

THE STATES-ITEM

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The States-Item prints the news impartially. It supports what it believes to be right; it opposes what it believes to be wrong, without regard to party politics.

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Quality of justice

The Clay Shaw case raises serious questions about the quality of justice in Louisiana. There has been an unhealthy mixing of justice and politics, and an absence of integrity.

There seems to be a connection between this and the ability of District Attorney Jim Garrison, with little more than the word of Perry Raymond Russo, to introduce his conspiracy fantasy into a court of law.

Mr. Russo now refuses to repeat his original charges against Mr. Shaw in a court of law.

In retrospect, it is incredible that the Clay Shaw case ever went to trial.

This warped sense of justice is reflected in the action of a group of New Orleans businessmen, operating under the name of Truth and Consequences, who put up a substantial sum of money, supposedly for an investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Significantly, much of the money was contributed after the arrest of Clay Shaw.

Their action raises serious questions. Was the money contributed used to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy, or to persecute Clay L. Shaw? Furthermore, should private citizens, who may have an ax to grind, be able to use

the district attorney's office in this manner?

Equally inexcusable is the use of state funds in the Clay Shaw witch-hunt. There is nothing wrong with Gov. John McKeithen having a law enforcement fund, provided it is used solely for this purpose.

But the \$10,000 handed over by the governor to Mr. Garrison was used in mysterious ways. The public funds apparently were mixed not only with money collected by Truth and Consequences, but with Mr. Garrison's personal campaign funds.

The truth is that we really don't know how the money supplied by Gov. McKeithen—taxpayers' money—was used.

One thing is clear. The handling of the Clay Shaw matter—from the first wild hours of his arrest until now—has shocked the nation and the world.

Even though he was acquitted, the biggest loser in the conspiracy investigation and trial was Clay Shaw. He was arrested and presented, manacled, to the world on March 1, 1967. With a perjury trial still pending, Mr. Shaw has yet to escape the burden he has carried for four years.

Mr. Shaw was the foremost victim, but all of us should feel uneasy. We are all vulnerable to a system of justice, where justice is not always done.

