

Governor Calls For Probe of Crime Charge

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By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—Gov. John J. McKeithen said today he has ordered an investigation into charges that criminal influences exist at all levels of state government.

The governor said if allegations that crime exists in state government prove true, "the people of this state will have my resignation so fast it will make their heads swim."

He said he would quit because if the allegations are correct, "either I'm a crook or I'm too stupid to be governor."

McKeithen said at his regular news conference that he, special state police investigators and an FBI agent will meet with the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission next week to study its evidence.

THE GOVERNOR again angrily commented on a Life magazine article on criminal influences in Louisiana state and local government. He called it a "deliberate smear" on the state.

Whoever is responsible for the article "should leave the state," he said.

Asked if he referred to Aaron Kohn, head of the MCC, McKeithen replied: "If the shoe fits, let him wear it."

THE CRIME commission said last week it supplied the basic information. The governor said that he and members of a special state police investigating team would meet with the MCC soon to collect whatever information the private group has.

"Whoever gave that information to Life Magazine about state government did this state a great disservice,"

he said.

The governor also commented on other issues:

He said that efforts are being made to get the federal court to alter its judgment in the grant-in-aid case to

permit the state to provide funds for mentally retarded children.

Law enforcement, he said, is the number one issue in the country today. He criticized the national leadership on this score and said he did not know if he could support President Johnson for reelection.

McKeithen said he has no plans to sign a civil service pay raise schedule recommended by the State Civil Service Commission earlier this year until he is certain adequate funds will be available to support one.

Asked if he planned to be a favorite son candidate at the Democratic National Convention next year, McKeithen said he did not think the convention would accept him as a candidate. He said although it might help him politically to support former Gov. George Wallace of Alabama now for president, he did not plan to make a decision on that yet.

McKEITHEN said that he "accepts" the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy, but this does not necessarily mean he "thinks" it is correct. He said he accepts it on the basis of those doing the investigating but declined to explain his definition of the word "accept." He added that District Attorney Jim Garrison should be allowed to complete his investigation. Otherwise, the nation or the world will believe that political pressure was brought to bear to end it prematurely.

He said, "I hope we can recuperate and cure the terrible image that has been projected about us throughout the nation."

The governor said that the only reason for the alleged smear that he could figure out is the indictment of Walter Sheridan, an investigator for the National Broadcasting Co., by Garrison in the Kennedy assassination probe.

HE DECLARED that there is crime in other states surrounding Louisiana, but the magazine picked on Louisiana apparently because rackets figure Carlos Marcello lives in the New Orleans area.

"They know they can take Marcello and smear anybody," the governor said.

The governor said again that the state will investigate itself first and then "we shall" investigate other allegations on the local level. He said that if the magazine allegations on the state level were true, then the state level would have to be probed first — "You can't have crooks investigating crooks."

HE SAID THAT if a panel of three ministers found that there was criminal influences on the state government level, then he would resign as governor.

McKeithen said he has ordered Col. Thomas Burbank, director of the Department of Public Safety, to notify all of the sheriffs whose parishes were mentioned in the magazine articles as places where gambling flourished to clean up if any of the charges are true. END

TESTIFIES ON CRIME

Kohn Spends Long Day Before Jury

Metropolitan Crime Commission director Aaron M. Kohn spent a long day before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury today in the second day of the jury's probe of organized crime charges.

Kohn was called before the jury about 9:40 a. m., and remained until a lunch break was taken shortly after noon. He was to have resumed his testimony in the afternoon session.

The appearance of Kohn followed a brief one by commission member, H. Eustis Reily, who was in the jury room for only a few minutes.

There was no indication what either witness told the jury. Grand Jury proceedings are secret.

BEFORE GOING in, Kohn told newsmen he was appear-

ing before the jury members to "give them a broad understanding of organized crime as we have understood it over a long period of time.

"Organized crime is as complicated as government, for it is an underworld framework of government.

"It can't be described in a simple sentence. We hope to give it piece by piece.

"We can't present evidence. We can only give information.

IN HIS STATEMENT, Landrieu said that he is one of five attorneys on the council and "all any honorable public official can do is to recuse himself when it appears that he has an interest in the matter in question."

"I have had to recuse myself very rarely," he added. "Whenever I even suspected that a conflict of interest was present involving any client, relative or friend, I have recused myself.

"I advised the managing director of the Metropolitan

Crime Commission more than two years ago that I represented TAC Amusement Co. as an attorney and I advised him to call to my attention any act on my part which he felt was contrary to good ethics.

"DURING that period of time I have not had one question or complaint from the director. I know that he does not accuse me of any wrong doing, but only of the possibility of a conflict of interest.

"Every person who serves in the government is faced with the same possibility. It is how you conduct yourself under the circumstances that determines whether you are

a good public official or not.

"I've been a lawyer for 13 years and hope to remain one until I die. I have never done anything as either a lawyer or a public official that was not in keeping with the highest ethical standards.

"I RECALL only two instances since I have been sitting on the council in which a conflict of interest has arisen. One involved the rezoning of a piece of property close enough to a lot in which I had an interest to depreciate the value of that lot and, out of a sense of fairness, I recused myself even though there was no direct conflict of interest.

"The only other one that I can think of involved a former client of an attorney in my office. Other members of

the council have had to recuse themselves when similar situations arose.

"The seven members of this city council, as well as prior councils, like any judge must, have listened to liquor law violation cases presented to us and made findings of guilt or innocence and assessed penalties which we felt were appropriate. To my knowledge, every finding and penalty decision has been unanimous."

It is up to law enforcement officers to provide the evidence."

It was the second such grand jury probe within a year. Last Sept. 29, the jury quizzed Kohn, other MCC officials, and Police Supt. Joseph I. Giarrusso about organized crime.

The 1966 quiz came in the wake of charges by Kohn that organized crime had influenced District Attorney Jim Garrison's decision to recommend a pardon for French Quarter stripper Linda Brigette on an obscenity conviction. Garrison denied this.

No results of the 1966 probe ever were announced.

Three of 16 MCC members subpoenaed yesterday testified in a session that lasted until 7:30 p. m. Kohn was called at 9:40 a. m. today, but the other 12 members were released from their subpoenas.

THE 16 WERE subpoenaed by the jury in connection with published accusations that New Orleans is a syndicated crime center.

Before appearing to testify, MCC officials called a news conference at which they said the grand jury should remove Garrison and Criminal District Judge Malcolm V. O'Hara as advisers.

They said the jury should "act to secure an impartial, objective judicial adviser and legal adviser."

COMMISSION President E. C. Upton Jr. said the MCC

would present "detailed investigative leads" to the jury involving "the pinball gambling racket, rackets' influence on sports and the liquor license racket" in New Orleans.

The MCC called for the removal of O'Hara after the judge testified before a federal court that he had acted as a messenger for two convicted felons — Teamster Union leader James Hoffa and New Orleans builder Zachary "Red" Strate.

GARRISON, who contends there is no organized crime in New Orleans, asked the grand jury to undertake the present probe after Life magazine depicted New Orleans as a crime center.

Kohn said the MCC supplied most of the data for the article. Garrison said he did not believe the Life charges, and promised to resign if the grand jury found evidence to support them. He suggested that Kohn quit if no such evidence is found.

Replying to this, Kohn said he would not be drawn into Garrison's "sly public game. Mr. Garrison always wants to bet with somebody."

AT THE CLOSE of last night's session, the grand jury foreman, James O. Sanders, was noncommittal about the possibility of recusing O'Hara and Garrison.

One MCC member summed up the day's proceedings this way:

"No hits, no runs, no errors."

Kohn charged that Moon Landrieu, city councilman-at-large, has a "conflict of interest" when voting on matters pertaining to revoking liquor licenses because he is the legal representative of TAC Amusement Co., which furnishes pinball machines and juke boxes for a large number of the city's lounges and bars.

In a statement, Landrieu denied the charge, declaring that, to his knowledge, he has never acted on "any matter which presented a conflict of interest. I have tried in eight years since I've been in public office to conduct myself in a manner that has been be-

yond reproach and I believe I have done this."

QUESTIONED AS to whether he regarded sitting on a liquor license violation case as a member of the City Council when a question of payoff on a pinball machine is involved as a conflict of interest, Landrieu declared:

"No. Not unless the party charged happened to be a client, friend or relative. I know of no such cases which have been presented to the City Council in which I have participated."

Kohn, when asked if he had specific evidence where Landrieu had used any influence, replied: "His votes on the council are the best evidence." *S.A.*



—States-Item photo.
CHATTING OUTSIDE THE GRAND JURY room before this morning's session are Metropolitan Crime Commission Director **AARON M. KOHN**, right, and **H. E. REILY**, member of the MCC executive committee. *67*