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Sad Performance In New Orleans

ONE OF THE MOST disgraceful episodes in modern American jurisprudence should have ended with the acquittal in New Orleans of Clay L. Shaw, the retired businessman accused by District Attorney Jim Garrison of conspiring to murder President Kennedy.

Throughout the two years Shaw was under the onus of the charge, it had been evident to newsmen covering the story that Garrison's case was virtually non-existent — and that the prosecutor was obsessed with a desire to impugn the validity of the Warren Report.

That conclusion was fully confirmed by the all-male jury, which deliberated less than an hour before finding the defendant innocent by a unanimous vote on the first ballot.

Shaw, who said his heavy legal expenses may compel him to return to work, indicated after his acquittal he might seek redress by bringing a court action of his own. The next day, Garrison brought a formal new charge which accused him of lying on the witness stand.

The new charge, which smacks more of persecution than prosecution, is an almost incredible challenge to the integrity and common sense of the jury which believed Shaw's testimony. It also, significantly, tends to complicate any redress action pending its own disposition.

Whatever happens in the perjury action, the voters of New Orleans can do Louisiana justice a notable service at the polls this fall by electing themselves a more stable district attorney.