Sirhan trial plans given FoI assist

LOS ANGELES

A cooperative effort between the courts and the California Freedom of Information Committee is expected to amplify press facilities at the trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan for the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Conferences begun in August at the court's request extended to the announcement that use of closed television facilities has been approved. (E&P, Nov. 23, p. 52.)

The amplified press facilities are expected to eliminate some of the confusion surrounding the Memphis trial in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is the belief of Richard H. Fogel, chairman, California FoI Committee. Fogel is assistant managing editor of the *Oakland Tribune*.

The assignment of seats will be released through individual letters to the various news media by H. M. Frediani, Los Angeles Superior Courts coordinator, who is assigned press liaison and logistics coordination for the trial. All inquiries should be directed to Frediani's office in the Hall of Justice. The phone number is (213) 625-3414 Extension 61903.

Benefits Seen

Fogel expressed the belief the cooperation of Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker will go far toward improving the opportunity for fair and accurate reporting of the Sirhan trial here.

Judge Walker is expected to announce shortly his selection of press allocations for the 33 courtroom and 60 to 70 closed circuit viewing room seats.

The additional facilities result from a series of meetings which began with a session attended by the FoI committee and the judges of the Superior Court in Los Angeles, Fogel said.

Sisk Proposal

Following this conference, Larry Sisk, special representative of the Copley Newspapers, researched the problem of limited press seating and came up with the tv system which the committee recommended.

Howard Williams, KNXT, Los Angeles, and the station itself provided the technical advice necessary and set up a demonstration for the court. A fixed monitor runs by cable to the annex courtroom. There are two cameras, one being a backup for use should the first camera fail.

No Broadcast

The picture is not broadcast, Fogel stressed. Some of the broadcasters thought the move provided a foot in the door to knock out Canon 35.

The Judge's jurisdiction includes the annex as well as the courtroom. Neither photographs nor recordings will be permitted in either room, Fogel explained.

The picture is run through a cable. The entire system is set up for the convenience of the court and the press.

As a result, judicial counsel reviewed the proposal and found it was not necessary for them to take any action. The judges can make the arrangements using existing rules.

"There is no film and no recording. It is a closed circuit television monitor," Fogel emphasized.

Special Group

Ray G. Spangler, publisher, *Redwood City* (Calif.) *Tribune*; Ben Martin, general manager, California Newspaper Publishers Association; Clayton H. Brace, vicepresident and general manager, KOGO, Time-Life station at San Diego; Sisk, and Fogel were members of the special FoI group which met with the judges.

In an analysis and report submitted to Judge Walker, the committee pointed to the global import of the case, declaring the implications are so grave it is doubtful any nation views the trial as a strictly American affair.

Nationally, the report cited the wire services, syndicates, and major dailies, and asked: "Where do you draw the line?"

Precedent and logic dictate the local press be adequately represented in celebrated cases, the report declared, adding:

"Because of the essential security measures involving identification and physical search of the press we have already lost much of the aspect of an open and public trial," it was stated.

The report further declared neither national news magazines nor media addressed to minority groups should be overlooked.

Politics and Religion

The Catholic press has a distinct interest in the case; nor should screening be in accord with political standards, the report added.

"Though one can abhor the lack of scruples, decency and honesty which pervades the so-called 'underground press' there is nothing in our tradition of government which isolates them from other press representatives," it declared.

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Publisher fights City Council secrecy

MIAMI BEACH, Fla.

Hendrik J. Berns, publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Miami Beach Sun*, has filed a suit in the Dade County Circuit Court demanding an injunction against secret meetings of the City Council.

Under Florida's so called "Sunshine Law," Berns contends, it is unlawful for any government or agency of government to conduct secret meetings and act on public business while excluding the public and the press.

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Elected president

Robert L. Woodruff, classified advertising manager of the *Long Island Press* has been elected president of the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Classified Managers Association. The vicepresident is Alan Freedman, *Hudson* (N. J.) *Dispatch*.

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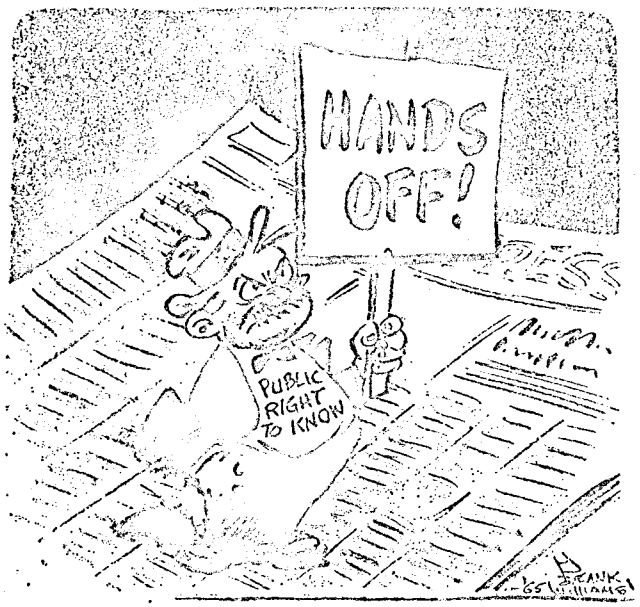

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