RAPS TREATMENT

Garrison Refuses Television Debate

District Attorney Jim Garrison refused to appear on a televised debate between DA candidates last night, saying he would not appear because WYES-TV had treated him unfairly in its post-trial coverage of the Clay Shaw conspiracy case.

DA candidates Harry Connick, Charles Ray Ward and Ross Scaccia appeared on a two-hour program on WYES, Channel 8.

A station spokesman said one of Garrison's aides delivered a letter containing the DA's refusal to appear five minutes before the show went on the air. The station denied it had ever treated Garrison unfairly and said it had offered him equal time following a program critical of the Shaw trial.

The text of Garrison's letter:

"Reference is made to your planned telecast this evening of a debate featuring the candidates for the office of district attorney.

"If you will recall, Channel 8 sponsored a program after the Shaw trial in which a panel consisting of Hugh Aynesworth of Newsweek Magazine, James Phelan of the Saturday Evening Post and a free-lance writer by the name of James Kirkwood, who just completed a book criticizing my investigation, engaged in a one-sided diatribe of our investigation and my office.

"Because your station was flooded with calls protesting the unfairness of the show, I responded by applying to your station for equal time to answer these charges. Needless to say, I was disappointed when I was refused equal time. Because of the above set of facts, I decline to appear on your station."

The following statement by WYES management was read on the air several times during the show:

"The Channel 8 management wishes to state that the program mentioned in Mr. Garrison's statement was a national press analysis of the Clay Shaw trial. Viewer response to the program was generally favorable. In response to Mr. Garrison's request, WYES-TV offered him a personal appearance in a 30-minute press interview program in the week following the program under discussion. Mr. Garrison did not respond to the invitation."