LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Discussion of Garrison, Trial Concluded

3/14/67

Editor, States-Item:

I find Evelyn Favre's suggestion that I resign from the district attorney's office (Letters to the Editor, March 11) rather emotional and unfounded. Since I do not consider myself or any other member of the district attorney's office guilty of any unethical conduct whatever, I feel that I need not apologize for my participation in the prosecution of Clay L. Shaw. I would further add that I consider it a privilege to be associated with the only public official in the country who has the courage to conduct a legitimate investigation into the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

In calling for everyone's resignation, except our janitor's, Miss Favre overlooks some rather significant facts of law; namely, that a Grand Jury returned an indictment against the defendant, a three-judge panel ruled that there was probable cause to bind the defendant over for trial. . .

As our legal system would have it, a jury of 12 men heard the evidence and returned a verdict of not guilty. They did this not because they thought the case was a fraud, but because in their minds the evidence presented by the state did not prove the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of the crime of conspiracy to murder the President.

As an attorney, I accept the jury's verdict, but I hardly think that their decision necessitates my, or anyone else's, resignation from office. On the contrary, I feel that a failure to prosecute under the above circumstances would be tantamount to malfeasance on the district attorney's part.

I might also add that in spite of the fact that some of the news media would have the people believe that Jim Garrison is the reincarnation of Adolf Hitler, the record will show that defendant's rights were never violated at any time and that even the Supreme Court of the United States could find no reason to prevent Jim Garrison from prosecuting Clay Shaw.

ANDREW J. SCIAMBRA,
Assistant District Attorney.

Editor, States-Item:

I am responding to the many people who have sent in letters taking issue with your criticism of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison.

The main issue to these people, seems to be that Mr. Garrison is beyond criticism because he was only performing his duties as a prosecutor, and that it was the Grand Jury that indicted Clay L. Shaw. I would like to point out that the Grand Jury is not made of lawyers or persons with legal background, and that these people have to depend upon the legal advice and urgings of the district attorney for direction. The district attorney is the man who tells them what constitutes a case in the eyes of the law. This is what happened in the Shaw case.

Point No. 2 is, that having convinced the Grand Jury that they had a case, Mr. Garrison then had a clear path to go on with his so-called case against Mr. Shaw. How he ever expected to have the jury bring in a "guilty" verdict, I don't know. It is difficult to explain why he even brought the case to court with his little bit of so-called evidence. I question his motives and reasoning.

Finally, I say to these people who take issue with your editorial for the resignation of Mr. Garrison: What if you, an innocent person, could be brought before the Grand Jury on such scanty information and be charged with this crime? Would you be able to hold up for two years under this persecution? What if you were a person of lesser means, and unable to prove yourself innocent of this charge? There is a right in America to be termed "innocent until proven guilty", but not in New Orleans, where you are guilty, until proven innocent. How many people of low means have gone to prison because of being unable to prove themselves innocent in New Orleans?

RICHARD D. MANUEL.

Modesto, Calif.

Editor, States-Item:

Why condemn Jim Garrison? He wanted answers to questions which he and the American people have a right to know. Your resentment only makes you seem involved.

It is unfair and un-American to ask for his resignation. Give this man due credit for speaking out.

MRS. E. R. OLSON.

Editor, States-Item:

The recent Shaw trial causes us all to sleep a little uneasy. The shadow of accusation is hovering over us like an evil specter of doom. Every time we see an officer of the law looking our way, we can feel his heavy hand on our shoulder saying we are under arrest for some imagined crime. And these imagined crimes may be many.

Unfeeling, cold, calculating minds of a district attorney and his staff seem to be a very fertile grounds for f a l s e charges. Without any curb on such people we are all subject to the ruthlessness of these so-called public servants.

What type of Grand Jury would issue an indictment on the flimsy evidence presented by Jim Garrison. . .

How do you repay a man for two years of his life? How do you recompense him for the anguish and concern over such a false accusation? . . .

So citizens, say nothing or do nothing and hope the eyes of the elected "protector" do not fall on you with accusation.

ED. HAYNES.

More Newspapers Editorialize on the Shaw Trial

(Editor's Note: Since publication of a roundup of editorial comment on the Clay Shaw conspiracy trial on Saturday, the volume of such editorials has grown. More are presented today.)

The Louisville Courier-Journal

District Attorney Jim Garrison's case against Clay Shaw turned out to be no case at all. If a prosecutor can sully a man's reputation, willynilly, and get away with it, our system of criminal justice is dangerously flawed.

If a prosecutor can all but ruin a man financially with no more evidence than Mr. Garrison presented, no one is safe from the depredations of an irresponsible district attorney.

There is a chance, however, that Mr. Garrison will not get away with it. The president of the American Bar Association has called for an investigation, and he wants the Louisiana Bar Association to consider disciplinary action against Mr. Garrison . . .

The Kansas City Star

. . . The entire business (Shaw trial) has been odd in the extreme, and we believe it is the obligation of the legal profession to look into the matter very closely in the interests of its own health . . .

Whenever a court becomes a circus, the principal victims are the people who rely on the American system of justice.

The Charlotte Observer

The exoneration of Clay Shaw takes care of District Attorney Jim Garrison's claim that he "solved the assassination" of President John F. Kennedy two years ago . . .

After all of Garrison's claims over the last two years, the biggest issue in his case against Shaw was whether the trial judge should let it go to a jury. The evidence was that weak . . .

There is no point in belaboring Garrison at long range for this fiasco. The members of the bar and the public he represents can handle him. . .

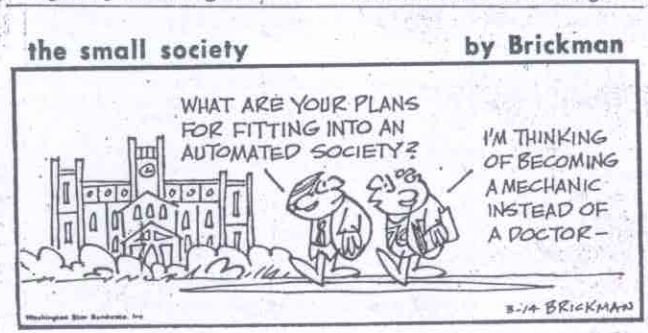
The Baltimore Sun

The president of the American Bar Association described the trial of Clay Shaw in New Orleans as a charade, and said he would ask the Louisiana Bar Association to consider disciplinary action against Jim Garrison, the district attorney who directed the prosecution.

A New Orleans newspaper, the States-Item, published an editorial saying that Garrison has shown himself unfit to hold the office of district attorney and should be brought into court to answer for his conduct. "He has perverted the law rather than prosecuted it," said the editorial.

These are harsh words, but Mr. Garrison deserves them fully on the basis of his actions during the two years from the time the charges were made until the trial's end last week . . .

Garrison has much to answer for, and it would be appropriate for his fellow lawyers to take the lead in questioning his actions.



The Milwaukee Journal

Two years ago District Attorney Jim Garrison of New Orleans charged Clay Shaw with conspiring to murder President John F. Kennedy. Garrison spent those two years as prosecutor, public relations man and judge in what he flamboyantly called "the case of a century." It took a jury 54 minutes to call it, in effect, a farce . . .

The cry in New Orleans is for Garrison's resignation. Certainly it is justified in view of the district attorney's perversion of the law. Furthermore, the American Bar Association should look into this disgraceful affair.

San Francisco Chronicle

Our sense of propriety has been put to severe test in recent weeks while awaiting the end of the dangerous, disgraceful and demeaning proceedings, conducted under mask of law, in the Orleans Parish courtroom in the otherwise sensible and sophisticated city of New Orleans. District Attorney Jim Garrison has now had his hand called by a panel of steady-minded jurors . . .

Garrison's misuse of great power was supported by financial backers of substantial means in New Orleans. It is still incredible that no one in authority in the entire state of Louisiana had the nerve to cry halt.

The Miami Herald

. . . District Attorney Jim Garrison is deservedly branded now as a public official who used his office to fabricate a case against an innocent man . . .

It was not the government that murdered truth, as Mr. Garrison insisted in his summary. The blame belongs to the fantasy that the district attorney permitted to bloom in his own brain.