Nation's Press Editorializes on Shaw Trial

(Editor's Note: Nationwide interest centered in the New Orleans' trial of Clay Shaw on charges of conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. Presented is a cross-section of this week's editorial comment.) 5-1 3/8/64

St. Louis Globe-Democrat:

The New Orleans farce directed by District Attorney Jim Garrison has ended, with his ultradramatic attempts to expose the Warren Commission as a fraud. Instead Garrison was shown an irresponsible and macabre court jester.

The bizarre conspiracy case, in which Garrison charged the Warren Commission's report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was fraudulent, has revealed Garrison as unfit to hold his present office.

He took advantage of his legal position by using the trial as a forum to advance his own pet theories, based on unsubstantial charges which wilted of their own absurdity . . .

Philadelphia Inquirer:

Flamboyant Jim Garrison, the district attorney of New Orleans, ushered the Clay Shaw conspiracy case onto the public stage two years ago with a roll of drums and the sound of trumpets. The curtain came down quietly after a five-week trial that failed to produce the promised fireworks, when the jury was unanimous in acquitting Shaw on the first ballot, after only 50 minutes of deliberations . . .

As a result, the report of the Warren Commission . . . emerges stronger than ever. Some skeptics, of course, will continue to harbor doubts. A few opportunists may use the record of the Shaw trial to write books for profit, if not enlightenment. The jurors, had to deal with matters of fact, not with rumors and figments of imagination.

Monroe News-Star:

Based on the evidence presented . . . the jury hearing the case had no choice but to render a verdict of not guilty.

The cold fact of the matter is that Garrison came up with very shoddy evidence, if one can call it that . . .

The point that needs emphasizing is not whether Garrison acted irresponsibly now that his case against Shaw flopped. The point is—did he violate the principles of justice regardless of the outcome of the trial?

The Louisiana Bar would be remiss if it did not at least make a thorough study . . .

Arkansas Gazette:

Looking back on the trial (if that is the word) of Clay Shaw, the instinctual response is to ask oneself how anything like this could have happened in the America of the late '60s. But the horrible thought intrudes that possibly it could only have happened in the America of the late '60s or at some time very close to the late '60s; that it is a part of the general derangement of our times and conceivably even an indispensable part.

It is difficult to believe that Mr. Garrison's charade could have been maintained for . . . (two years) if there were not a sizable number of members of the public-at-large who were prepared to believe any kind of conspiracy theory for the John Kennedy assassination they were offered, so long as it was a conspiracy.

The screams and cries of "No!" "No!" heard from women at the back of the spectators' seats at the verdict of not guilty was evocative of the maddened fishwives of Paris, unaccountably cheated at the very steps to the guillotine of some long-awaited head . . .

Houston Chronicle:

For more than two years the nation and the world have been assaulted with a barrage of wild claims from New Orleans' District Attorney Jim Garrison . . .

When it became obvious to most people that the sound of Garrison's voice was more important to him than the soundness of his statements, "Big Jim" promised that he would be borne out at the Shaw trial.

The trial is finally over, two years after Shaw's arrest . . . Shaw is innocent.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

The acquittal of Clay L. Shaw on a charge of conspiring to assassinate President Kennedy would have been a foregone conclusion were it not for the fact that the case against him was so preposterous that an equally preposterous verdict just might have resulted . . .

If a fraud was perpetrated, no one has to look further for it than the office of the New Orleans district attorney.

The whole ridiculous proceeding is a blot on New Orleans. Mr. Garrison is up for reelection in six months, and we hope the voters deal with him as he deserves . . .

Lake Charles American Press:

The farce in New Orleans is over. The verdicts are in.

One verdict, which surprised no one, was rendered by the jury . . .

Another verdict is also in. This verdict is on the conduct of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, and the verdict here is "guilty as charged" . . .

The Shaw trial was financed (in part) by contributions of a private group. We do not think this sort of thing should be condoned . . .

Some months back, we said that the Shaw trial was making a laughing stock of Louisiana, and there is no doubt now that this is exactly what has happened . . .