

DA's Crime Statements Are Reviewed

After the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Crime and Delinquency filed its disturbing report asserting the broadscale existence of organized crime in New Orleans, Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison announced his office would set up a special team to investigate.

The district attorney is a little late, in this respect; but better late than never, perhaps.

We say *perhaps*, because even as he announced formation of the organized crime investigative team, the DA did not seem overly enthusiastic about the task.

Should his team find organized crime here in abundance, as the mayor's committee reported and as the Metropolitan Crime Commission has claimed for years, the district attorney would find himself in a rather awkward position.

In recent years, the DA has spent much of his time and resources investigating the crime commission and its managing director, Aaron Kohn, when he was not busy with other "conspiracies."

The DA now insists that he has never said organized crime does not exist in New Orleans:

"Of course, this is not so as any review of my press releases on the subject will make clear."

Sept. 28, 1967, Dist. Atty. Garrison: "As for the governor's statement that organized crime and corruption are flourishing in Louisiana, I am willing to take him at his word. After all, he has been governor for three years and he should know. Such corruption *does not exist* in the city of New Orleans, however."

Oct. 13, 1966, Dist. Atty. Garrison before the Young Men's Business Club: "The *only* rackets left

here are those existing in Mr. Kohn's mind." In that same address, the DA said Mr. Kohn's statements were hurting tourism in the city. The mayor's advisory committee has charged that organized crime is trying to *take over* the city's tourism business.

Oct. 3, 1962, Dist. Atty. Garrison, in a memorable statement, accused the Criminal District Court judges of deliberately withholding fines-and-fees revenues from the DA's office thereby impeding the DA's probe of B-drinking activities.

"This raises interesting questions about the racketeer influence on our eight vacation-minded judges," said the DA then.

Racketeer (Webster's dictionary) — "One who extorts money or advantages by threats of violence, by blackmail, or by unlawful interference with business or employment."

April 18, 1969, Dist. Atty. Garrison: "While all the available evidence has indicated to us that organized crime is not flourishing, it is exceedingly likely that it exists in some degree in every major city.

"It is my thought that we should take a positive attitude toward any such report."

The DA's attitude toward MCC and other organized crime reports in the past has been, at best, defensive.

Naturally, we are glad to see his belated effort to investigate charges of organized crime in New Orleans.

His new positive attitude comes at a time when the Nixon administration is mobilizing its resources against organized crime throughout the country. The DA should find the Justice Department most cooperative.