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On and On

More than seven years after the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, the experts are going to fire Sirhan Sirhan's revolver again to try to determine, once and for all, if he was the only gunman in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel at 12:15 a.m. June 5, 1968.

It was inevitable that they would. Ballistics specialists disagree sharply as to whether all the spent bullets found at the murder scene came from the same weapon.

Although such experts often disagree, and although not one of the 90 to 100 witnesses saw another gunman, Robert F. Wenke, presiding judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court, was right in ordering the retesting of Sirhan's revolver and a re-examination of all other ballistics evidence at his trial.

If Wenke had denied the petitions of CBS-TV and of Paul Schrade, one of five Kennedy supporters who also were struck by bullets during the assassination, he would only have lent weight to the insane suspicions of those who still want to believe that there is an official conspiracy to conceal critical evidence in the case.

But what will the new inquiry prove? It is more than possible that the experts once again will disagree, even after subjecting the gun and bullets to more precise analytical tests than were possible seven years ago.

But even if the experts were to agree that all the bullets did, in fact, come from Sirhan's gun, would that be an end to it? We think not. A finding that did not agree with the conspiratorialists' own suspicions would only incite them to further demands for further inquiries into further aspects of the case.

Schrade and CBS, whom we do not number among the conspiratorialists, are not only insisting on a reexamination of the ballistics evidence but are also asking the Los Angeles Police Commission to make public all of the investigative files on the senator's murder.

As a victim, Schrade has a legitimate interest in determining whether the bullet that almost cost him his life came from Sirhan's gun and whether

the police investigation was as thorough or competent as it might have been.

CBS wants access to the files to prepare a documentary on the investigation.

But the Police Commission is resisting their request to open the files to the public—and for good reason. Much of the information would be harmful to innocent parties and has no relevance whatever to the assassination. The summary contains one neighbor's false accusations against another, and police reports on the private lives of individuals who later were found to have had no part in the crime.

The files contain hearsay, unproved suspicions and, as always in such cases, the maunderings of unsound minds and the wild allegations of publicity seekers.

We doubt that either Schrade or CBS would object to the excision of such information, possibly by a judge or by a panel of prominent members of the Bar, before the files were made public.

But it is inconceivable that the conspiratorialists would accept the deletion of as much as a jot or tittle without howling: "Coverup!"

The commission's present position—that it does not want to open the files at all, but would answer specific questions on their contents—is, of course, even more unacceptable to those who suspect that there has been a deliberate suppression of the evidence.

On and on it goes, more than seven years after the murder. Yet no member of Robert F. Kennedy's family believes that Sirhan did not act alone. No witness to the crime—not even Schrade—actually believes there was a second gunman: He merely wants to be certain.

And as it is with Robert F. Kennedy, so it is with John F. Kennedy. There are those who believe that such crimes could not be the act of one man with one gun.

No, there *must* have been others. And because the conspiratorialists *must* believe that, and will be heard, the melancholy inquests will continue—for how many more years?