

Lawyer Denies Extortion Try In Bail Case

Attorney Ralph L. Kaskell Jr. has denied accusations of attempted public extortion made by former Assistant Dist. Atty. Charles R. Ward and added that he will return to New Orleans from Washington to face the issue.

Kaskell, associated with the New Orleans law firm of Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles, called Ward's charges yesterday "false and unfounded."

He said he will appear before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury to testify, "waiving all immunities," if he is asked to do so.

WARD REQUESTED the grand jury yesterday to investigate an alleged attempt to blackmail the district attorney's office into settling a claim against a bonding company.

The Maryland National Insurance Co. was accused by the DA's office of failing to pay \$629,000 in bond forfeitures due in Criminal District Court cases. Ward said Kaskell tried to arrange a compromise in which only \$100,000 of the forfeitures would be paid.

Ward resigned Tuesday as an assistant to Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and announced he will run against Garrison in the November election.

GARRISON ON Monday
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withdrew a recommendation to Gov. John J. McKeithen that Ward be named to one of two Criminal District Court judgeships. The DA cited the bribery accusation against Ward as the reason for the withdrawal.

Ward said Garrison knows the accusation is false.

Ward, in a letter to grand

jury foreman Fernand S. Lapeyre, said Haskell threatened to reveal depositions accusing Ward of accepting bribes if the \$100,000 compromise were not accepted.

HE STATED that the alleged attempt to extract a favorable settlement for Maryland National amounts to "blackmail."

Ward also stated in the letter to Lapeyre that the grand jury is the proper body to in-



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vestigate the extortion charge "since these allegations are made against a former law partner of the present district attorney, and because of the very close and personal relationship of Mr. Eberhard Deutsch to Mr. Jim Garrison."

Deutsch is the principal partner in the law firm. He declined comment on the matter.

THE ALLEGED extortion attempt, claimed Ward, was made by Kaskell during a meeting with Assistant DA Shirley C. Wimberly Jr., who represented the DA's office in the claims for the forfeitures.

An order restraining Garrison, Wimberly and state of-

ficials from efforts to collect the bond forfeiture was issued yesterday by Federal District Judge Lansing L. Mitchell.

Judge Mitchell set a hearing for 10 a. m. Monday on a suit by Maryland National which asked for an injunction prohibiting the seizure of any of its assets in the state and attacking the constitutionality of certain provisions of the state insurance laws.

Maryland National formerly employed William Hardy Davis, one of the persons who made bribery charges against Ward. According to the charges, Ward received money to influence him not to push for bond forfeiture collections.