

Charge Made in Bond Probe

Insurance Company Lawyer Is Indicted

An attorney for Maryland National Insurance Company was indicted Thursday on a charge of extortion in connection with an alleged threat on an assistant district attorney assigned to collect bond forfeitures.

The Orleans Parish Grand Jury returned the indictment against attorney Ralph L. Kaskell Jr. in a report to Criminal District Court Judge Thomas M. Brahney Jr.

Kaskell, a member of the law firm of Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles, testified before the jury for about two and one-half hours before being indicted.

ACCUSED OF THREAT

Kaskell is accused of making a threat on assistant DA Shirley G. Wimberly Jr., on June 6 for the purpose of obtaining acceptance by the DA's office of a lesser sum than that which Maryland National owed in bond forfeitures.

It is estimated that the company may now owe as much as \$720,000 in forfeitures of appearance bonds in Criminal District Court.

The indictment said that Kaskell threatened to accuse former First Assistant DA Charles R. Ward of a crime.

Ward resigned as first assistant on June 17 and announced his intention to run against incumbent DA Jim Garrison.

ALLEGATION BY WARD

Ward revealed at the time that certain officials of Maryland National had accused him in affidavits of accepting bribes so that he would hold back on collecting on forfeited appearance bonds of the company.

Ward alleged that Kaskell used the bribery accusations in an attempt to force the DA's office to accept a settlement of \$100,000 from Maryland National.

Ward said that Kaskell met with Wimberly and threatened to reveal the bribery accusations if the lesser sum was not accepted.

According to Ward the alleged action amounted to "blackmail" under the state

extortion statute. He demanded a grand jury investigation of his charge against Kaskell as well as the bribery charges against him.

TWO INDICTED

On July 3, the jury indicted two local attorneys on a charge

of corrupt influencing in the Maryland National case.

Attorneys Milton P. Masinter and Thomas Toronto Jr., were accused of accepting \$12,500 in 1968 with the intention of using it to influence Ward in the collection of forfeitures.

Ward said that the action cleared him of any wrongdoing. He said that he was not implicated because there were no allegations of bribery.

ANOTHER SESSION

The jury conducted another session later Thursday afternoon and heard testimony from one man. He was identified as Anthony Latino, 4936 Prytania.

Jury foreman Fernand S. Lapeyre said the later session had nothing to do with the Kaskell case.

Assistant district attorneys James L. Alcock and John P. Volz declined to comment on why Latino was subpoenaed.

An Anthony Latino who was 38 and lived at 4936 Prytania was arrested in early May at Cusimano's Lounge, 4938 Prytania, on a gambling charge involving alleged payoffs for games won on a pinball machine.

Kaskell asked for a continuance on Aug. 14 in his legal effort to have the judges of Criminal District Court rescind an order which in effect banned Maryland National bonds from that court.

The judges issued the order on Aug. 5. It directed the clerk of Criminal Court not to accept any bonds with Maryland National as surety.

CASE UNDER STUDY

Kaskell asked for the continuance pending action by Federal District court, which is studying Maryland National's case.

He pledged that the company would not write bonds in state or city courts in New Or-

leans until the issue of the forfeitures is resolved.

Kaskell testified before the jury Thursday from about 11 a.m. until about 1:30 p.m.

Assistant district attorneys James L. Alcock and John P. Volz said that Kaskell was not subpoenaed, but neither would say whether he appeared at the invitation of the jury or at his own request.

RECOGNIZANCE BOND

Judge Brahney granted Kaskell a recognizance bond at the request of Alcock, who was promoted to first assistant DA after the departure of Ward.

"This gentleman (Kaskell) is a local attorney and has roots in the community and the state

would have no objection to releasing him on his own recognizance," Alcock said.

The recognizance bond was set at \$1,000.

The jury also returned an indictment of aggravated rape against another man in an unrelated case.

Harold Madison, 33, 2100 S. Claiborne Ave., was charged with aggravated rape of a 57-year-old woman from Houston, Tex.

The crime allegedly occurred Sunday night at 2715 S. Tonti.

Madison was in custody and Judge Brahney allowed no bail privileges.