

WEDNESDAY

DA CANDIDATES DEBATE

Forced Resignation Denied by Scaccia

5-10/24/69

By ALLAN KATZ

A debate by district attorney candidates was enlivened last night when candidate Ross Scaccia flatly denied allegations that he was required to resign as an assistant U.S. attorney in connection with travel to Las Vegas in the company of gamblers.

He further denied involvement in alleged attempts to change the testimony of a witness against former Teamster Union president James Hoffa.

The questions were raised by H. Eustis Reily, a member of a panel questioning DA candidates. Reily is a member of the Metropolitan Crime Commission of Greater New Orleans.

SCACCIA, ALONG with DA candidates Harry Connick and Charles Ray Ward, addressed a meeting of the Junior Chamber of Commerce at Frank's Steak House.

Incumbent DA Jim Garrison was not present. His first assistant, James L. Alcock, appeared in his place. Alcock said Garrison is suffering from a slipped disc.

The alleged attempts to

change the testimony of a witness against Hoffa also involved Criminal District Court Judge Malcolm H. O'Hara Jr. The Louisiana Supreme Court in 1968 held O'Hara was guilty of misconduct in the matter but "not guilty of the gross misconduct which would warrant his removal." The Metropolitan Crime Commission has asked that O'Hara be impeached.

Scaccia said he was not guilty of any wrongdoing in either the Las Vegas trip or the alleged attempt to influence testimony in the Hoffa case.

SCACCIA, WHO is now in the private practice of law, said he went to Las Vegas while he was an assistant U.S. attorney at the suggestion of his chief, Jack Ciolino.

He said the trip was completely innocent. However, Scaccia said, flying on the same plane with him and Ciolino "were about 33 bookmakers" who were not connected with him or Ciolino in any way.

Scaccia said he did get in some trouble over the Las Vegas trip but said it was not a cause when he left the U.S. attorney's office after completing a tour of duty as a prosecutor.

IN THE HOFFA matter, Scaccia said he was questioned by Justice Department attorneys about Judge O'Hara, whom Scaccia described as "a good friend."

He said he "refused to testify falsely against Judge O'Hara." Scaccia said this matter also had no bearing on his eventual resignation as an assistant U.S. attorney.

Scaccia added that he has never committed any act of which he feels he needs to be ashamed.

The evening was further enlivened when Connick and Al-

cock engaged in a brief shouting match.

ALCOCK SAID Connick is falsely presenting cases involving prosecutions involving the DA's office in a way that suggests the DAs' office is negligent.

Alcock said he was particularly incensed by the way Connick cited the case of James Stroy. Connick said the DA's office was responsible for allowing Stroy, arrested four times in the last 24 months, to go free Aug. 9 on a \$1,000 recognizance bond.

ALCOCK SAID the low bond was allowed by a judge who acted without the knowledge of the DA's office. Alcock said the judge was "lied to" and that the DA's office could not be held responsible for an incident it wasn't involved in.

Connick retorted that Alcock was offering a "flimsy excuse"—that, in Connick's opinion, the DA should be accountable for everything that happens in Criminal District Court.

Alcock said Connick was distorting the case. In fact, Al-

cock said, Connick was lying.

CONNICK CHIDED Alcock for calling him a liar, saying Garrison wouldn't approve.

"When I catch you in a lie, Harry, I'm going to say so," Alcock replied.

Ward, the other DA candidate, attacked both Connick and Garrison "as representing the same no-change policy."

Ward said that when Garrison entered politics eight years ago, "he had the support of the Times-Picayune and the States-Item, who called him a reformer."

TODAY, WARD said, Garrison promises to bring "only more bad publicity to New Orleans as he continues his pursuit of Clay Shaw through court after court."

Ward said Connick now has the backing of the newspapers and MCC. "Connick is now the white knight without sin," he said.

Ward said New Orleanians "have had a belly-full of reformers."

Ward told the Jaycees he offers an independent DA's office "and I can be tough when the occasion demands or compassionate when compassion is required."