Carrison case subdues prosecutors

A news analysis

THE OUTCOME of the Garrison case, which involved months of investigation and the expenditure of untold thousands of dollars, is not the only big case the federal prosecutors have lost since U.S. Investigators began racking down on state officials. THE FEDERAL action was supposed to fill a void created by the lack of state investigation and prosecution of political corruption. Only a few months ago, U.S. Atty. Gerald J. Gallinghouse's office failed in its efforts to convict C. H. 'Sammy' Downs, one-time political lieutenant of former Gov. John McKeithen, for payments he allegedly received in the purchase of voting machines by the state. That case wound up in a hung jury and apparently it has been awaiting the end of the Garrison trial where Gallinghouse has been concentrating his efforts. Gallinghouse retained jurisdiction over the Downs case because he brought forth the charges before the Middle District was created. In the Eastern District, U.S. Atty. Don Walter of Shreveport has the trial of W. W. McDougall, chief administrative aide to McKeithen, in the offing. THE OUTCOME of the McDougall trial may well establish the future course of action by the federal government in seeking to put an end to corruption practices by state officials. McDougall is charged with making a false declaration to the grand jury in connection with its probe of insurance commission kickbacks. The trial, postponed from the summer when a key government witness became ill, is now set for Oct. 29. It will be a tough charge to prove to the satisfaction of a trial jury, but federal prosecutors feel they must bring the one time Civil Service commissioner to justice if they are to go forward with other aspects of the investigation into state insurance. Four former lawmakers also were indicted in connection with the state insurance probe. BUT STILL hanging on the agenda is Walter's investigation of the role played by McKeithen in the splitting of commissions by agents of record with others. Although the Justice Department refused to permit Walter to move against McKeithen earlier, the Eastern District prosecutor is keeping that case very much alive. In the Middle District, where the state capital is located and is usually the seat of state government corruption, there are a number of investigations proceeding that could be hampered by the current dispair. A grand jury has been looking at the Louisiana Office Building Corp., which was created as a vehicle for financing the construction of and expansion of the state capitol building. There also is an Antitrust Division investigation of building industry practices in the making. The Antitrust Division has had plenty of acquaintance with Baton Rouge in the past several years with the prosecution of teamster boss Edward Edward Partin and concrete magnate Ted Dunham Jr. It won convictions, but neither man has gone to jail. One of the most celebrated cases brought to trial by the federal prosecutors was that of Atty. Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion, Rep. Salvador Anzalmo and businessman Ernest Bartlett in the Louisiana Loan and Thrift Corp. scandal. Here again, the federal action fell on its face before a jury that apparently found it difficult to follow the maze of business-political transactions. BUT THEY did get Gremillion on a perjury rap. The jurors could more easily understand a simple charge of lying compared to the mystifying insinuations of the charges against him. State officials also find themselves having to protect their flanks at the hands of a state grand jury. There is a great deal of pressure from black groups on East Baton Rouge Parish Dist. Atty. Ossie Brown to indict federal agents in connection with the slaying of a black youth mistakenly sought by the FBI as an Army deserter. In the last action on that matter, the top FBI agent in the state didn't show up for an appearance before the state grand jury. THE FEDERAL action had been expected to go forward when the district attorney refused to charge the man identified in the Grand Jury's indictment as the guilty party.