

# State Assails Sirhan, Calls for Full Penalty

By George Lardner Jr.  
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES, April 21—

In a clear-cut call for the death penalty, the State of California assailed Sirhan Bishara Sirhan today as a contemptuous, cold-blooded assassin who deserved no mercy from the Nation that gave him refuge.

Any touch of leniency, prosecutor John Howard warned the jurors, "Must sooner or later spell an end to the traditional democratic election process we now enjoy."

Not once did Howard mention death in his brief, stinging condemnation of the skinny, impassive defendant who sat by his lawyers, busily chew-

ing on a wad of gum. But the message was clear.

### Example to Others

Sirhan, the prosecution insisted, should be sent to the gas chamber as an example to others who might be tempted to follow in his footsteps.

Just a half-dozen like him, Howard declared, "Would suffice to leave this country bereft of democratically endorsed leadership."

"Sirhan was entitled to the fair trial which he has received. He has no special claim to further preservation."

The 25-year-old immigrant's fate—either death or imprisonment for life—was put in the hands of the same jury of seven men and five women who convicted him of first-de-

gree murder last Thursday. Under California law, a separate trial must be held to set sentence after first-degree convictions.

### Pleas for His Life

The case went to the jury just before noon. As they did during Sirhan's first trial, the jurors deliberated until about 4 p.m. and returned to their quarters for the night.

The jury received the case after impassioned pleas for Sirhan's life from defense attorneys Grant B. Cooper and Russell Parsons.

"Whenever any American's life is taken unnecessarily, whether it is done in the name of the law or in defiance of the law," Cooper told the courtroom, "the whole nation is degraded."

The words, he pointed out to the jurors, were not his own, but those of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, two months before he was felled by a bullet from Sirhan's gun.

"Let the circle of violence end here in this courtroom," Cooper pleaded, his voice breaking with emotion for the first time since the trial began 16 weeks ago. "Do not tell the world that in California we execute sick people."

### Reminds Jurors

Howard said the prosecution did not contest Sirhan's mental illness, nor did it maintain that the jurors should not consider it.

But he reminded the jurors that they had already found Sirhan fully responsible under the law for his crime by convicting him of first-degree murder.

Not once during the long trial, he said, did Sirhan demonstrate any remorse for the killing. Instead, he told the jurors, he took the witness stand and smiled as he testified smugly that "I don't know who shot Senator Kennedy."

As an immigrant, Sirhan "reached this shore at the indulgence of a Nation which

takes pride in providing refuge to the oppressed," Howard said. He repaid it by killing a presidential candidate who, but for Sirhan, "might have succeeded to the highest honor and responsibility which the American democratic process can bestow."

"Justice," Howard demanded, "must be firm." Sirhan, he said, would regard permission to live "as a triumph."

The heavyset prosecutor concluded by contrasting the attention paid Sirhan with that accorded American troops in Vietnam.

He said he had just read "a back-page article" on American casualties.

"Apparently," Howard said, "It was a good week. Only 202 American dead. The Sirhan trial was on the front page."

"We have lavishly expended our resources for the sake of a cold-blooded political assassin while content to send patriotic Americans to their death with a \$70-rifle and our best wishes," he declaimed. Sirhan, he concluded, has received enough consideration.