

Law Experts Disagree on Chances For Fair Trial in Nurse Slayings

CHICAGO, July 17 (UPI) — Criminal law experts disagreed on the propriety of the decision by the Chicago police to announce they had identified a man they were convinced was the killer of eight student nurses.

One said it would make it very difficult for the man ever to receive a fair trial.

But another said that, since the man in question still was at large at the time of the announcement, the information released might aid the public in helping police capture him.

The statements were made Saturday before the suspect was captured.

Chicago Police Supt. O. W. Wilson announced at a news conference Saturday that he had no doubt an itinerant seaman named Richard B. Speck, 25, was the man who stabbed and strangled the eight girls in their town house apartment last Thursday.

Warren D. Wolfson, a criminal law attorney who defended Danny Escobedo in a lower court ruling reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court, said the publicity would hinder Speck's chances to receive a fair trial.

The Supreme Court reversed Escobedo's 20-year sentence on a murder conviction on the grounds Escobedo's constitutional rights were violated because he was not allowed to see his attorney while in police custody.

Wolfson said it was "unfortunate" Wilson had released the following details:

- About 32 latent fingerprints traced to Speck found on

a bedroom door on the second floor of the town house.

- Speck's picture, identified by the only survivor of the massacre, student nurse Corazon Amurao.

- Speck's police record, including convictions for peace disturbance, malicious destruction of property, forgery, and aggravated assault involving a male and female.

- Wilson's statement that, "I think we have physical evidence. The intended victim has identified his photograph and as far as I'm concerned, there's no question he's the murderer."

Wolfson said police should have said only that they were seeking Speck in connection with the killings and accompanied the announcement only with a physical description of him.

"The evidence is for the jury to decide," he said. "It's going to be very, very difficult to get a fair trial for this man unless memories dim or jurors can be obtained who have no knowledge of the case. Both possibilities are unlikely," he said.

Prof. Fred E. Inbau of Northwestern University Law School, argued that the publicity was

"a public service" that might help in capturing Speck.

"It's just a lot of rot to say the press shouldn't publicize this and that the public doesn't have the right to know," Inbau said.

"This person was still at large; he was not locked up. He was not being readied for trial," Inbau said.

Inbau said police had "some real basis for the identification."

"One of the true functions of the news media is to assist in matters of this sort," Inbau said. "It's rendering a public service without prejudicing the rights of the accused."