KNXT
CBS Television Stations
A Division of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.
6121 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90028
(213) 460-1212

Dear Mr. Yellin:

We now have a few days experience with our closed-circuit at the Sirhan trial and I presume you have seen or heard some of the comments. I will be very interested in seeing what develops there.

Is there anything else I can do from here and what kind of progress are you making?

Cordially,

Howard S. Williams
Editorial Director

Mr. David Yellin
Director of Broadcasting
Memphis State University
Memphis, Tennessee 38111

January 16, 1969

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Arts and Sciences
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38111

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

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KNXT
HOWARD S. WILLIAMS

November 27, 1968

Mr. Howard Williams
Editorial Director
KNXT
6121 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90028

Dear Mr. Williams:

We are in the process of making an appeal to Judge Preston Battle to allow a closed-circuit setup for the upcoming James Earl Ray trial.

Our purpose is the same as yours was in getting permission to use closed-circuit in the Sirhan B. Sirhan proceedings. We wish to accomodate the many represenatives of the news media assigned to cover the story who will not be able to be present in the small courtroom in which 42 seats will be reserved for news coverage.

I would appreciate any help you could give us, particularly legal arguments presented to offset the California Rule 980. Judge Battle has indicated a strong objection to a closed-circuit pickup, claiming that a camera is a camera is a camera. He is basing his opinion on the precedent of Billy Sol Estes case, on the premise that the decision was reversed because a TV camera was present.

I am particularly concerned that we "defeat" the misconception of closed circuit TV, and especially do not want it to be perpetuated because of legal precedence. I do not know at this time exactly how we will proceed and who will be involved in our appeal, but perhaps the information you can give us will enable us to make the most effective plan. Many thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

David Yellin
Director of Broadcasting

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Dear Mr. Yellin:

Please accept my apology for the delay in responding to your letter. It implies no lack of interest in your problem. I did wait a while until our own system was in and working, and meanwhile have not had an office, because of reshuffling in the station.

Our system is in and working and the final touches will be added tomorrow. As a matter of fact, the other day I gave it the first real test on a brief hearing and I thought it was excellent.

I should warn you that if you do obtain permission for such an installation, it is a great deal of work. We put together the basic parts for a demonstration in just two days, but refinements have taken a lot of time. However, the Station Manager here has turned me loose whenever necessary for this project, just as he has always given me any time or other help required for various other activities of the California Freedom of Information Committee.

We have completed this installation because of the personal interest of the trial judge, Superior Judge Herbert V. Walker, and the Criminal Courts Coordinator, Harold M. Frediani, plus the approval of a great many other judges who have studied the situation in detail. Every step was weighed carefully. All counsel and the defendant approved, but it was the approval of Judge Walker which of course finally made possible this historic innovation. Needless to say, any one of several people along the way could have brought it to a halt. But everyone realized the need to permit the fullest possible coverage of the trial by all who had legitimate reason to tell their own readers, viewers and listeners, around the world, how American justice operates. Of course the California Freedom of Information Committee has taken no part in determining who would be admitted. We simply suggested the closed circuit and agreed to install it with the equipment and people we can borrow for this or other Freedom of Information projects.

You asked about the legal arguments presented to "offset Rule 980." We did not "offset" the rule. The rule concerns photography for publication, and broadcast, neither of which is involved in this project, which is merely an extension of the courtroom. I do not know what arguments Judge Walker might have used in his discussions, because we were not present when he discussed it with other judges.

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The Estes case involved a pre-trial hearing and recording of the trial for broadcast, and that is not involved here. There will be no recording for broadcast. Part of our original presentation included an outline of the steps we would suggest to prevent ilicit recording.

Attached is a copy of the report our Committee submitted October 1 to support the suggestion of extending the courtroom in this manner.

Any number of systems could be used. We chose a black and white vidicon because of the lighting situation and because of their size and ease of installation. No operator is required. It is turned on with a key switch. A backup camera is installed in case of a breakdown and it can be turned on by the same switch. Separate cables on the cameras go to the other room, where another switch tunes the monitors to the other camera. We have three 27-inch monitors mounted on shelves 5 feet off the floor, facing seats which were in the room. The sound is separate, with shielded wire to prevent induction tapping, and speakers are mounted under the monitors. The vidicon cameras are anchored in a wooden box which was placed inside an air conditioner box, from which the cooling unit was removed and the cover replaced. The grill can cause a loss of sharp focus, but even in place the system works very well.

I talked at some length with Mr. Hemphill who called from Nashville. I also understand someone from there may come to see our system. I will be glad to see anyone, and I'm sure Mr. Frediani will be most helpful, as he was to us.

If you have further questions, I'll try to be much more prompt.

Cordially,

Howard S. Williams
Editorial Director

Mr. David Yellin
Director of Broadcasting
Department of Speech and Drama
Memphis State University
Memphis, Tennessee 38111

December 23, 1968