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NEW ORLEANS AP - A federal judge ruled Monday that television newsman Walter Sheridan does not have to appear before the Orleans Parish grand jury helping Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison in his Kennedy assassination conspiracy probe.

U.S. District Court Judge Alvin Rubin, in his ruling, said Sheridan would be forced to match legal wits with the district attorney without benefit of a lawyer if he went before the grand jury.

At the same time, however, Judge Rubin denied a request by Sheridan, an investigative reporter for the National Broadcasting Co., and Richard Townley, a newsman for WDSU-TV here, to enjoin Garrison from prosecuting them on charges of public bribery.

Townley also is charged with intimidation of a state witness.

Sheridan and Townley filed a federal court suit after their arrests, claiming Garrison had harrassed them because they had been critical of his Kennedy probe. Sheridan was subpoenaed by the grand jury after his arrest.

Garrison accused the two newsmen of trying to get his witnesses to change their testimony.

"There is no way for Sheridan or his lawyer to know whether the grand jury investigation is against public bribery and hence is no threat to Sheridan or is against some other offense, leaving Sheridan naked to those whom he concedes to be his enemies," Judge Rubin wrote in a 33-page opinion.

He held that adequate procedures were available in state courts for the protection of Sheridan and Townley in the criminal charges Garrison filed against them.

Sheridan was an aide of Robert F. Kennedy, now a U.S. senator from New York, when Kennedy was attorney general in his brother's Cabinet.

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Attorneys for Sheridan and Townley also asked for an injunction against future harassment by Garrison or his aides, claiming it would be a violation of their civil rights.

Judge Rubin said the allegations by Sheridan and Townley were sufficient to require a hearing on this portion of the suit.

The judge scheduled a pre-trial conference Sept. 5, at which time a trial date will be set.

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