

## Private Fund Is Started To Help Kennedy Inquiry

New Orleans, Feb. 24—(AP)—A conspiracy investigation fund has been created by New Orleans businessmen to underwrite District Attorney Jim Garrison's pledge to prove there was a conspiracy in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

While there had been a number of critics of the Warren Commission Report, Garrison is the first public official with power to investigate to say there was a conspiracy.

The prime mover behind the fund raising is Joseph M. Rault, Jr., president of Rault Petroleum Corp. of New Orleans.

### Amount Is Secret

Rault confirmed the fund's existence, but declined to give any dollar amount.

Asked whether the fund could match the reported \$8,000 spent by the district attorney on the investigation in the last three months, Rault said:

"Yes. If he needs \$8,000 for the next three months he'll get it, and the three months after that. There is no time limit to this.

"We are prepared to back Jim Garrison all the way. It can be a year—or five years if necessary. And we'll provide whatever he needs. No questions asked."

The unorthodox financing of an investigation by a public official came about partly as a result of newspaper disclosures that Garrison was conducting an investigation into the Kennedy assassination.

The New Orleans States-Item broke the story last Friday after discovering that the district attorney's office had spent about \$8,000 in three months. Vouchers covering this amount described the use of travel funds for "special investigation."

Garrison said that by publishing the names of the cities to which his staff traveled, possible witnesses or suspects were alerted and that this impeded his investigation.

The solution, he said, was to find money that wouldn't have to be accounted for in public records.

Meanwhile, free-lance pilot David W. Ferrie, who Garrison said had clues to the assassina-

tion and was nearly ready to talk, was found dead in bed Wednesday. A congenitally weak artery in his brain had ruptured.

Garrison said on Wednesday the death was an apparent suicide. On the basis of an autopsy, Coroner Nicholas Chetta later ruled out murder as a possible cause of death, leaving suicide, accidental death or natural death as possible causes. Chetta said he saw no evidence of suicide other than an unsigned, undated note which described death as a "sweet prospect."

Dr. Donald A. Welsh, a pathologist at Louisiana State University School of Medicine, after conducting the autopsy, said Ferrie died of natural causes, the ruptured vessel.

Chetta first fixed the time of death as Tuesday evening. After talking with George Lardner, Jr., Washington Post reporter who said he left Ferrie at 4 A. M. Wednesday, the coroner said he could not "rule out the possibility Ferrie might have died as late as 4 A. M.

### Others Scared

Ferrie's death apparently scared other persons whose names have figured in the probe.

David Lewis, a bus station baggage clerk who claims he had knowledge of a possible conspiracy to kill Mr. Kennedy, went to Garrison's office yesterday. Lewis again expressed fear for his life.

Before going into Garrison's office he said:

"I'm not worried about myself, but I am about my family. Maybe there has been too much said about me already, but they know my name and know what I look like and they know where I work, so that's it."

He did not say who "they" are.

Miguel Torres, a Cuban exile who lived a block from Lee Harvey Oswald's 1963 residence here, was transferred from a jail cell to the Orleans Parish Prison Hospital. Reportedly there was a telephone call threatening his life. Torres was returned to New Orleans from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola last month for questioning by Garrison's investigators.

Bulletin