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Attorney's Impassioned Plea for Sirhan

Los Angeles

Sirhan Sirhan's oldest counselor and confidante yesterday called him a "poor, sick wretch" who deserves neither the death penalty nor life imprisonment.

"We haven't offered a word of phony testimony here," attorney Russell E. Parsons told the jurors at Sirhan's murder trial here for the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. "This man is more than sick. He is not a candidate for first-degree murder."

It was a brief, but apparently heartfelt summation, opening the defense's final effort to show that Kennedy's

coldblooded assassin was, in reality, an immature, irresponsible psychotic.

A wrinkle-faced man well into his 70s, Parsons nodded imperceptibly at the defendant sitting behind him.

"I've sat here and had him reach up and hold my hand — like a baby," he told the jurors. "One minute he appears to be as smart as a whip. The next minute, he can't tell right from wrong."

Dwelling on Sirhan's war-torn childhood in Jerusalem in the late 1940s, Parsons said the youth already "had the scars on him" when he came to America with his family in 1957.

"There was bitter con-

flict," he said, "between the Zionists who are somewhat warlike and the Arabs."

In any event, Sirhan and his family, Parsons went on, "had to leave their homes. They're not immigrants. They're refugees."

Sirhan has said that he grew bitter at Kennedy over the Democratic presidential candidate's support of Israel in the Mideast turmoil and particularly over his endorsement of plans to sell Israel 50 U.S. Phantom jets.

The 25-year-old Palestinian

claims to have gunned down Kennedy last June 5 in what psychiatrists and psychologists have described as a trance-like schizophrenic rage.

Pleading for acceptance of the story, Parsons protested: "We conceded he shot Senator Kennedy. We're not trying to pull the wool over your eyes."

Parsons told the jurors: "Let your verdict spell out in every hamlet in the Arab republic, and in Europe that a man can get justice in America. And that is neither

life imprisonment nor the death penalty because this case doesn't warrant it. Not for this poor sick wretch, no matter what he did."

In the present proceedings the jury was called upon to make a determination of guilt or innocence on the murder charge and five counts of assault with intent to commit murder. The assault counts were based on the wounding of five persons who were with Kennedy

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