RFK'

District Attorney Jim Garrison told The Times-Picayune Tuesday night that newsman Walter Sheridan is a "known intimate" of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and questioned how Sheridan could be loyal to both the senator and to the National Broadcasting Co.

Garrison's statement follows:

"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 try to destroy a state's case so that a defendant can escape justice.

"Mr. Sheridan is a man who recently produced the notorious National Broadcasting Co. program concerning the New Orleans investigation. Aside from the fact that it insulted the in-

telligence of every American, it was a very clear attempt to prejudice in advance possible jurors in this case. This program will probably stand for many years as a symbol of the length of which some powerful outside interests are willing to go in order to interfere with state government.

"Whether Mr. Sheridan — a known intimate of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy — is innocent of the crime of attempted bribery will be determined by a jury of citizens. It still remains to be determined what motives lie behind Mr. Sheridan's efforts to interfere with law enforcement in New Orleans.

"If he actually represents the interests of Sen. Kennedy, then he has been unfair to his employer, the National Broadcasting Co. If he really represents only NBC, then Sen. Kennedy should pick his associates more carefully. In either case, justice in Louisiana is our problem and not theirs."