

Mid-City Democrats Hear District Attorney Hopefuls

Scaccia, Connick, Ward, Garrison Speakers

Though the Democratic primary election is little more than a month away, the race for Orleans Parish district attorney is maintaining a somewhat easy pace.

The four candidates for DA in the Nov. 8 primary got together Wednesday night at a meeting of the Mid-City Democrats, who seemed more excited about the race than the candidates themselves.

There was loud applause as each candidate took the speaking stand, and the speeches were interrupted several times by audience comments.

Comments from the candidates were no more than mild exchanges as the four DA hopefuls made their pitches in the jam-packed office of First District Assessor James E. Comiskey.

ROSS SCACCIA

Ross T. Scaccia, after listing his qualifications for the office he seeks, said, "I know what it is to prosecute the hardest types of cases."

He said he is the only candidate who has served both as an assistant Orleans Parish district attorney, as an assistant United States attorney and as a defense attorney.

Scaccia also said he knows "who the big bookmakers (in New Orleans) are, and I know

that the present DA hasn't convicted these people."

New Orleans' problems, he said, are murder, rape, armed robbery and burglary. "As your DA, I'll do something about them."

CHARLES WARD

Charles R. Ward, former assistant DA under incumbent Jim Garrison, said he wants to forget about the notorious Clay Shaw conspiracy trial, conducted by Garrison.

"The Shaw Trial is history and I think we should forget about it," Ward said.

He complained that New Orleanians will not face the issues it must face in order to improve. "I don't understand this city," Ward said. "If I talk about the issues, nobody listens, but if I say something nasty about Garrison or Harry Connick, the lights go on and it's all over television."

Ward added, "I knew there was a conspiracy in the Shaw trial, but there was no evidence. The jury bore me out. But we can't live in the past."

HARRY CONNICK

Connick, the third speaker at the meeting said that "just because I have the endorsements of John Petre and Moon Landrieu (candidates for mayor) and the New Orleans States-Item and The Times-Picayune doesn't mean I'm not independent."

He said "you have to get endorsements or you won't

win." He said each time he solicits a vote from an individual he is trying for an endorsement.

Connick said Garrison has abused the power of the office of DA for 7½ years. He went through a list of cases he said illustrate the "gross abuse and misuse of the powers of District Attorney."

The former U.S. Attorney said if he is elected DA, "I will be in that office, not somewhere else. I'll be there to prosecute those persons who think nothing of robbing you, burglarizing you and harming your children."

JIM GARRISON

Garrison, who wasn't expected at the meeting when Comiskey said at its outset that the DA was ill with back problems, showed up late but was in time to hear Connick's remarks.

He said "Every one of my opponents is qualified for district attorney. I don't know that any one of them would make a bad DA."

Garrison said, however, that he was there to convince the people to re-elect him to an office "that I think has been a good one."

The incumbent denied several of the charges made by Connick and added, "We've tried to build a good office and steadily improve it."

He cited his record of "never having lost a murder case." The DA said, "You can talk about crime in the streets, but

statistics (for New Orleans) indicate that we're doing pretty well."